

**RAYMOND WILLIAMS : A STUDY ON
CULTURE AS A CATEGORY IN
MARXIST AESTHETICS**

Thesis

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D E C L A R A T I O N

I, Balakrishnan Kalamullathil, do hereby declare that this thesis entitled **Raymond Williams : A Study on Culture as a Category in Marxist Aesthetics** is a bonafide record of the research work done by me under the guidance of Dr. T.K. Ramachandran, Lecturer, Department of English, University of Calicut. I further declare that this thesis has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship or other similar title of recognition.

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CERTIFICATE

Certified that this thesis, **Raymond Williams : A Study on Culture as a Category in Marxist Aesthetics** is a bonafide record of the research work carried out by **Mr. Balakrishnan Kalamullathil** under my supervision and guidance. No part of this has been submitted earlier for any other purpose.

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PREFACE

The cultural criticism of Raymond Williams, the pre-eminent Socialist critic of the twentieth century has not been adequately examined by Indian scholarship. The present work is a modest attempt in that direction, taking into account only his select works. In a historical phase where criticism has been "struck in the post" – post structuralism, post modernism, post colonialism, even post marxism – it can be seen that William's critical interventions by dint of their accent on "culture" as a force field stands out as one which the modalities of any of the above approaches cannot bypass to its benefit. It is my firm conviction that of all critical modes the cultural theorisations of Williams with their remarkable emphasis on the working class and the popular culture can facilitate the historical necessity of meeting the subtle and deliberately orchestrated challenges of neo-liberal globalization, from whose hydra-grip no walk of life is free now.

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In the course of my research I have consulted the English Department Library, the CHMK Library, the Academic Staff College Library, and the Library of the School of Distance Education of Calicut University. I thank the librarians and staff of these libraries for their kind help.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CC	- <i>The Country and the City</i>
Communications	- <i>Communications</i>
CS	- <i>Culture and Society</i>
Culture	- <i>Culture</i>
DIB	- <i>Drama from Ibsen to Brecht</i>
DIE	- <i>Drama from Ibsen to Eliot</i>
ENDL	- <i>The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence</i>
Keywords	- <i>Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society</i>
LR	- <i>The Long Revolution</i>
ML	- <i>Marxism and Literature</i>
MT	- <i>Modern Tragedy</i>
PF	- <i>Preface to Film</i>
PM	- <i>The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists</i>
PMC	- <i>Problems in Materialism and Culture</i>
PL	- <i>Politics and Letters: Interviews with New Left Review</i>
RC	- <i>Reading and Criticism</i>
Television	- <i>Television: Technology and Cultural Form</i>
WS	- <i>Writing in Society</i>

INTRODUCTION :

LOCATING RAYMOND WILLIAMS

As James Klugmann, historian of the Communist Party of Great Britain, notes, the thirties was a period of "extreme change and struggle and storm" throughout the world both politically and economically, which all culminated in the outbreak of the World War II¹ (13-14). Following the giant slump of 1929, British economy suffered a great blow, and the country was reduced to one of great poverty, malnutrition and unemployment. Consequently life seemed to demonstrate the bankruptcy of the capitalist system and there was the clamour for some sort of quick and rational alternative. A very strong feeling of doom was reflected in the culture and literature of the period. And for many people the demand for an alternative was embodied in Socialism as it developed in the USSR. A widespread struggle against war, which developed throughout the decade, was certainly one of the main roads to Socialism and to Marxism, and both working-class people and intellectuals were aligned to the cause (14, 15, 17, 20).

The main agenda of the cultural practice of the period was to bring art and letters into the stream of revolutionary struggle. Radical groups like Left Cultural Discussion had their journal *Left Review* devoted to this purpose. The threat to letters posed by Fascism and the crisis in capitalism was inspirations to their ventures. As a result there was a spate of Marxist writing

in English, both theoretical and imaginative in the 1930s. A political orientation to criticism was the need of the hour, for there was no tradition of such a criticism to fall back upon. However as Margolies points out the theory of literature which they developed on their own had three basic tenets: that all art is class art; that social value is the proper criterion of art, and that art was active (that it *does* something) (68-69). Similarly there was the work of the Left Book Club (between 1936-48), which, attempted to spread "all such knowledge and all such ideas as may safeguard peace, combat fascism and bring nearer the establishment of real socialism" (Reid 194).

The late thirties saw an extra ordinary outpouring of Marxist writing² including works on literary theory. The year 1937, for instance, saw the publication of Ralph Fox's *The Novel and the People*, Alick West's *Crisis and Criticism* and Christopher Caudwell's *Illusion and Reality*. These works responded to the crisis in their own way as it was reflected in literature – in the dislocation of literary values, the lack of direction of the novel or the poetry, and the abdication of criticism. In the beliefs and attitudes of those writers we find pronounced a Marxist orientation. Ralph Fox, for instance, believed that men make their own history, and that the novel as a genre was the realisation of this. Alick West found the source of all cultural values in labour and production. Caudwell forged from diverse fields – Marxism, Science, Philosophy, Politics, Sociology, Anthropology, Psychology and

Aesthetics – a single theory that covered all cultural production (Margolies 78; Caudwell XIV).

An interspersing of poetry and politics was a remarkable feature of the thirties. Poets of this period, also known as the Auden generation were involved in Left politics and the anti fascist movement, especially in the wake of the Spanish Civil War (Heinemann 107). The poetry of the period was political as emerging from the environment punctuated by Cold War and its brain washing, and it helped define the power struggle of the time (Kettle 83, 94, 100). The fiction, in contrast, developed in rather reactionary directions. In spite of Ralph Fox's revolutionary idea of the novel, the major novelists – Virginia Woolf, Aldous Huxley, Edward Upward, Rex Warner, George Orwell, Graham Greene and Christopher Isherwood – were products of high bourgeois culture. The novel, in their hands, was becoming the text of bourgeois humanist (individualist) ideology. The dominant fictional mode, realism, with its material referentiality was to mature into Modernism (Widdowson 133-35, 161). Parallel to this there was a remarkable rise in the field of working class literature. Writers like Walter Greenwood, Walter Briesby and Lewis Jones chose as their subject matter working class communities faced with uncertainty and irresolution consequent on mass unemployment and deprivation. Though the existing framework of literary criticism, which was defined by the canon of 'good art' failed to recognise this body of writing, the texts challenged common sense notions of culture and

creativity, without at the same time being subversive or progressive (Snee 165-167).

The major programme of the Left movement, however was their campaign against fascism as well as other burning problems of the day. Left Theatre Movement (1934-39) and Workers Film Societies and related associations were active in these programmes (Clark 215, 220-221, Hogenkamp 256, 268). Their programmes were generally anti-aesthetic in nature. Naturally, in this situation of crisis, there were debates in England about culture and civilization but they did not crystallize out until the post-War years. The major texts concerned with these debates were the anthropological works of Malinovsky, Clive Bell's *Civilization: An Essay* (1928), F.R. Leavis's, *Mass Civilization and Minority Culture* (1930) and T.S. Eliot's *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (1948). Both Malinovsky and Eliot maintained that culture is the pattern of a society as a whole. But Eliot's argument that religion and culture were a whole way of life came as a critique of the alternative notions of culture held by Bloomsbury, Leavis and the Fabian Socialists (O'Connor 57-58). These works were generally concerned with the social inequality and their arguments operated on the word 'natural'.

Perhaps the most influential literary and cultural emblem of the thirties was the *Scrutiny*. It was partly an aftermath of Leavis and his friends' disillusionment with the tenets of Eliot which was reflected in the decline of

Criterion. More than a literary critical movement the *Scrutiny* was a national campaign for cultural renewal (Wright 38). Q.D. Leavis's *Fiction and the Reading Public* (1932) and Denys Thompson and F.R. Leavis's *Culture and Environment* (1933) provided the theoretical basis of *Scrutiny*. These works celebrated an irretrievably lost 'Golden Age', of an 'organic community' which was displaced by industrial capitalism, for which literary education (criticism) was seen as a substitute. By taking the tools of literary criticism to non-literary fields, the *Scrutiny* was forging a sociological approach to literature, though its conception of society and culture was largely elitist and apolitical. Mathew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) was recognized as one of the sacred texts of *Scrutiny*. Its notion of culture as a substitute for religion derived directly from Arnold (Wright 52-56). In general, the dismal scenario of English life, which was one of cultural disintegration, mechanical organisation and constant, rapid change, appalled the contributors to *Scrutiny*. As Ian Wright evaluates the situation,

Bewildered by the aftermath of the war and by the Depression. Out of touch with the industrial centres and with practical politics, saddled with their over simplified diagram of English history and their nostalgic dream of a lost golden age, the scrutineers were incapable of taking an objective overview of their new situation (53-54).

The position tends to slide into either a strong anti-Marxist stance or a reactionary Cambridge legacy as a substitute for radical politics.

The "Cambridge English" in the twenties and thirties meant a literary study on the paradigm "life and thought". The practical criticism initiated by Richards was essentially synchronic in its methods: "clear reading and clear writing" were for him absolute supra-historical values. Leavis conceived literature to be the "storehouse of values" and believed that close reading and analysis of literature was the discovery and animation of the most central human values. From that position, in contrast to Richards, he developed not an "intricately wrought composure", but a drastic discrimination and a militant assault in the whole field of culture and society. But as Williams points out "the full evident life and thought of the period after the Industrial Revolution was in a different dimension, and it was here that the crisis of the formulation began" (*WS* 182, 185, 186, 187). That is to say, that the "life and thought" paradigm was quite incompatible in a world of the open struggle of classes and of the fierce priorities of industrial capitalism, which had its own conception of education.

The selective use of English as a language and literature was of great importance in mediating power relations between classes and other groups in British society right from the days of the Newbolt Report (1921), which prescribed English literature as a discipline in higher education with the status of an autonomous domain (Doyle 27, 28). But the entrenched practice in Cambridge was a disciplinary separation between language and literature. As a result, the underlying problems and conditions of such a cultural

formulation was either suppressed or fossilized. On the other hand, the radical literary, critical practices initiated from the 1930s and continued upto the 1950s brought forth the idea that many other kinds of knowledge and analysis had to be drawn if the work was to be properly done. Even when close reading remained valid, the new convergence between disciplines was to be recognised for a greater objectivity in critical procedure. Various forms of thinking and analyses like formalism, structuralism, sociology, linguistics, psycho-analysis and Marxism which merge with modernism as a cultural formation was at once a response to the underlying and decisive unevenness of literacy and of learning of a class society. To understand this signification, Williams proposes a new disciplinary approach: "the whole text was to be read without date and author". Williams proposes this as a way to move beyond and overcome the decay of Cambridge English. For, in writing, as in theory, there was a paradoxical distance from the general life, which he perceives as an intense crisis of culture and society. Such a procedure could establish connection with a world of practice, choice and struggle (*WS* 221, 223, 225-26).

The Copernican influence of F.R. Leavis in reshaping the character of "English studies" (Baldick 27) continued to dominate the entire field of literary criticism right upto the early 1960s as characterized by the high tide of New Criticism as evident from the large demand for the back numbers of *Scrutiny* volumes (and the Cambridge University reprinted the entire set of

twenty volumes in 1962). Again it was a period of entrenched Leavisism, for the Leavisites were wielding profound influence through a seven-volume work of literary history, viz., *The Pelican Guide to English Literature* (ed. Boris Ford 1954-61), which was for twenty years a source of reference for students and teachers in Britain (137) and elsewhere. (Of course, there is in the last volume an essay by Williams on modern drama and another one by Hoggart on communications). It was in such a condition of New Critical and Leavisite theoretical hegemony that Williams was cutting inroads through his groundbreaking works beginning with *Culture and Society*. By its polemical title the book was providing a fresh and radical critical paradigm.

In response to the sclerotic dogmatism of *Scrutiny*, the Oxford scholar F.W. Bateson launched the journal *Essays in Criticism* in 1951. In his 1953 editorial essay "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time", Bateson made a case for the reconciliation of the best tradition of scholarship and criticism, and of contextual and textual studies. This involved a rejection of the modernist pioneers in the name of a new sense of responsibility; Williams was one of the early contributors to the journal, along with Donald Davie, Graham Hough and Frank Kermode (136).

With the advent in the 1960s, of Post-structuralism through the works of Althusser, Macherey, Derrida, Foucault and Lacan, English literary study in British universities experienced a crisis in reading practices. As Peter

Brooker argues, this crisis has two aspects – the first lies in the mixed implications for English of the intrinsic concepts and procedures which have emerged from within 'discourse theory', which have a strategic, oppositional effect upon the critical and pedagogic routines of English teaching (62). The second concerns the relation of post-structuralism to developments within Marxism, which necessitated a cultural history that would chart the contours of British intellectual-political culture (63).

The crisis, as Williams notes in his 1981 lecture, continued even in the 1970s, between Marxism and Structuralism and impinged directly on the dominant paradigm of literary studies as a perceived field of knowledge (*WS* 192, 196). Williams's works, especially with *The Long Revolution* was rejecting the dominant paradigm, by undertaking an analysis of culture, taking such aspects as communication, technology and sociology into consideration (209-10). The theoretical position was eventually described in *Marxism and Literature* as "cultural materialism". As he defines it "Cultural materialism is the analysis of all forms of signification, including quite centrally writing, within the actual means and conditions of their production" (210). This view of literature and culture, according to him, assumes the stature of a "historical semiotics", as distinct from some of the narrower structuralist displacements of history (210).

A theoretical orientation in the above lines accounts for the versatility and ambition of contemporary Marxist literary criticism. The work of Raymond Williams, as it comes within instituted literary studies, marks a crucial point of development of a Marxist criticism. Such forums as Literature and History, Red Letters and Radical Philosophy and intellectual movements like History Workshop and Literature Teaching Politics instanced the project. Francis Mulhern defines this development as "An enlarged domain, new objects, revised norms, and framing these, new terms of identity". Thus emerged a theoretically "materialist" formation of literary studies, whose ethos was 'political' and its commitment polarized against bourgeois culture and so anti-humanist (Mulhern 13-14).

Radical developments within English proper took a new turn in the 1960s with the work of Raymond Williams and Terry Eagleton. As it emerged, radicalism had to confront, the pervasive influence within the Anglo-American academy of the dominant tradition (Residual belles-lettrism, conformist Anglo-American New Criticism, non-conformist Leavisism). And since the 1960's radical theory has oscillated uncertainty between a critical structuralism often in confusing association with an objectivist form of Marxism (compare Althusser and the Post-Althusserians) and a libertarian form of Marxism (compare E.P. Thompson and John Fekete) (Hoyle 44).

As Terry Eagleton argues, modern criticism was born of a struggle against the absolutist state. Criticism was only ever significant when it engaged with a more than literary issue and when the literary was suddenly foregrounded as the medium of vital concerns deeply rooted in the general intellectual, cultural and political life of an epoch (*Function* 107). In the 1930's *Scrutiny's* only rival in the form of an alternative body of criticism – fragmentary, uneven and materialist – was Christopher Caudwell who lacked a tradition of Marxist criticism to fall back on. When Williams began his writing career in the early 1950s, the ethos of thirties' criticism was the only thing available to him – a compound of vulgar Marxism, bourgeois empiricism, and Romantic idealism. The English Marxism available to him was almost an intellectual irrelevance. However, Marxism and *Scrutiny* provided the formative influence on Williams, both of which he rejected eventually, only to clear away his own path of literary, cultural analysis. He did this almost single handedly, working from his personal resources, without significant collaboration or institutional support. Then, he was to formulate a socialist criticism for which no English comparison is relevant but which must be compared to the aesthetic production of a Lukacs, Benjamin or Goldmann (Eagleton, *Criticism and Ideology* 21-24).

Williams's sequence of interventions can be described as blazing a trail from the cul-de-sac of Left-Leavisism to the high road of continental Marxism, a path considered "too personal and arduous to be easily followed"

(Widdowson, *Re-Reading* 48). The remarkable aspect of Williams's project is a concern with the inseparability of the linguistic and the social in the structure of discourse. He defined the practice of discourse in writing, recognising it in social terms as "Communication" (Marx 28). Anglo-American New Criticism and contemporary Structuralist criticism were taken to task for abstracting the substance of communication to such a degree that it deals only in isolated works, for treating the practice of writing as an object and readers as consumers of objects; and for ignoring questions of the relations between writers and readers and of the relations between writers' social experiences and other social experiences (29-30). The Bakhtin school's challenge of Russian formalism by emphasizing the social and historical production of signifying systems was on similar grounds. Williams's insistence on the term "structure of feeling" was seen to correspond to the Bakhtin school's emphasis on the way ideology was *generated* (as diachronic process) rather than *given* (as synchronic monolith) (Hoyles 49).

It is instructive to notice that even in the 1980s, as testified by Marjorie Boulton's *The Anatomy of Literary Studies*, "Literary Studies" was clearly aimed at those going on to read English in higher education, and in which 'good literature' was regarded as a humanist surrogate for religion, much as it was by Matthew Arnold and by the Newbolt Report of 1921 on *The Teaching of English in England*. The dominance of such a conventional criticism, predicated on imperial practices on the study of 'texts' was articulated at a

high level of abstraction. Major advances beyond a poverty stricken criticism of this type have been made possible only by the production of a sustained theoretical critique and a rupture with the empiricism. The questions, discourse, and the assumptions of bourgeois criticism, were fundamental to the development of a Marxist criticism, which, in effect, came to mean "critical theory". As a 'different' intellectual field it continued its operations of literary critical practice within the untransformed education system of a still powerfully entrenched bourgeois culture. Such a practice was to controvert the assumptions of conventional criticism by a detailed rebuttal of them in practice by offering both "a sharply conscious explanation of *what* is being criticized, *why*, in what conditions and to what end, and an exact accountability to the text-for-study and to the reader". According to Widdowson, a similar procedure is essential if a materialist criticism is to develop the tools, as well as the models, to penetrate the special space occupied by literature in the social process (*Re-Reading* 5-7).

The 'crisis' in English, then impinges not on any particular "approach" but on the question of the nature, content, direction and future of "English" as a discipline. Accordingly attempts were made for a plurality of kinds of study, which imply a breaking-down of disciplinary barriers, a resituating of literature within the broader ambit of the study of history and cultural production. The position overtly emphasizes the fact that English has to be seen as a site on which social meanings are constructed and so renders itself

for a materialist politics. As Terry Eagleton argues, criticism was only ever significant, when it engaged with more than literary issues, that is, when the 'literary' fore grounded the general intellectual, cultural and political life of an epoch. Of course, the Enlightenment, the drama of Romanticism, and the *Scrutiny* project were exemplary cases in point (*Function* 107). According to him the singlemost important critic of post-War Britain who has assigned a more productive role to criticism has been Raymond Williams. He has explicitly rejected the appellation of *literary critic*, for in forging the discipline of "cultural studies", the precise name for his critical practice, he has to transgress borders of knowledge and to become ubiquitously a sociologist, political theorist, social philosopher, cultural commentator (108) – in every sense a librarian's nightmare.

Even in the sixties 'English' in British university remained so impervious to the above trends despite E.P. Thompson's essay "The Peculiarities of English" (1965) and Perry Anderson's essay "Components of the National Culture" (1968). In a sustained series of interventions it was first Raymond Williams (from *Culture and Society* (1958) to *Marxism and Literature* (1977), and later Terry Eagleton (from *Shakespeare and Society* (1966) to *Criticism and Ideology* (1976)) who have placed radical critical theory on the agenda in the 'English' academy. Williams's project is concerned with the inseparability of the linguistic and the social in the structure of discourse, which he designated as "communication" (*ML* 28).

Eagleton has observed that the correlation of 'literary' and 'social' must involve some concepts of structure. The neo-Hegelian tradition of Marxist criticism from Lukacs through the Frankfurt school to Sartre and Williams had been instrumental in providing this requirement (*Function* 95-7, 102). In his basic formulations, of course, Williams makes a case for a sociological poetics akin to the one originally urged by the Bakhtin School (Hoyles 50).

Attempts to go "beyond" the dominant practices of "English" have been made by John Fekete's analysis of New Criticism in *The Critical Twilight* (1978) and Francis Mulhern's analysis of Leavisism in *The Moment of Scrutiny* (1979). These were in fact so much an attempt to go "beyond" as go "through" them (*Re-Reading* 51). In his "Foreword" to Fekete's book, Raymond Williams calls attention to a disjuncture between New Critical Theory (discourse about social life) and practice (attention to the words on the page) as forming part of the strategy of New Criticism from 1920s to 1960s. For Fekete, "New critical close reading . . . the econometry or other technologies . . . is never innocent of the determinations of the conceptual system which implicitly or explicitly control it." On the other hand it constitutes a "genuine advance" over all earlier methodologies "by asserting the ontological status of art as aesthetic." And further the New Critics failed to locate art as a moment of the historical practice of the social formation (Fekete 101-2). Fekete's close analysis of New Criticism from Eliot and

Richards, through Ransom and Frye, to Mc Luhan, provides an informed perspective against which radical theory can measure itself (*Re-Reading* 51).

Francis Mulhern's *The Moment of Scrutiny* gives us a sociology of Leavisism as an oppositional movement, "to mediate the large-scale entry of a new social layer into the national intelligentsia." He argues that the Leavisite revolution "in the discipline was also a revolution of literary criticism against the palsied cultural regime of post-War England" (Mulhern 318). The *Scrutiny* opened up an educational space within which the cultural institutions of bourgeois democratic capitalism could be subjected to critical analysis, a space, which was to be utilized to remarkable effect most notably by Raymond Williams and the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (329). Leavisism, on the other hand was promoting literary criticism as a discourse whose general cultural function was "the repression of politics" (331). So the task of the Left, as it emerged itself, was to confront Leavisism and to bring out its limits and possibilities.

In the 1960s and 1970s radical theory oscillated dizzily between objectivist and subjectivist heresies. So the project of the sociological poetics inaugurated by the Bakhtin School was to receive wider critical attention as a matrix from which radical theory might fruitfully develop. Tony Bennett, adhering closer to the Bakhtin School, asserts, "The text is not the issuing source of meaning. It is a site on which the production of meaning - of

variable meanings - takes place. The social process of culture takes place not within texts but between texts and between texts and readers" (Bennett 173-4). As Catherine Belsey argues, the implications of a rejection of the Leavisian critical discourse is to evolve a more constructive strategy by which to treat English as a site of struggle, to generate new critical discourse, to re-read the great tradition not for the sake of valourizing it, but in order to release its plurality ("Re-Reading the Great Tradition" 130).

The emergence of Cultural Studies with its institutional sitting at Birmingham University came as a consequence of the work done in the post Second World War period in the sphere of British adult education (*WS*). Cultural Studies as a programme was however, alleged to be a "terrain for which there is no agreed map" (Gray and Mc Guigan VI). Out of the discipline of English, primarily inspired by Raymond Williams (1958) important questions were being asked, mainly by working class mature students about the relations between "culture" and "society," which broke the bounds of traditional disciplines like literature and history, and had a difficult and sometimes deeply troubled association with newer social scientific disciplines, most notably sociology. One of Williams's early essays "Culture is Ordinary" (1958) encapsulates in its polemical title most sharply the cardinal impulse of Cultural Studies project, the stress on "lived experience" and the discovery of "the popular form of denigration or sentimentalization by cultural elites" (Mc Guigan 1992). Williams is recognized as the unique

figure in the original formation of Cultural Studies, although Stuart Hall played a larger role in establishing it as a curriculum subject, particularly by fusing the British tradition of "culturalism" with the French tradition of "Structuralism" (Gray and McGuigan 1993: VIII).

Cultural Studies, operating on the borders of knowledge, could still be concerned with anything that is meaningful, as in the matter of power relations. Cultural Studies in various garbs – as communication, film and media studies, feminist, black politics and the 'discourse of the other' deal – with power relations in society. From its status as concerned with the peculiarities of the British, it has gone international to Australia and North America. In England it soon became institutionalized within the academy from the university down to school curriculum. Raymond Williams's challenge to the old cultural criticism from within the tradition of English criticism has been a great fillip to the internationalization of Cultural Studies and the critical renewal of an intellectual field which was not contained by traditional disciplinary borders (Gray and Mc Guigan 1993: IX-X).

The work of the "triumvirate" of Cultural Studies, Hoggart, Williams and Thompson, though remarkable for their differences, who writing in the late 1950s showed a common questioning of academic values and disciplines, in particular those entrenched within English and History. Ever since, there have been a number of interventions, often from the margins, which at their

best, cause disjunctures and distractions in the development of the field of study. For instance, Barthes's "The Rhetoric of the Image" (1964) was a rigorous mode of semiological (structuralist) analysis, especially of the visual image, but also of other texts and practices. He emphasizes the underlying structures of texts and practices, and provides a necessary distance, which the more experiential and humanistic versions of Cultural Studies lacked (Barthes 15-27). Stuart Hall goes further and offers a model for understanding the textual construction of meaning and the practice of reading, or decoding, the text, by introducing a sociological dimension to the question of "reading" of all texts, as for example, taking television as key object of study (Hall 28-34). Similarly, Edward Said, using a Foucauldian frame work, addresses the questions of the "Orient" across many sites of knowledge production viewed as "Power political," "Power intellectual," "Power cultural" and "Power moral" (Said 42-53). This kind of discourse is claimed to be an advance in the process of what Williams has called the "unlearning" of "the inherent dominative mode" (Gray and Mc Guigan 376).

Scholars have also identified certain neglected dimensions of culture within the field of mainstream Cultural Studies. There is the question of the constitution and formulation of culture industry, the intensification of cultural distribution, and before access to audiences and what contribution cultural studies could make to policy making (Garnham 54-61). Similarly there is the recognition of over-looked areas such as the highly popular fictional genres

called romances (Radway 62-79). These instances point to the range and scope of Cultural Studies as an area of exploration into the uncharted.

Williams has observed that "culture" is one of the two or three most complex words in the English language. But he has very openly stated the basic assumptions of his study of culture: that it is not something, which is to be seen as anybody's prerogative.

Culture is ordinary: that is the first fact. Every human society has its own shape, its own purposes, its own meanings. Every human society expresses these in institutions, and in arts and learning. The making of a society is the finding of common meanings and directions, and its growth is an active debate and amendment under the pressures of experience, contact and discovery, writing themselves into the land. The growing society is there, yet it is also made and remade in every individual mind (qtd Gray and McGuigan 6).

Culture, he says, has two aspects: the known meanings, which its members are trained to; and the new observations and meanings, which are offered and tested. And so he uses the term "culture" in two senses, to mean a whole way of life – the common meanings; to mean the arts and learning – the social processes of discovery and creative effort. Williams insists on the conjunction of both these senses, rather than reserving the word for one or other of these senses as used by many writers (6). In so doing Williams rejects two other senses (colours) of culture: one, 'culture' as contained in the

notion of "cultivated people"; and the other which he pungently calls "culture-cultures", "do gooders and high brows and superior prigs." Culture in this sense is heavily conditioned by a feeling about hypocrisy or about pretentiousness; quite wryly Williams puts it: "Goering reached for his gun: many reach for their cheque books; a growing number, now, reach for the latest bit of argot" (7-8). The different senses of the word 'culture' are for him, "the detritus which makes it difficult for us to think seriously about it all" (8).

At Cambridge Williams was influenced by two encounters: Marxism and the techniques of Leavis. As he had to disagree with the Leavisian notion of culture so he had to do with the Marxist version:

The Marxist interpretation of culture can never be accepted while it retained as it need not retain, this directive element, this insistence that if you honestly want socialism you must write, think, learn in certain prescribed ways. A culture is common meanings, the product of a whole people, and offered individual meanings, the product of a man's whole committed personal and social experience. It is stupid and arrogant to suppose that any of these meanings can in any way be prescribed; they are made by living, made and remade in ways we cannot know in advance. To try to jump the future, to pretend that in some way you are the future is strictly insane (9-10).

Obviously, the Marxists and Leavis did not go hand in hand. While the Marxists knew more than Leavis about modern English Society, Leavis knew

more than the Marxists the real relations between art and experience. Leavis's diagnosis of English culture was quite radical, but was rapidly becoming orthodox, as his emphasis was consistently on an agricultural England, with a traditional culture of great value which was replaced by a modern, organized, industrial state, with a new mechanized vulgarity sweeping into the centres of power. While Leavis's diagnosis was correct, though it went unacknowledged, Williams had to reject it, for any account of culture, which denies the value of an industrial society is really irrelevant. In fact the real "cultural vulgarity" is a problematic: "I believe the central problem of our society, in the coming half-century, is the use of our new resources to make a good common culture; the means to a good abundant economy we already understand" (11).

An important thing, which blocks the development of such a common culture, is the equation between popular education and the new commercial culture. Accordingly there is the normal description of the masses as low and trivial in taste and habit. The new culture was built on this formula, which Williams rejects: "there are in fact no masses, but only ways of seeing people as masses" (13). Based on historical reasons Williams denies that popular education and commercial culture are born out of the social chaos of industrialism, and out of the success, in this chaos of the "masses" formula, and not out of popular education. Again Williams rejects as quite untenable the false equation that the observable badness of the popular culture is a true

index of the state of mind and feeling, the essential quality of living of its consumers. This, according to him is a degrading version because "the masses" are also capable of critical and intelligent reading, fineness of feeling, quickness of discrimination and clear grasp of ideas (13). Williams also opposes a false analogy, a kind of Gresham's Law, that just as bad money will drive out good, so bad culture will drive out good. Williams's argument is that "we live in an expanding culture and all the elements in this culture are themselves expanding" (14) and the problems connected with such a culture form the subject matter of his book *The Long Revolution* (1961) (which follows *Culture and Society* (1958)) as an historical and theoretical interpretation of the nature and conditions of an expanding culture.

Cultural Studies in Britain developed in reaction to the dominant definition of "culture" bequeathed by the conservative tradition of cultural criticism and challenged it at two basic levels – one, an anthropological conception of culture, an interest in the 'lived text' of social rituals and social institutions as in artifacts. This was in opposition to the identification of 'culture' with a particular selection of canonized texts and legitimate practices. While cultural criticism saw only an absence of 'culture' within the working class, Cultural Studies set out to uncover the variety and vitality of situated practices and beliefs, and to demonstrate their roots in popular experience. Secondly it was the project of Cultural Studies to show how public institutions and their initiative worked ideologically to mobilize popular

understanding and practice in the service of the asymmetric power relations between producers and consumers, government and citizens, and intellectuals and public. These two projects converged to produce a third one concerned with the interplay between situated cultures and ideological formations and particularly with the ways in which the first provides resources for negotiating, refusing and resisting the second (Murdock 81).

The British tradition of cultural criticism was always strongly linked to the "condition of England question." It addressed the question as to how was it possible to construct a common culture in a situation where the uneven growth of industrial capitalism was creating deep class divisions and where organized religion was losing its always stronghold over the popular imagination. The conservative response was enshrined in an idea of 'imagined community', strong enough to displace the solidarities of class, region and locality. An integral part of this project was the construction of a selective cultural tradition, which embodied the essential qualities of "Englishness." However, Cultural Studies set out to deconstruct this formation of nation and people within its general frame work, its major work could be read as a series of mediations on "the condition of England" which integrated national ideologies and explored the counter formations of class and to a lesser extent region. In consequence, it was to bypass the explosive growth of transactional culture. It was therefore contingent on Cultural Studies to

address questions about the shifting relation between national, sub-national, and supranational formations (85).

Unlike in the 1950s, in the eighties, cultural institutions – broadcasting and print – were subjects to profound change. For example popular culture or popular fiction which Richards and Leavis saw as a menace to literacy in the twenties and thirties came to be recognized as forming part of social history, for they constituted relations which in turn constituted a class. But the problem was that such peoples' questions were not answered by the existing distribution of the educational curriculum. Thus academic projects in conforming to the boundaries of the set course by passed the interrelations between disciplines. The consequence was the emergence of a group which received 'work experience' necessary to foster the new industrial capitalism and which lacked that dimension of human and social knowledge and critical possibility which the Cultural Studies projects emphasized (*PM* 159-161).

The rejection of the "dominant ideology" thesis in the 1980s led to the development of "critical pluralism," a new perspective, which viewed the cultural field as the site of a continual struggle between competing discourses. Consequently to speak about the cultural field was "to speak of a field of relations structured by power and difference" in which some discourses are more central and dominant than others but where these "positions are never permanently fixed" (Hall 51). Therefore as Murdock argues, Cultural Studies

"needs to broaden its core concerns and establish new points of connection with work at the cutting edge of the social sciences" (1993: 88). Such a need to recover the original interdisciplinary impetus and to be more adventurous in crossing intellectual checkpoints is especially necessary to meet the crisis of intellectual practice as well as the institutional crises of the public sphere:

If cultural studies is to contribute in a central way to the debates of the 1990s we will need to fight long and hard to defend and extend the spaces and resources that allow intellectual work and political debate to proceed independently of commercial pressures and the encroachments of state and government. If a decade of Thatcherism has taught us in Britain anything, it is this (Murdock 89).

One is here reminded of Raymond Williams's persistent call throughout his works for "the exploration and specification of distinguishable cultural formations" through the historical analysis of the "extending and interpenetrating activity of artistic forms and actual or desired social relations" (*PM* 174-5).

New Historicism is often seen as the American counterpart of Cultural Materialism. But in approach and emphases these two are different (Kiernan XI). It is as much a reaction against Marxism as a continuation of it (Veaser XI). As Dollimore and Sinfield point out, cultural materialists tend to concentrate on the interventions whereby men and women make their own history, whereas the new historicists tend to focus on the less than ideal

circumstances in which they do so, on the "power and social and ideological structures" which restrain them. The result is a contrast between political optimism and political pessimism. Secondly, unlike the cultural materialists, the new historicists cut themselves off from effective political positions by their acceptance of a particular version of post structuralism, which problematises knowledge, language, truth, etc., with the hope of a radical possibility of attaining secure knowledge. Thirdly the new historicists situate the literary text in the political situation of its own day, while the cultural materialists situate it within that of ours (Dollimore and Sinfield 14, 15). The difference between the two approaches lie mainly in two aspects: firstly, in the political outlook, and secondly, in the degree of emphasis on the post structuralist perspective. The theoretical basis of New Historicism derived mainly from Foucault, whose 'discursive practices' tend to reinforce the dominant ideology (Lentricchia 235). Cultural materialism draws from the key theoretical concept of Raymond Williams, namely 'structure of feeling', which is a tool of resistance to the dominant ideology.

It is from the above perspective that a modest attempt has been made in the present study to locate and assess the work of Raymond Williams. The project, however, does not take the whole corpus of Williams's work into consideration. Such a task, no doubt, is a scholar's nightmare. What is undertaken here is an examination of select works of Williams, which have more overt theorizations on 'culture'. The focus of the investigation is his

conceptualizations on culture, which through a double move – an intervention in English critical tradition, and an engagement with contemporary Marxist criticism – hinge on the formulation of a radical critical theory, namely, cultural materialism. The process of making 'culture' as a category in Marxist aesthetics, against the grain of cultural and critical orthodoxies, is an intriguing chapter of contemporary criticism.

The four chapters, which follow this "Introduction" together is a mapping of this historical process of formation as well as an attempt to provide an explanatory framework for this development. Accordingly Chapter I "Framing a General Theory of Culture" is an examination of Williams's first major work, *Culture and Society* (1958). From the views of several major English writers and thinkers of the period 1870-1950, Williams traces out a distinct geneology of English culture primarily from a materialistic perspective. The development of the idea of culture was directly related to great historical changes in industry, democracy, class and art. A pioneering work and a life changer to contemporary young scholars, the book established a 'Culture and Society' connection, which was eventually recognised as a tradition, and an initiation for a distinct mode of criticism, namely, Cultural Studies. Identification of a materialistic, democratic and secular view of culture as 'a whole way of life' was the remarkable achievement of the book. It became an active antidote to the literary, cultural theodicy, which a capitalist and consumerist value system legitimated – that is, *contra* Arnold,

Leavis, Eliot. This became a break away from the theoretically feeble Marxist critical practice of the thirties and the forties. Though a typically British work, in the pressure of its formulations it was able to command international recognition.

Chapter II "Theorizing a Break: Towards Democratization of Culture" further theorizes a break away from his own earlier position in order to construct a more rigorous cultural theory. Thus shifting from the evolutionary notion of culture as a 'way of life' as postulated in *Culture and Society*, which was termed 'culturalism', he begins to consider 'creativity' as an integrally social process in his next book, *The Long Revolution* (1960). Following this conception, there is an inextricable link between culture, communication and community, a point, which also recognises that "cultural is political". The whole problematic was encapsulated in the concept "structure of feeling", which was another term for culture.

Chapter III "Ramifications of a Marxist Theory of Culture" has three subsections: the first section, "Culture and Communications" deals with the crucial importance of communications in social life. At one level this has to do with the relationship between science and society, while at another level recognizes that communications are determinants in modern cultural process. Thus, in his *Communications* (1962) Williams opened up a new field of enquiry – the interface between processes of communication and various

social institutions. In problematizing communications, he identifies authoritarian, paternal, commercial and democratic systems of communications. He was opposed to the 'massification' of culture through communication technologies and culture industry. Communications also enter into a nexus with modes of production through advertisements. Thus the centrality of communications as means of production, naturalization and control cannot be bypassed by an active Marxist cultural theory.

The second section, "A Sociology of Culture" examines the novel project of Williams in making a case for a sociological grounding in cultural theory. So far as a sociological perspective of communications, language and art are concerned, English criticism was deplorably weak. In *Culture* (1981) William's was making an original attempt to fill this gap. Taking cues from Lucien Goldmann, Williams defines two areas for analysis: the relation between the material means and the social forms within which they are used; and their relation to the specific artistic forms, which are cultural productions. Corresponding to the production/reproduction perspectives of economic activities, there are also similar bearings in the cultural field. Since cultural materialism is committed to the transformation of an exploitative social order, a sociological dimension would make it an all the more powerful critical concept.

Section three, "Paradigms of Critical Practice" focuses on a select area of Williams's literary criticism and shows the fusion of his theory of literature and his critical practice. His major critical works – *Modern Tragedy* (1966), *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht* (1968), *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence* (1970) and *The Country and the City* (1973) – present the profile of a critic who attempts to challenge the literary tradition as part of a political endeavour. By examining artistic processes and products from the perspective of 'Cultural Materialism', Williams envisages the possibility for alternative social formations. From the above works, Williams emerges as a Marxist critic opposed to the conventional view of literature and who with abounding vigour responds to the historical transformations.

Chapter IV "Cultural Materialism: Prospects and Possibilities" examines Williams's works in which he had extended discussions on "what Marxism and literature amounted to" in an international context. Among his works of this phase are *Keywords* (1976), *Marxism and Literature* (1977), *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (1980) and *The Politics of Modernism* (1980). These are typical of the nuanced nature of Williams's engagements with Marxism, culture and aesthetics. These works adumbrate a cultural aesthetics with greater precision and clarity. They also argue for the relevance of a cultural aesthetics for the future.

The study concludes with the conviction that Williams has been instrumental in giving shape to the disciplinary field of Cultural Studies. His major contribution as a critic lies in recognising the once privileged field of "culture", as a potential category in Marxist aesthetics, by declaring and theorising that "Culture is ordinary" on solid and firm grounds. Williams views 'culture' as an area where diverse categories – a way of life, art and literature, politics, ideology and history – meet, undergo changes and assume new shapes. It shows and records the transformations of the social phenomena and its historical determinants. These are so vital as to create an alchemy of aesthetics.

In the contemporary aporias of postmodern/post Marxist theories that have become fashionable and have been made problematic following the Soviet collapse, Williams's work stands out with its firm rootedness in the working-class movement. From the thirties on, the 'English Marxist' tradition had been uniquely committed to the Socialist cause – a refusal "to enter the well-worn paths of apostasy", for which "experiential political reasons" went hand in hand with "intellectual reasons" in the face of "any follies or self delusion of Stalinism" and intellectual ridicule (Thompson 305). And further, the robustness and avowed working-class allegiance, which the "culture and society", tradition cultivated, conspicuously separates the English "Cultural Materialists" from their sceptical American counterparts, the New Historicists.

1. A glance of the events in sequence shows that there was not a period in modern history with so many stormy events in so short a time: giant slump (1929); collapse of Labour Government and election of the National Government (1931); Japanese invasion of Manchuria (1931); Hitler comes to power in Germany (1933); Struggles against Fascism in France; the 'five campaigns of annihilation' against the Chinese liberation movement, and the great 'Long March' ending up in the North West with its capital at Yen-an (1936); Italian invasion of Abyssinia (1935); establishment of Popular Front Governments in France and Spain (1936); renewed Japanese invasion of Northern China (1937); Spanish Civil War (1936-9); betrayal of Munich (1938); invasion of Austria and Czechoslovakia by Nazi Germany (1938); outbreak of World War II (1939). Obviously, a host of socio-political, economic and cultural questions intersperse these developments (Klugmann 14).

2. The Left Book Club and the *Left Book News* were launched in 1936 at the initiative of Victor Gollancz, who intended "creation of an educated public opinion" through "political publishing". Books published between 1936-1948 by the club include the following: G.D.H. Cole's *The Intelligent Man's Guide to World Politics*, *The Outline of Modern Knowledge*, *What Marx Really Meant*, *Peoples Front*; John Stratchey's *Menace of Fascism*, *The Coming Struggle for Power*; G.R. Mitchison's *The First Workers' Government*; Ralph Fox's *A Biography of Lenin*; Alen Hutt's *This Financial Crisis*, *A Text Book of Marxist Philosophy*, *Christianity and the Social Revolution*, *The First Five-Year Plan of Soviet Union*, John Stratchey's *The Theory and Practice of Socialism*; Leo Huberman's *Man's Worldly Goods*; Frank Jellinek's *The Paris Commune of 1871*; David Petegorsky's *Left Wing Democracy in the English Civil War*; A. Ramos Oliveira's *A People's History of Germany*; A.L. Morton's *A People's History of England*; G. Gedye's *Fallen Bastions* (a classic work on the growth of Fascism); R. Palme Dutt's *World Politics*, *India Today*; Edgar Snow's *Red Star Over China*, Alan Hutt's *A Post-War History of the British Working Class*; Hyman Levy's *A Philosophy for a Modern Man*; Hewlett Johnson's *The Socialist Sixth of the World*; Francis Bartlett's *Sigmund Freud*; Reuben Osborne's *Freud and Marx*; Emile Burns' *Handbook of Marxism*; Webb's *Soviet Civilization*; John Mulgan's *Poems of Freedom*; Hymie Fagon's *Nine Days that Shook England* (about the General Strike). Besides, several pamphlets and leaflets on contemporary issues were also distributed with a view to create an understanding of national and international problems from a Marxist perspective (Reid 193-207).

CHAPTER I
**FRAMING A GENERAL THEORY
OF CULTURE**

In his essay "Literature and Society" ([1950] 1999) Williams says,

My first topic is that of *literature as evidence* . . . Most people recognize by now that the arts have an intimate relation to society, that the consideration of artistic matters quickly leads to consideration of social and moral questions, and that in one important sense the arts can only be fully understood when they are examined within the context of the society in which they were produced (99).

This statement appears to be embryonic in the conception of his first theoretical work, *Culture and Society 1870-1950* ([1958] 1963). It is in this work that Williams undertakes the mission of his life, namely, that of formulating a theory of culture, principally based on evidences from literature and literary studies. As he states in the "Introduction",

The development of *culture* is perhaps the most striking among all the words named. It might be said, indeed, that the questions now concentrated in the meanings of the word *culture* are questions directly raised by the great historical changes which the changes in *industry*, *democracy* and *class*, in their own way, represent, and to which the changes in *art* are a closely related response. The development of the word *culture* is a record of a

number of important and continuing reactions to these changes in our social, economic, and political life, and may be seen, in itself, as a special kind of map by means of which the nature of the changes can be explored (CS 16).

Culture and Society ([1958] 1963), *The Long Revolution* (1961), and *Communications* (1962) are the important works of Raymond Williams belonging to the first stage of his theoretical output. In these works, particularly in the first two, we find an overall statement of Williams's early general theory regarding the possibility of a shared and collaborative culture, which could be realized by the democratic extension and enlargement of the characteristically English cultural tradition, which had existed since the nineteenth century. For J.P. Ward these works are further characterized by a liberal humanist perspective, for Williams does not take any one separate intellectual discipline as the basis of his probing, in contrast to *Keywords* (1976) and *Marxism and Literature* (1977) wherein a remarkable shift to a more overtly Marxist position is quite evident (PL 11, 13). But for Terry Eagleton, Williams's work represents the "radical socialist perspective" on culture and society (*Criticism and Ideology* 110).

Culture and Society was a remarkably pioneering enterprise at the time of its inception. Williams was offering in this work a genealogy of 'culture' in the tradition of English criticism, which came to be designated as the

“culture and society tradition”. As Allan O' Connor points out the work is not only a text but also a position within a text of reading and re-reading (49).

Williams finds that 'culture' is a remarkable force field of general change. He attempts to describe and analyse this general pattern of change and gives an account of its historical formation. He sees in the history of this word, in its structure of meanings "a wide and general movement in thought and feeling" significantly a nineteenth-century tradition, where in thoughts and ideas of a wide variety of writers converge. Williams is concerned with two types of analyses: first, an analysis of the previous usage of the word 'culture', and second the development of his own definition, based on its historical usage in which he attempts to reconcile inconsistencies and contradictions which he had high-lighted in the historical discussion. He argues that the concept represents two different, though related, responses discernible in the changing society:

In summary, I wish to show the emergence of *culture* as an abstraction and an absolute: an emergence, which in a very complex way, merges two general responses—first, the recognition of the practical separation of certain moral and intellectual activities from the driven impetus of a new kind of society; second, the emphasis of these activities, as a court of human appeal, to be set over the processes of practical social judgement and yet to offer itself as a mitigating and rallying alternative (CS 17).

Considering a variety of writers and thinkers from Edmund Burke down to George Orwell, Williams traces from their ideas the development of the notion of culture within the English tradition. Its distinction lies in the attempt to chart a typically British genealogy of culture from which an entirely novel “culture and society” discourse was made possible. Edmund Burke, ‘the first modern conservative’ and William Cobbett, “the first great tribune of the industrial proletariat” share a common concern for society in their criticism of the new industrialism. Burke established the idea of the state as the necessary agent of human perfection and condemned the aggressive industrialism of the nineteenth century. There was also the idea of an ‘organic society’ emphasizing the interrelation and continuity of human activities, rather than separation into spheres of interest. And further, it was Burke’s idea of “the spirit of the nation” which was designated “national culture” by the end of the nineteenth century (30).

William Cobbett saw in the Industrial Revolution, the regimentation of men into two classes namely masters and abject dependents, an unnatural class system. Cobbett contrasted the apparent prosperity of industrialism with actual poverty. In an England groaning under the most oppressive commercial system, he advocated resistance, not violent agitation, but a movement of the people’s own, for he was opposed to every kind of repression by state authority. In his recognition of labour as the only rightful property of the poor, Cobbett was approving, the course of the labour

movement from its infancy. At the same time he was arguing for a popular education of the workers' own and was paradoxically idealizing the Middle Ages, which consisted of an image of communal society as an alternative to the claims of industrialism. In this respect he was in line with Burke, Pugin, Carlyle, Ruskin and Morris (33). Southey criticized the political economy and manufacturing system, which reduced men to machines and drained them of their kindly and generous feelings of human nature. Owen, on the other hand, recognized the powers and values of Industrial Revolution in shaping a new moral world, which was both human and material. Both discern "the cause of all our difficulties" not in human nature but in the constitution of the society, as a problem of social engineering, a position which has got a bearing on the notion of culture in its formative phase. (44)

The generation of romantic poets from Blake and Wordsworth to Shelley and Keats were more deeply interested and more involved in the study and criticism of the society of their day. These romantic artists share "interlocking interests":

a conclusion about personal feeling became a conclusion about society, and their observation of natural beauty carried a necessary moral reference to the whole and unified life of man. For these two generations of poets lived through the crucial period in which the rise both of democracy and of industry was effecting qualitative changes in society: changes which by their

nature were felt in a personal as well as in a general way.
(CS 48-49)

There was a corresponding change in ideas of art, of the artist, and of their place in society. This was especially pronounced in Wordsworth who in a Burkean sense contrasted the “people” with the “public” and conceived of the “embodied spirit” of a people's knowledge as something superior to the actual course of events, the normal run of the market. Williams finds in this insistence one of the primary sources of the idea of culture. Art, for Wordsworth, is not mere commodity; it is something more as he says in the ‘Preface to Lyrical Ballads’, the artist is “the rock of defense for human nature, an upholder and preserver, carrying everywhere with him relationship and love . . . the poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society The artists’ creative imagination thus implies a revolution for life” (734-43). And further his theory of poetic language is inextricably linked with the idea of communication and solidarity with the common man. “The poet thinks and feels in the spirit of human passions”. Again, “a poet is a man speaking to men”. In this way a strong bond between the artist and society was established by the romantic artists contributing to the formation of a general idea of culture in varying degrees (62-63).

In 1958, Williams believed that Marxism with its key distinction between materialism and idealism was a product of the split between culture and society that it reproduced and perpetuated. Williams could not accept

that the valuable high culture created by Romantic poets could be explained away, or dismissed, as merely ideological by Marxist historical materialism. He rejected the explanatory power of the Marxist concepts of base and superstructure. The idea that complex consciousness was wholly determined by the material conditions established by a particular economic mode of production appeared too mechanical to account for literary culture (226).

From the time of Coleridge on, the idea of culture entered decisively into the English social thinking most notably in the writings of J.S. Mill, who was generally identified with the Germano-Coleridgean school. Their inquiry into the inductive laws of the existence and growth of human society was perhaps the largest contribution made by any class of thinkers towards the philosophy of human culture. The emphasis on culture was, according to Mill, the way to enlarge the utilitarian tradition, which attained its greatest height in Bentham. Bentham and Coleridge believed themselves to be inimical, the former demanding the extinction of existing institutions and creeds, and pressing the new doctrine of utilitarianism and the latter reasserting the best meaning and purpose of the old and demanding that they be made a reality. However, "The powers they wield are opposite poles of one great force of progression" (75).

In his *Constitution of State and Church*, Coleridge tries to set up a standard of 'health' of nation vis-à-vis civilization, which is but a 'mixed

good.' Coleridge defines this standard in the word '*cultivation*', the word being used for the first time to denote a general condition, a 'state or habit' of, the mind, which was viewed as the task of an endowed class, the clerisy, or the National Church to achieve in the form of the social condition of man's perfection (77-78). Carlyle combines Coleridge's proposal and J.S. Mill's notion of an extended system of national education and presents the case for an 'Organic Literary Class' (*Writing and Teaching Heroes*) and an expanded popular education. To him the criterion for the perception of a new society was "the inspired wisdom of a Heroic Soul". Culture thus came to be defined as a separate entity and a critical idea (96-97).

The response to industrialism that we find in a group of novels written in the middle of the nineteenth-century provides some of the most vivid descriptions of life in an unsettled industrial society. The industrial novels are marked by a failure to imagine a solution to the problems of industrialization within the existing society. They typically end in death or in emigration to the colonies. The condition of the new society, its common criticism of industrialism and its general 'structure of feeling' are illustrated by such novels as *Mary Barton*, *North and South* (Mrs. Gaskell); *Hard Times* (Dickens); *Sybil* (Disraeli); *Alton Locke* (Kingley); and *Felix Holt* (George Eliot). What is remarkable about these novels from a cultural point of view is that.

Recognition of evil was balanced by fear of becoming involved. Sympathy was transformed, not into action, but into withdrawal. We can all observe the extent to which this structure of feeling has persisted, into both the literature and social thinking of our own time (CS 119).

In J.H. Newman's thoughts on university education as a system of national education there is the stress on perfection as the standard for the mind, as health is the standard for the body. In Coleridge and Newman the general opposition is to utilitarianism and an alarmed reaction to increasing working-class power; that is a general reaction to the social effects of full industrialism and in particular to the agitation of the industrial working-class. This tendency prepared the ground for Matthew Arnold's work where 'culture' is offered as the alternative to 'anarchy' (121, 123).

Matthew Arnold's definition of culture provides the tradition a single watchword and a name. His project in *Culture and Anarchy* is to recommend culture as "the great help out of our present difficulties". Culture being "a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know the best which has been thought and said in the world" could be achieved through a system of national education. The idea of culture thus stands not merely for literary culture but as a concept of general application denoting a standard of life. And further culture is conceived as "true human . . . harmonious perfection

. . . developing all sides of our humanity; and . . . all parts of our society” (qtd 123-124).

In his understanding of the nineteenth-century society, Arnold had been significantly influenced by such thinkers as Coleridge, Burke, Newman and Carlyle. Yet the originality of his work consists in the authentic way in which he looks at modern civilization which unlike that of Greece and Rome is “mechanical and external, and tends constantly to become more so”. As opposed to this picture, he presents a charming and fascinating, spectacle of being 'cultured' in the way of life, habits, manners, tones of voice, and all the assortment of niceties of a select group of people. Williams dismisses this spectacle as consisting of priggishness and spiritual pride (125).

Arnold's views on Industry and production as 'stock notions' are of a piece with the ideas of Carlyle, Ruskin and Tawney. As Williams observes, Arnold was an excellent analyst of the deficiencies, of the gospel of "doing as one likes," individually and socially and so his position has consequences for both spheres: the danger of spiritual anarchy when individual assertion was the only standard; the danger of social anarchy as the rising class exerted its power (127).

Williams is very critical of the social implications of Arnold's revaluations. As he observes, the state, which for Burke was an “activity” has become for Arnold an “idea”. The truth of this statement is born out by

Arnold's recommendation for a system of national education, his emphasis on the state as the agent of general perfection, "the centre of light and authority", the organ of "the best self" and his disavowal of the various social classes to be substituted by a state led by the "remnant" or "aliens" guided by the laws of human perfection. His quite unsympathetic attitude to the working-class (Populace) seriously limits his theory of culture in so far as he sees their work as "anarchy" and so detrimental to society. And Arnold's hopeful expectation of a "revolution by the course of law", through the agency of the state is for Williams a fallacious conception:

When the emphasis on state-power is so great, any confusion between that ideal state which is the agent of perfection, and this actual state which embodies particular powers and interests, becomes dangerous and really disabling (*CS* 133).

In Arnold's doctrine, the idea of culture means "right knowing and right doing"; a mutable process and not an absolute essence. His emphasis is so much on the importance of knowing and so little on the importance of doing. Perfection as "becoming", and culture as a "process" suggest that they are known absolutes, "the passion for sweetness and light". But then, as Williams points out, this view of culture as a process was limited to an abstraction in that Arnold fails to find the material of that process, either with any confidence in the contemporary society or in any particular order that transcended human society. Moreover while appearing to resemble an

absolute, it has in fact no absolute ground. Thus Arnold, was caught between two relativist worlds of reason: as the critic and destroyer of institutions, and as the maker of institutions. This confusion of attachment was marked by the word "culture". However, Arnold's recognition of "a period of transformation when it comes"(in his essay "Equality"), and the importance of the idea of culture in relation to such a transformation, speak for Arnold as a great and important figure in nineteenth century thought (CS 135-136).

Williams examines the relationship between art and society as part of his venture to trace the development of the idea of culture in nineteenth century England. As he puts it, "An essential hypothesis in the development of the idea of culture is that the art of a period is closely and necessarily related to the generally prevalent 'way of life' and further that, in consequence, aesthetic, moral and social judgements are closely interrelated" (137). The works of A.W. Pugin, John Ruskin and William Morris exemplify an important line of argument in this respect in nineteenth century England. In the 1830s, the ground for such a development had been well prepared by Coleridge and Carlyle who both focused on the relationship between "culture" and "civilization". Williams finds Pugin's emphasis on the relation between art and its period quite curious as it appears in the context of a revivalist tract where he had written that "the history of architecture is the history of the world" and he insists on the revival of the feelings from which it originally sprang. In his view, the most important element in social thinking, which

developed from the work of Pugin was the use of art of a period to judge the quality of the society that was 'producing' it (CS 137-138).

Both Ruskin and Morris were opposed to Pugin in matters of belief. According to Ruskin it is impossible for the artist to be good if his society is corrupt. In his view, the art, or the general productive and formative energy of any country, is an exact exponent of its ethical life, namely, social and political virtues. And so, noble art springs from noble persons. A society thus had to be judged in terms of all its making and using, and in terms of all the human activities and relationships which the methods of manufacture and consumption brought into existence (149). In Ruskin's radical criticism of nineteenth century society, a particular kind of experience, identified with the arts, is being used as a standard of the health of a civilization. In a civilization where experiences are being constantly overlaid by the attitudes of industrialism, Ruskin argues, not only that a national art is impossible, but also that the civilization itself is therefore bad. In the distinction that he makes between two opposite kinds of experience, mechanical and organic, the latter is the province of the "art" or the "aesthetic" which is but an operation of the whole being. The artist's goodness is also his "wholeness" and the goodness of a society lies in its creation of conditions for "wholeness of being." Thus Williams notices a transition to social criticism in Ruskin's thinking, a general transition between thinking about art and thinking about society, which is marked by the changes in the meanings of *culture*. The idea

of the “organic” is now central both in conservative and Marxist thinking about society. However both Carlyle and Ruskin ended in a deadlock, namely, that they failed to realize a society organized in terms of values (*CS* 144, 146).

It is only with William Morris, at the end of the nineteenth-century, that there is the courage to seek a solution in a different future: in a new kind of organization of working and living. Morris sought to attach the general values of society to an actual and growing social force: that of the organized working class. That way Morris was making a remarkable attempt to break the general deadlock experienced by Carlyle and Ruskin and was attempting his own extension of it. He was opposed to the Coleridgean civilization which was mechanical, scientific and characterized by eyeless vulgarity which has destroyed art, the one certain solace of labour. Instead he envisions a social revolution as the answer to the deadlock, wherein art has a stronger claim in its embodiment of the idea of culture. The Oxford culture represented by Arnold has done irreparable damage to art and literature in its “attempt to teach literature with one hand while it destroys history with the other....” Caught in the grip of commercialism the English middle class is quite ineffective in furthering an idea of culture. However art depends on the society, which produces it and Morris recognizes art to be a particular quality of labour (*CS* 156, 158).

What is central to Morris's social criticism is his desire to end the capitalist system, and for the institution of socialism, so that men could decide for themselves how their work should be arranged and where machinery was to be appropriate. These ideas have to be understood in the light of Morris's Socialism, which was developed in opposition to utilitarianism. His emphasis on the working people and their betterment contains an application of the country's thinking about the meaning of culture. The arts defined a quality of living, which it was the purpose of political change to make possible, namely, progress of civilization in a meaningful way. Williams, thus, finds in the works of Morris, a *terra firma* for a debate on culture *vis-à-vis* art and society, which would be of lasting merit (CS 161).

The second part of *Culture and Society* called 'Interregnum' is a brief discussion of the cultural criticism of the period 1880-1914 as they appear in the works of W.R. Mallock, Oscar Wilde, Walter Pater, James Whistler, George Gissing, Bernard Shaw and the Fabians, Hillaire Bellock, G.D.H. Cole and the Guild Socialists and T.E. Hulme. Williams considers this period an interregnum on the ground that by 1880 the tradition he is identifying had been formed and so the period had very little new to offer. "Such works require notice, but suggests brevity" (165). But as Eldridge and Eldridge point out, this is one of the significant omissions in Williams's treatment of the subject. (1994). The third part of *Culture and Society*, entitled "Twentieth Century Opinions," is a discussion of D.H. Lawrence, R.H.

Tawney, T.S. Eliot, I.A. Richards, F.R. Leavis, and George Orwell. Besides, there is a short chapter on "Marxism and Culture".

Lawrence continues the nineteenth century critique of industrialism in the manner of Carlyle and sees its acquisitiveness as debasing human purpose to "sheer mechanical materialism" (CS 201). Individuals become mechanical, disintegrated and amorphous, a condition of mind, which contributes to the ugliness of industrial society, which drains of common sympathy between people and frustrates the "instinct of community" (204). For Lawrence, "the actual living quick itself is alone the creative reality" (207), and the living self has one purpose only: to come to its own fullness of being. Education is only one agency in achieving this most difficult task. Yet this could only be possible on the basis of equality where the basic needs of all people had to be met. From this conception evolves the idea of culture as community, communication and love, moving against the grain of an industrial civilization.

R.H. Tawney, the social and economic historian, is presented as a link in the continuity with the nineteenth century tradition with his criticism of market philosophy and industrialism. His two books, *The Acquisitive Society* (1921) and *Equality* (1931) present critiques, which share the legacy of Arnold and Ruskin (217). He insists that the foundations of a common culture are economic and its condition is a large measure of equality (218),

which would promote the dignity and requirement of the individual human beings in the spirit of a confident humanism (CS 220). He was thus making a case for the extension of culture beyond a minority class and a full-scale attack on private property. Williams finds Tawney to be the last important voice in that tradition which had sought to humanize the modern system of society on its terms. This was the mark both of his achievement and his limitation (223).

T.S. Eliot, who was theoretically of great importance to Williams, was very much enamoured by the ideal of a Christian society, but at the same time was very much worried by the commercialized society (unregulated industrialism) which he feared would lead to “deformation of humanity”. He sees industrialized society or modern material organization as a complication and a threat to Christian society. Eliot presents his penetrating reexamination of the idea of culture in his book *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (1948). His purpose in the book is to present the essential conditions for the growth and for the survival of culture (CS 228). The importance of the book, according to Williams, lies in two of its discussions: first its adoption of the meaning of “culture” as “a whole way of life” and the subsequent consideration of levels of culture within it; second, its effort to distinguish between “elite” and “class” and its penetrating criticism of the theories of an ‘elite’. The sense of culture as a ‘whole way of life’ (230) – has been an appropriation from twentieth century anthropology especially of Malinovsky

and sociology which includes all the characteristic activities and interests of a people, like sport, food, art religion and philosophy. Eliot's arguments on culture as the pattern of a society as a whole were of great theoretical importance to Williams. Eliot has argued that religion and culture were a 'whole way of life' (CS 230). This also provides a very strong critique of the alternative notions of culture held by Bloomsbury, Leavis and the Fabian Socialists. It thus rules out Bloomsbury's individual search for culture as a social goal, *Scrutiny's* "minority culture" and the Fabian Socialist's idea of the extension of an already existing (dormant) culture (O'Connor 58).

As Eldridge and Eldridge point out, there are continuities in Eliot stemming from Coleridge and Carlyle but this is extended into a critique of mass society. So it is argued that the standard of art and culture are depressed in a profit-oriented society with its advertising propaganda and even its system of mass education. But the conservative element is located in the concept of hierarchy and the cultural elites for the maintenance of civilized values and the defence of the social order against the insipient mob. Hence, the idea of culture is set against egalitarianism. In Eliot's perspective, in contrast to Tawney, they can scarcely co-exist (Eldridge and Eldridge 57).

Williams is radically different from Eliot in considering 'culture' as 'a whole way of life'. He finds a contradiction at the heart of Eliot's position, a new conservatism which is at odds with his social principle and the

immorality of exploitation in the industrial capitalism which maintains the social classes and human divisions that he endorses. And unlike Burke and Coleridge he does not reject the basic economic system of the society. Theoretically, the problem of Eliot is that he cannot accept the notion of a contradictory totality. Similarly his theory of class also does not take into consideration the complex ways in which functional groups, classes such as merchants, industrial capitalists and financiers operate in a society. Williams further detects a similar problem with Eliot's notion of culture as a whole way of life: while a working knowledge of culture defined as ways of life is impossible, Eliot argues that much of culture is not fully knowable; it is unconscious or 'emergent'. This potential contradiction between an emergent culture and a 'dominant' culture is left unrecognized by Eliot. Williams accepts the argument about culture and totality but insisted that it might be a contradictory totality (O'Connor 59).

Terry Eagleton clearly brings out the distinction of Williams's concept of culture vis-à-vis Eliot's. For Williams, a culture can never be brought to consciousness because it is never fully achieved. What is constitutively open ended can never be completely totalized. Culture is a network of shared meanings and activities, never self-conscious as a whole, but growing towards the advance in consciousness and thus in full humanity, of a whole society. A common culture involves the collaborative making of such meanings, with the full participation of all its members; and this is the

key difference between Williams and Eliot's idea of a common culture. For Williams a culture is common only when it is collectively made; for Eliot a culture is common even when its making is reserved to the privileged few. For Williams a common culture is one which is continuously remade and redefined by the collective practice of its members; not one in which values formed by the few are then taken over and passively lived by the many; for this he prefers the term "culture in common" (Eagleton, *The Idea* 117, 119).

In thinking of all these matters, as central to the idea of culture, Eliot has closed almost all existing roads with unresolved contradictions. Therefore for a more positive guidance Williams turns to the works of two influential literary critics, I.A. Richards and F.R. Leavis. I.A. Richards's *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924) and *Science and Poetry* (1926) offer a particular idea of culture, which is essentially a renewed definition of the importance of art to civilization. Written as part of the critical revolt against the Romantic theory of the 1920s, the theoretical attack comes through the social facts of language and communication (CS 239). Williams contends that the judgements on which this attack was founded is a matter of the whole culture. But in his discussion of the mass society and the growth of science wherein the former challenges standards of morality and the latter undermines the old keys of wisdom in philosophy and religion, there is the imperative to think of safeguards against the encroachments of commercialism, which control majority taste. The suggested solution is the development of a new

consciousness, through the experience of literature, which should become a training ground for general experience against anarchy rather than a return to tradition. Williams's objection to this is on two counts. First, it begets an attitude of servility to the literary establishment, amounting to passivity. Thus Richards's account of the inadequacy of the ordinary response, when compared with the adequacy of literary response, is a cultural symptom rather than a diagnosis. Moreover when Richards prescribes poetry as "capable of saving us" it becomes the "new anthropomorph" (CS 245). His second objection is that a developed sense of the social, namely, "the complex of social action and interaction which constitutes the practice of living" is absent in Richards (245).

In F.R. Leavis's influential pamphlet *Mass Civilization and Minority Culture* published in 1930, the term "minority culture" refers to literary tradition as well as the critical spirit that should accompany it. Here again there is the continuity from Coleridge and Arnold, but Leavis addresses himself to the new situation in the twentieth-century which was marked by the developments in the press, advertising, popular fiction, films and broadcasting institutions which embodied ways of thinking and feeling in a threatening manner (CS 250). Leavis's analysis rests upon a myth of the past, a view of an organic, pre-industrial rural society with right relationship in a natural environment contrasted favourably with modern urban society – its meaningless work and commercialized and degraded values. Those involved

in the contemporary minority culture are struggling against the tide and are continually striving to formulate defensive positions. But Williams observes, "If there is one thing certain about the 'organic community', it is that it has always gone" (253). The real social experience is sidetracked in Leavis's evaluations. Literary criticism, then, could not stand in judgement on culture as a whole way of life. As Eldridge and Eldridge point out,

If culture is to be understood in this anthropological way then the very concepts of minority and majority culture become increasingly problematical. We have to find ways of understanding the variations of social experience in modern industrial societies and the causes of these variations, as a necessary prelude to critique. For all his energy and indeed his dislike of capitalism and its establishments, Leavis lapses into a mixture of mythology, conjecture and dogmatism (60).

Williams's opposition to Eliot, Leavis and the whole of the cultural literary conservatism that had formed around them, was informed by a very specific national consciousness. When the New Left Review team posed this argument, his honest response was that his experience in the Welsh social relations was unconsciously operating on the strategy of the book. Another case in point is the process of industrialization, which was eminently European. But there is no international dimension in *Culture and Society*. Here Williams points out that the project was conceived rather as a short response to a particular English situation (*PL* 112-113).

Williams next engages in a brief but revealing discussion of Marxism and culture. Though Marx was the contemporary of Ruskin and George Eliot, Marxist interpretation of culture did not become widely effective in England until the thirties of the twentieth century. Marx himself outlined, but never fully developed a cultural theory. In the "Preface" to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859) Marx wrote:

The mode of production in material life determines the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes of life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness (qtd CS 259).

As Williams comments, "the superstructure is a matter of human consciousness, and this is necessarily very complex, not only because of its diversity but also because it is always historical: at any time, it includes continuities from the past as well as reactions to the present" (259). From this assumption emerges a theoretical perspective on culture:

A Marxist theory of culture will recognize diversity and complexity, will take account of continuity within change, will allow for chance and certain limited autonomies, but, with these reservations, will take the facts of the economic structure and the consequent social relations as the guiding string on which a culture is woven, and by following which a culture is to be understood (CS 261-2).

Here Williams makes another important presupposition:

Structure and superstructure, as terms of an analogy, express at once an absolute and a fixed relationship. But the reality which Marx and Engels recognize is both less absolute and less clear. Engels virtually introduces three levels of reality: the economic situation; the political situation; the state of theory. Yet any formula in terms of levels, as in terms of structure and superstructure, does less than justice to the factors of movement which it is the essence of Marxism to realize. We arrive at a different model, in which reality is seen as a very complex field of movement, within which the economic forces finally reveals themselves as the organizing element (CS 260).

Williams argues that Marxist writing in England in the thirties had been very mixed in both quality and occasion. These were primarily a response to actual conditions in England and Europe, which were characterized by dogmatic rather than a conscious development of Marxist studies. Accordingly he finds that R.E. Warner's view that "Capitalism has no further use for culture," is the conclusion of an analysis, which falls short of a proper Marxist interpretation. It was a tradition basically proceeding from the Romantics, and coming down through Arnold and Morris, with the sprinkling of a few phrases from Marx.

Marxist writing in the 1930s was a form of romantic protest which envisioned a place for the artist and the intellectuals in socialism to be established by the workers, but at the same time "the making over of the

workers' cause into the intellectuals' cause was always likely to collapse". Given that, culture was not so far ahead, not so firmly affiliated to the future, as was then thought (263-4). And as Terry Eagleton argues (*Criticism and Ideology* 21-22) the development of Marxist criticism was not a matter of continuity of what went before but precisely of bypassing it. When Raymond Williams came to write in the early 1950s the ethos of thirties' criticism was mainly represented by the powerful ideological moment of the *Scrutiny*. It was a compound of vulgar Marxism, bourgeois empiricism and Romantic idealism and it could yield him almost nothing. However both *Scrutiny* and Marxism supplied between them the formative influences of his early development. But he rejected *Scrutiny* as a whole position because of its elitism, and also rejected Marxism on the following ground:

As for Marx, one accepted the emphasis on history on change, on the inevitably close relationships between class and culture but the way this came through was, at another level unacceptable. There was, in this position, a polarization and abstraction of economic life on the one hand and culture on the other which did not seem to me to correspond to the social experience of culture as others had lived it and as one was trying to live it oneself (Eagleton and Wicker 28).

Thus questioning of the Levisian liberal humanist case led to the emergence of a Left-Leavisism, of which Williams's work has been the major exemplar. The English Marxism available to him was little more than an

intellectual irrelevance (as was also the case with Caudwell), which for that precise reason he had to reject in his own time only to prepare the ground for his own *oeuvre* (Eagleton *Criticism and Ideology* 22-23).

Similarly, Williams finds that Alick West's account of the continuity between Romantic and Marxist ideas precipitate a fault line: the Romantic poets were idealists who were unable to give a material meaning to their social conception. Contrary to this interpretation is E.P. Thompson's Marxist account of Morris who saw man's economic and social development always as the master process and tended to suggest that the arts were passively dependent upon social change (CS 264-5). Williams contends that what was attacked in Morris was precisely what Marx taught and the position that Marxists wished to defend. For Morris's master-process which Thompson criticizes is surely Marx's real foundation, which "determines consciousness". This is also what Engels meant by "the reflexes of all these actual struggles in the brains of the combatant" which would "exercise their influence upon the course of historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their form". Williams thinks that these and the other contradictory and confusing positions render Marxist theories of culture vague. The Marxists see the arts variously as dependent on social reality, as determining social reality or as ultimately depending on social reality, and also reflecting, affecting or changing it. Marxist theories of culture in the thirties make use of all these propositions as the need serves and render them

confused (265-6). Such confusing interpretations exhibit “a quite shocking ignorance” of what Marx wrote and the word “superstructure”, had been used with “wholly ridiculous implications”. However Marxists assigned a high value to culture, and as Marxism became a major interpretative and active movement, a theory of culture was necessary. It was felt to interpret not only past and present culture in Marxist terms, but future culture also had to be predicted. In England, this work was done mainly in relation to literature. And, as he points out, the work of Christopher Caudwell, the best known of the English Marxist critics, was immensely prolific in ideas but the Marxist orientation in him is doubtful. Moreover, while Thompson praises him as a Marxist theoretician, JD Bernal accuses him for being influenced by “bourgeois scientific philosophy”. Williams observes that the English attempt at a Marxist theory of culture shows an interaction between Romanticism and Marx, between the idea of culture, which is the major English tradition and Marx's brilliant revaluation of it. And the interaction is as yet far from complete (CS 271).

A new realization in the nineteenth century was that the basic economic organization could not be separated and excluded from its moral and intellectual concerns. Society and individual experience was alike being transformed and this driving agency had to be taken into account. Of all who insisted on this, it was Marx who decisively gave a social and historical definition to the confusing idea of “industrialism”. The important question in

this context is the Marxist impact on thinking about 'culture'. The basic question is whether the economic element is in fact determining. Williams admits that it remains an unanswerable question (271). The shaping influence of economic change can be discerned in the period 1780-1950, the period with which *Culture and Society* is concerned. Williams looks at the problem in this way:

We can never observe economic change in neutral conditions, anymore than we can, say, observe the exact influence of heredity, which is only available for study when it is already embodied in an environment. Capitalism and industrial capitalism which Marx by historical analysis was able to describe in general terms, appeared only within an existing culture. English society and French society are both, today, in certain stages of capitalism, but their cultures are observably different, for sound historical reasons. That they are capitalist may be finally determining, and this may be a guide to social and political action, but clearly, if we are to understand the cultures, we are committed to what is manifest: the way of life as a whole (CS 272).

The rigid methodology of Marxist cultural interpretation involves the forcing and superficiality of procedure, which says Williams, would lead one to a critical trap:

For 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 the literature has to be related. The

interpretative method which is governed, not by the social whole, but rather by the arbitrary correlation of the economic situation and the subject of study, leads very quickly to abstraction and unreality, as for example in Caudwell's description of modern poetry (that is since the fifteenth century) as '*capitalist* poetry', where it remains to be shown that '*capitalist*' is a relevant description of poetry at all (CS 272).

Similar flaws were there in the overriding generalizations in the description of Western European literature of the last century as "decadent"; the description of the English life, thought and imagination of the last three hundred years as "bourgeois" and English culture as "dying" were to surrender reality to a formula. Therefore Williams asserts that in all these points there was a general inadequacy among Marxists in the use of 'culture' as a term. It normally indicates the intellectual and imaginative products of a society. But it would seem that from their emphasis on the interdependence of all elements of social reality, and from their analytic emphasis on movement and change, Marxists should logically use culture in the sense of a whole way of life, a general social process. The difficulty lies in the terms of Marx's original formulation: 'structure' and 'superstructure' as descriptions of reality. Williams suggests that even as terms of analogy they need amendment. (273) It is significant to note here that this task of amendment of these concepts was undertaken by Williams in his essay "Base and

Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory.” Arguments of the essay will be discussed in Chapter IV.

Williams argues that any attempt to define the culture of the socialist future in line with the Marxist interpretations of the past is inadequate. But the relation between literature and society is not "as simple and direct" as to enable one to make authoritative prescriptions for such a culture. Therefore Williams says:

But, if we are to agree with Marx that 'existence determines consciousness', we shall not find it easy to prescribe any particular consciousness in advance, unless, of course (this is how in theory it is usually done), the prescribers can somehow identify themselves with 'existence'. My own view is that if, in a socialist society, the basic cultural skills are made widely available, and the channels of communication widened and cleared, as much as possible has been done in the way of preparation, and what then emerges will be an actual response to the whole reality, and so valuable (CS 274).

Williams also points out that a theory of culture as propounded by Lenin is inadequate as he finds the growth of consciousness as 'chaos'. And further, so far as the development of consciousness is concerned, Lenin is inconsistent with Marx. For Lenin's argument that the working-class is capable of developing only 'trade union consciousness' calls for reexamination, redefinition and reconsideration of Marx's ideas. However he says, "We are

interested in Marxist theory because Socialism and Communism are now important”, and therefore he looks for its clarification in the field of culture as a whole (275).

With this in mind, Williams hopes to find a way out through Orwell's approach to the study of culture and society. While he admires Orwell's human concern and sympathy for the victims of society – the poor, the outcast, and the exploited – he finds there a mood of disillusion, unredeemed by hope. Orwell represents the paradox of the exile, sometimes from his own country, typically from his class, without any settled way of living in which his own individuality could be confirmed. It was this distrust of society, caused by his own lack of grounding in community that leads Orwell to portray society as inherently leading to totalitarianism. Orwell, while rejecting the consequence of an atomistic society, retained within himself its characteristic mode of consciousness. The pessimistic mood in Orwell's writing is seen as an outcome of the pressures and tension he experienced. Though it is a negative mood, one of despair, it has resources of hope, to recover and nourish the critical tradition of opposition to capitalism. For Williams the task is to move beyond these disabling features in order to establish some basis for the argument that capitalism was not the last word (Eldridge and Eldridge 61-62).

It is significant to note that towards the end of *Culture and Society* Williams assumes a Marxist position stronger than in the early chapters of the work. He is radically different from the Marxist criticism of the thirties and even from the post-War responses to society and arts. Making a significant shift from the superstructural categories of vulgar Marxist misinterpretations, Williams offers a new conceptualisation wherein such non-economic superstructural components as mass, communication and community are accommodated as potential points of consideration in the analysis of culture. However, in *Politics and Letters*, Williams was taken to task for not having included in the book a chapter on Marx and Marxism and Industrial Revolution. Williams clarified that at that stage he was preoccupied by the theory of art alone. He was quick to agree that insertion of Marx would have radically improved the book. Similarly, he was questioned on the silence of the book on the problems of the nation, of imperialism, and of community. He ascribes this absence mainly to his Welsh experience in which those notions were not so relevant. The term community then appeared ambiguous to him, and he was quite insufficiently aware of the post-War capitalist state (PL 116-20).

Williams concludes his study on culture hinging on seven points namely 'mass and masses', 'mass communication', 'mass observation,' 'communication and community', 'culture and way of life', 'the idea of community,' and the development of a 'common culture'. These points are

discussed in relation to three major issues: Industry, Democracy and Art. He says:

The history of the idea of culture is a record of our reactions, in thought and feeling, to the changed conditions of our common life. Our meaning of culture is a response to the events which our meanings of industry and democracy most evidently define. But the conditions were created and have been modified by men (CS 285).

From a historical perspective he focuses on the "idea of culture" and he knows that such a task is a slow reach for control. Williams recognizes that the idea of culture is a reaction to a major change in the conditions of English common life. Still, culture perceived as a whole form appears to be perpetually problematic:

The idea of culture describes our common inquiry, but our conclusions are diverse, as our starting points were diverse. The word, 'culture' cannot automatically be pressed into service as any kind of social or personal directive. Its emergence in its modern meanings, marks the effort at total qualitative assessment, but what it indicates is a process, not a conclusion. The argument which can be grouped under its heading do not point to any inevitable action or application. They define, in a common field, approaches and conclusions. It is left to us to decide which if any we shall take up (CS 285).

In relation to Industry, Democracy and Art there have been three main phases of cultural change. Eldridge and Eldridge schematize these phases (62) as follows:

Phases	Industry	Democracy	Art
Phase I 1790 – 1870	Rejection of machine production and social relations of the factory system	Threat to minority values	Independent value of art and its qualitative importance to the common life
Phase II 1870 – 1914	Hostility to machinery	Community/organic society Vs dominant individualist ethics and practice	Art as value in itself
Phase III 1914-1945	Acceptance of Machine production – social relations in industrial system of production is problematic	Twentieth century version of Phase I concern with mass communication	Reintegration of art with common life – communication

Here the periodization is not a sharp one; it represents times when there were dominant modes of thinking in response to the development of a capitalist society in England. Here comes the question of the contribution of critical thinking about culture in the second half of the twentieth century. Williams offers a set of interrelated reflections which hinge on the concepts of 'mass', 'communication', 'community' and of course 'culture.'

Williams seeks first to disentangle the meanings of the word “mass” and then to question the value of the term itself. The term mass came to be used as a synonym for 'mob', when applied to people, as for instance, mass production, mass action, mass meeting. This was then seen as a threat to “culture”, and by extension, to the elite guardians of culture. But culture was

also threatened in terms of the quality of its artifacts by mass production. As Adorno puts it,

If indeed the advances of technology largely determines the fate of society, then the technical forms of modern consciousness are also heralds of that fate. They transform culture into a total lie, but this untruth confesses the truth about the socio-economic base which has now become identical. The neon signs which hangover our cities and outshine the natural light of the night with their own are comets presaging the natural disaster of society, it is frozen death (*Culture Industry* 83).

It is a dreadful condition, which men should fight out.

When democracy itself is described as mass democracy, it implies some of the grounds on which it was resisted. Thus the equation becomes: the masses = mob = rule by majority = (mass) democracy = threat to culture. Mass, then, becomes a negative term and whatever is linked with it is negatively defined – mass education, mass prejudice, mass thinking, mass suggestion, and mass communication. When the term is routinely used in this way, it can be deployed to justify the idea of a minority culture, to confirm elites and establishments and to capture the idea of culture so that it justifies exclusivity and systems of control over insipient mobs. For Williams such a line of thinking needs to be challenged in order to argue that culture is not the enemy of democracy but can be enlarged by it for the common good. This

accounts for the direct challenge that Williams makes to the validity of the concept of “mass”:

There are infact no masses; there are only ways of seeing people as masses. In an urban industrial society there are many opportunities for such ways of seeing. The point is not to reiterate the objective conditions but to consider, personally and collectively, what these have done to our thinking. The fact, is surely, that a way of seeing other people which has become characteristic of our kind of society, has been capitalized for the purpose of political or cultural exploitation. What we see, neutrally, is other people, many others, people unknown to us. In practice, we mass them, and interpret them, according to some convenient formula (CS 289).

Williams is concerned to examine the formula, not the mass, because “we ourselves are all the time being massed by others”. This contains the direct statement of Williams's views on cultural and political exploitation, which provided the underlying motivation for the writing of *Culture and Society*. In literary analysis and in historical accounts this 'sense of the many' is being robbed of their common culture by 'the few'. As Eldridge and Eldridge point out, “The challenge to the use of 'mass' as a concept is, therefore, not some quirky pedantry, but a way of drawing attention to its ideological functions and control implications” (1994: 60). John Storey argues that relations of power and politics inescapably mark the culture/ideology landscape. It thus suggests that the study of popular culture

amounts to something more than a simple discussion of entertainment and leisure (5).

The intersection of culture and ideology was an important project of the British 'Cultural Studies' as instanced by the 1980's projects of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS): *On Ideology and Culture, Media, Language* (London: Hutchinson, 1980). These were influenced by Althusser, Gramsci and the Frankfurt School. Both the British and the Frankfurt traditions saw culture as a mode of ideological reproduction and hegemony, in which cultural forms help to shape the modes of thought and behaviour that induce individuals to adapt to the social conditions of capitalist societies (Kellner 16-17). Again from a neo-Gramscian perspective Tony Bennett sees popular culture as a terrain of ideological struggle between dominant and subordinate classes and cultures:

The field of popular culture is structured by the attempt of the ruling class to win hegemony and by forms of opposition to this endeavour. As such, it consists not simply of an imposed mass culture that is coincident with dominant ideology, nor simply of spontaneously oppositional cultures, but is rather an area of negotiation between the two within which – in different particular types of popular culture – dominant, subordinate and oppositional cultural and ideological value and elements are mixed in different permutations (221).

The concept of 'mass' in relation to the growth of communications is an important problem. The fact of expansion and of growing diversity of communications is an important set of phenomena, but the nature of the relationships between those who sent and those who receive messages contains a range of possibilities. Certainly the notion of masses is a convenient way of looking at audiences if the intention is to manipulate, as in the case of propaganda or advertising. Yet this can be contested in the name of democracy in so far as commercial base of media activity, and its paternalist forms remain intact. At root, the way we look at the media and the decisions we make about control of it in our society are political questions. They have to be seen for what they are and what they enable specific groups to accomplish if we are to go beyond that and think of democratic alternatives. This become significant when we think about the way concepts are interlinked and affect our idea of the world. Thus the way we think about communication has to do with the way we think about community:

any real theory of communication is a theory of community. . . .
It is very difficult to think clearly about communication, because the pattern of our thinking about community is, normally, dominative. We tend, in consequence, if not to be attracted, at least to be pre-occupied by dominative techniques. Communication becomes a science of penetrating the mass mind and of registering an impact there. It is not easy to think along different lines (CS 301).

This notion is central to develop the idea and experience of democracy. Mass communication theory carries with it the idea of the few controlling the many, a point which has to be publicly contested. Whereas dominative thinking will depict the manner in terms of mobs, rioters, and strikers, democratic theory will rethink the questions of transmission and reception of messages and will be grounded in the value of equality of being. The democratic emphasis is central to Williams's concept of a common culture – a concept which is both an ideal and something to struggle for.

It is instructive at this point to consider some of the insights of the Frankfurt School theorists on the subject. Adorno, for example, in *The Negative Dialectics* (1973) has dwelt at length on the philosophical ramifications of the 'systems'. At the peak of the Enlightenment, it was de' Alembert who rightly distinguished between the two fold character of systems: *l'esprit de systeme*, and *l'esprit systematique*, *Esprit de systeme* is a manifestation of the abstract, or the metaphysical system-building propensities inherent in the nascent capitalist order. It is manifested in the imperial command to "coform" ; the pernicious "will to power" of the new capitalist subjects, and the supremacist refusal of the colonizer to recognize heterogeneity in any form. In terms of "identity" and " non identity" he demonstrates that the formalist bias of *esprit de systeme* leads to the institution of the "tyranny of the concept". *Esprit de systematique*, on the other hand, has its origin in the beaurocrat's desire for order. Adorno further

argues "criticism of systems and asystematic thought are superficial as long as they cannot release the cohesive force which the idealistic systems had signed over to the transcendental subject" (26). Systems, he observes, imitate a central antinomy of bourgeois society, namely, "to remain the same, to "be", that society must constantly expand, progress, advance, its frontiers, not respect any limit, not remain the same" (26). What follows from this negative dialectic is that "Systematic unanimity would crumble" (27). Almost in the same vein, Jurgen Habermas identified a radical split between "Instrumental Reason" and "Communicative Reason" as inherent in the Enlightenment. As he puts it, in a totally administered society, only instrumental reason, expanded into a totality, found embodiment; everything that existed was transformed into a real abstraction (295-296). It so happens because the public sphere gets attenuated in monopolistic capitalism. This in turn leads to the manipulation of the public opinion (141-142). These distinctions will be of help to us in conceptualizing the manner in which the utopian, subversive potential of art/culture gets to be smothered by the culture industry.

The development of a common culture is not an easy task to achieve; it will be a very complex organization, requiring continual adjustment and redrawing. It is realizable in a context of material community and by the full democratic process. But the question is highly problematic because it involves the task of achieving solidarity between diverse elements, as well as the recognition of diversity without creating separation. As Williams puts it,

“No community, no culture, can ever be fully conscious of itself, ever fully know itself. The growth of consciousness is usually uneven, individual, and tentative in nature” (CS 319).

This accounts for the fact that the point has not been clearly and practically recognized even in the English working class movement, inspite of its long democratic tradition. Williams contends that the issue involves a dialectic:

A culture while it is being lived, is always in part unknown, in part unrealized. The making of a community is always an exploration, for consciousness cannot precede creation, and there is no formula for unknown experience (CS 320).

Thus, in a true democratic spirit, as an antithesis to the Arnoldean prescriptive stubbornness, Williams assumes a healthy, tolerant position in respect of the advance in consciousness which is necessary for the furtherance of a common culture:

Wherever we have started from, we need to listen to others who started from a different position. We need to consider every attachment, every value, with our whole attention; for we do not know the future, we can never be certain of what may enrich it; we can only, now, listen to and consider whatever may be offered and take up what we can (CS 320).

Liberty of thought and expression prefigures Williams's thoughts on common culture as “less a natural right than a common necessity”. Education

and communication can be channels or blockages to the realization of common culture. So while emphasizing the role of the working class, he is also about to give a caution so as to ward off dogmatism:

To tolerate only this or only that, according to some given formula, is to submit to the phantasy of having occupied the future and fenced it into fruitful or unfruitful ground. Thus, in the working class movement, while the clenched fist is a necessary symbol, the clenching ought never to be such that the hand cannot open, and the fingers extend, to discover and give a shape to the newly forming reality (CS 320).

According to Williams, a culture is essentially 'unplannable'. Only the means of life, and the means of community can be ensured. But the kind of life that will be lived is unknowable. For,

The idea of culture rests on a metaphor: the tending of natural growth. And indeed it is on growth, as metaphor and as fact, that the ultimate emphasis must be placed. Here, finally, is the area where we have most need to reinterpret (CS 320).

Williams conceives of a more active idea of human beings and relationships in terms of human growth and human tending other than that of the long dominative mode. Industry and democracy have been the two major forces changing the world: "Understanding of this change, this *long revolution*, lies at a level of meaning which it is not easy to reach" (321).

And the democratic experience is very much central in this process. Williams brings out the inextricable relationship between the appropriate political experience and the idea of culture in the following way:

The idea of a common culture brings together, in a particular form of social relationship, at once the idea of natural growth and that of its tending. The former alone is a type of romantic individualism; the latter alone a type of authoritarian training. Yet each, within a whole view, marks a necessary emphasis. The struggle for democracy is a struggle for the recognition of equality of being, or it is nothing. Yet only in the acknowledgment of human individuality and variation can the reality of common government be comprised. . . . The natural growth and the tending are parts of a mutual process, guaranteed by the fundamental principle of equality of being (CS 322-323).

Raymond William's conceptual apparatus for a general theory of culture was set in motion with the publication of *Culture and Society* (1958). The work undertakes a mapping of the hitherto uncharted territory, opening up a new avenue of theoretical postulate and analysis hinging on culture. It was acclaimed as a life-changer for youngish readers in the 1960s — as evident from the fact that the work went into several editions and was translated into Italian, Japanese, Portuguese and German (Inglis 146). The book not only surveys an English tradition of radical dissent from industrial capitalism especially as it manifests itself in the semantic history of the word “culture” in the writings of a variety of authors but also establishes a powerful

critique of the political and economic structure which help to perpetuate cultural inequality in post-War society.

As Terry Eagleton acknowledges, the formulation of a discourse on culture was a task which Raymond Williams did almost single handedly as the most suggestive and intricate body of socialist criticism in English history. For, like Caudwell in the thirties, Williams in the fifties was severely deprived of the materials from which to construct a socialist criticism. The pioneering product of Williams's unflagging, unswerving labour was a criticism for which no English comparison is even remotely relevant, but which must be referred for comparative assessment to the aesthetic production of a Lukács, Benjamin or Goldmann. At the same time Eagleton was sharply critical of the idealist epistemology, organicist aesthetics, political gradualism and Romantic populism of Williams's work (*Criticism and Ideology* 23, 24, 27). Yet, as the single most important critic of post-War Britain Williams has extended himself over immensely diverse fields as history, sociology, political theory and thus evolved a global moral concern for a common culture (Eagleton 1984: 108-9).

Culture and Society has been recognized as a genuine voyage of intellectual discovery, not a mere reworking of an old Cambridge 'Moralist' course. It was an oppositional enterprise, attempting to redress the appropriation of a long line of thought about 'culture' to reactionary positions

especially in the earliest works of T.S. Eliot and F.R. Leavis. However it has been criticized that for Raymond Williams the idiom “culture and society” is a methodological rather than a substantive imperative. For he has been taken to task for certain 'absent traditions' and influences in the book: he has left out French Revolution, popular radicalism, sociology, an international perspective and Marx. Its failure to recognize the non-literary culture of popular radicalism is both a product of *Culture and Society's* literary centeredness. It has been accused that there is in the book the absence of any developed reference to the *dominant* intellectual formations of the time—political economy, political individualism, liberalism, and empiricism—against which the “culture and society” tradition was pitched. Thus it omits the roots of the 'English ideology' in the thought of the previous century and a half in Hobbes, Locke, Adam Smith and Bentham which would have given the work a better sense of the exceptional character of the literary-moral-social criticism and given it a more social and historical grounding (Eldridge and Eldridge 69).

It has to be seen, however, that two of the major concerns of Williams, as they appear in the book *Culture and Society*, namely, one, a conception and definition of culture in relation to industry and democracy and the other, the process and means of communication as integral to an understanding of culture find more detailed examination with greater theoretical vigour in the subsequent works, *The Long Revolution* (1961) and *Communications* (1962). Infact the selection of the semantic field of *Keywords* (1976) was originally

found in the project of *Culture and society*. It started as an appendix to this book, which Chatto & Windus insisted be dropped in order to shorten the book. (O'Connor 49) *Culture and Society* thus opened up an entirely new field of enquiry pivoting on 'culture' as an exceptionally complex term to become the basis for a distinct critical discourse known as the Cultural Studies (Wilson 26). With its analysis of nearly two centuries of cultural history as history of institutions and practices, the study of popular culture developed rapidly, first at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) founded in 1964 and then through courses (mainly taught at Polytechnics and Colleges of Education) variously described as "media studies", "film studies", "cultural studies" and "communications". In this way it came to be recognized that popular culture could not be understood apart from the social institutions in which it is promoted and reproduced (Easthope 69-70).

As Allan O'Connor remarks *Culture and Society* is not only a text but a position within a text of reading and re-reading. The book's methodology of beginning with 'contrasts' (between Burke and Cobbet and, Southey and Owen) can usefully be compared with, as for instance that of Sartre's *What is Literature* (1947) and Roland Barthes's *Writing Degree Zero* (1953). Williams's post-War work shares with Barthes an insistence on form, *écriture* and the history of writing, giving the work the stature of a European book. Both Sartre and Barthes share an emphasis on the emergent experience of

living as a body in the world and also a critical stance towards bourgeois culture. It is also commonplace in Williams that writing is associated with power and historically was intended for a minority. Sartre described a history of writers, while Barthes describes the history of forms of writings, but Williams writes in *Culture and Society* about individual writers in relation to the history of collective forms. The focus is on the signs of literature. While he was employing his training in close analysis in identifying the culture and society tradition, he was diligent enough not to miss the presence of the writers and their commitment, a method different from Sartre or Barthes. *Culture and Society* characteristically shows that a residual but also oppositional tradition of writing was being used in post-War England in a wholly ideological way (O'Connor 55-7).

Several objections were raised by the New Left Review team on the lapses, silences, inadequacies, imbalances and omissions, which occurred in the composition of the book. The book, they pointed out, changes register notably in the conclusion, when Williams moves to something like a political—Marxist—discourse proper. But there is a systematic depreciation of the actual political dimension of all the figures considered by him. Asked on this lacunae Williams argues that it is not a general dismissal of politics as part of a conscious polemical stance: "It remains my firm conviction that their political thought is of radically less interesting than their social thinking". And further he did not go into the political aspect, partly because of the

contradictory character of politics after 1795 (PL 101-102). The epistemology of the book itself was challenged as a “slide into irrationalism” for in the method of his assessment of individual thinkers he was contrasting or counter posing ideas and arguments with “response” or “experience”. Williams explains that this was a result of his literary training, which consisted of the primacy of the “response” to the articulated experience or instance where questions of truth or falsity are secondary (120-22).

Culture and Society, while it earned for Williams the reputation as a social and political thinker on the basis of the issues it raised and the body of reading and thinking about them which it lay down, also invited hostile criticism as for example by Terry Eagleton in his *Criticism and Ideology*. Williams answers to the point in an objective manner: “That was a new epoch, that needed a quite different book”. *Culture and Society* perhaps seemed, as “a bridge from one to the next, but a bridge is something that people pass over”. He calls the book “first stage radicalism” effecting a major shift in emphasis. It permitted a reconnection with a very complex tradition of social thought and of literature, which had been short circuited by *Scrutiny* and indeed by a whole class formation around it (PL 109-110).

There are inconsistencies in his evaluation of Lawrence and Caudwell. His great regard for Lawrence in *Culture and Society* on the ground of the latter's concern for democracy and socialism slides into one of repulsion in

The Country and The City on the ground of his bourgeois liberalism. Likewise in *Culture and Society* he is arguing against Caudwell but in *The Long Revolution* he admires Caudwell's interest in the "creative process". The political significance of Morris's work was also recognized only much later (PL 127-28).

An interesting "silence" in *Culture and Society* is on religion. Williams explains that he was unconsciously making an assumption characteristic of the Marxist tradition that if religious terms occurred in a discourse they were a transposition of social terms (PL 130). In this connection it is to be remembered that Max Weber, one of the founding fathers of Sociology in his study of the transition in Western Society from a feudal to a capitalist culture argued that it was a distinctive form of religious thinking (Protestant-ethic thesis) which led to the capitalistic culture in the West ([1904] 1976). Weber's "spiritualist interpretation" was attacked by the economic historian Kurt Samuelson (1961) pointing out that Weber and his supporters have reinterpreted religious texts in a way that enables them to extract meanings that confirm the thesis. Clifford and Marcuse point out this discrepancy while making a case for the notion of Cultural Translation (143). Cultural Translation is an anthropological notion of culture in which "capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" is transformed into the notion of a text – that is, into something resembling an inscribed discourse (141). Weber's approach has got certain links with Durkheim's, notably in according

religion a central role in determining cultural formation. Williams did not emphasize enough the crucial role that the idea of literary value played as substitutes for religious and ethical values in the fashion of Matthew Arnold. Another significant omission was the re-emergence of radicalism in the 1770s and 1780s (*PL* 130-1).

However the reconstruction of a tradition of "culture and society", despite and through all these different criticisms and objections has been recognized by the interviewers as an enduring achievement. In spite of the above lapses and failures, the book was read, argued about and triggered an entirely new debate. It became a source of alarm to the sector of right-wing liberal opinion for its re-association of culture and social thinking which it had abandoned after the thirties (*PL* 132). It is important to notice that "culture" was not an indigenously Marxist concept in the sense in which "ideology" might be said to be (Outhwaite 127).

The significance of *Culture and Society* lies in the fact that it was the first English venture to transmute a concept – "culture", often held to be an elitist one – into a Marxist category. Consequently, there was a crucial cultural dimension to the whole Marxist and Socialist project of the twentieth century. Questions of culture and ideology have become so central to Western Marxism that they began to define aesthetic discussions. With his next work *The Long Revolution* (1961) Williams was able to make his

formulations much more precise, in a democratic spirit, recognizing the primacy of the working-class in social formation. The next chapter focuses on that aspect of his theorization on culture.

CHAPTER II

THEORIZING A BREAK : TOWARDS DEMOCRATIZATION OF CULTURE

Raymond Williams was very much concerned with the idea of fostering a working class culture in the widest sense. In this respect, he was dissatisfied with the notions of the erstwhile cultural trio-Annold, Eliot and Leavis — who in different ways saw culture as a bastion of what is the best, the intellectually and aesthetically ennobling. Therefore Williams was concerned to make distinctions. For him the question was how to preserve the idea of culture in a different sense but quite democratically. This involves the question of incorporating in the working-class culture, the achievements of the cultural past. This, Williams's felt, could be done only by displacing Leavis's idea of mass civilization.

As J.P. Ward points out, to dispose of the notion of mass civilization was one of Williams's central aspirations (*PL* 20-22). Accordingly in the conclusion of *Culture and Society*, he makes two important points, among other things. The first is that, the very term 'bourgeois' is no longer a useful one. Because, if culture is really to be common to all, the distinctions on classes will have to disappear. The second point is the idea of complexity. That is, even if class distinctions are to be eradicated a cultural seamless web is difficult to achieve: "to any individual, however gifted, full participation

will be impossible". This position entails solidarity with the working class tradition. The situation calls for another theoretical distinction, namely, "complexity" as an essential tool of cultural, literary and social analysis. Williams continued this project in *The Long Revolution* (1968).

Regarding the conception of the book, Williams says: "I wanted to be able to develop the position briefly outlined in the conclusion of *Culture and Society*, by a general analysis of contemporary culture and society, a wide structure of feeling in the society, as it intersected with institutional developments" (PL: 133). For the Labour politician Richard Crossman, *The Long Revolution* was "the first theoretical exposition of the 'new socialism' and not to have read *Culture and Society* was to brand oneself 'the intellectual equivalent of a square'" (qtd. Higgins 52).

The Long Revolution is a thoroughly innovatory project, wherein Williams makes a *heroic* attempt to break with the idiom and method of *Culture and Society* and engages in a mode of discourse militantly hostile to the very idea of generalization. This amounts to constructing a cultural theory in a much more rigorous fashion. The book presents a tendency towards an evolutionary notion of "culture" as a "way of life". As Stuart Hall tells us, there are two characteristic stresses in *The Long Revolution*. The first is the stress on the impossibility of separating the different lived systems and according one any prior determinacy. This forms the theoretical basis for the

radically interactionist conception of the social totality which the book advanced. The second is the complementary stress on “experience” as the authenticating test of cultural analysis, as well as the privileged object, which it attempted to “produce in thought”. Stuart Hall is opposed to this kind of analysis. According to him, analysis must deconstruct the lived wholeness in order to be able to think about its determinate conditions. However, he concedes that the more recent emphasis on indissoluble, socio-material practices does go a great deal on the way towards a more materialist theory of cultural practice (Hall "Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms" 61-63).

Again, Stuart Hall summarizes the nature of Williams's critical apparatus—in *Reading and Criticism* the documentary aspect was paramount, and the text was a record of human experience; *Culture and Society* added a more active element: there was both “record” and “response”. *The Long Revolution* developed the ‘response’ side in theoretical terms: literature provides the most intense kind of “response” to cultural change; but it is a “special kind of communication” and therefore part of a more general creative process (PL 64).

Planned and written as a continuation of the work begun in *Culture and Society*, *The Long Revolution* (1961) deals with “questions in the theory of culture, historical analysis of certain cultural institutions and forms, and problems of meaning and action in our contemporary cultural situation” (IX).

In both, Williams contested the way Leavis appropriated the title 'culture' exclusively for high cultural forms. If literature expresses the culture of the English ruling class, 'the gentry', then, popular culture may be defended as an expression of the working class and therefore cannot be omitted in any account of culture defined as "the whole way of life" of a society. This approach was termed "culturalism" and formed the early part of English cultural criticism (Easthope 72).

The title *The Long Revolution* was taken from the following sentence in *Culture and Society* which speaks about industry and democracy as the two major forces that have been changing the world: "understanding of this change, this *long revolution*, lies at a level of meaning which it is not easy to reach" (CS 321). By concentrating on these topics Williams was in fact constituting a new academic subject in which the complex relationship between industry, democracy, culture, society and creativity could be explored. The 'Long Revolution' is "A genuine revolution, transforming men and institutions; continually extended and deepened by the actions of millions, continually and variously opposed by explicit reaction and by the presence of habitual forms and ideas" (x). In other words, the "long revolution" is a continuous process of transformation through the industrial revolution, the democratic revolution and the cultural revolution.

The first part of *The Long Revolution* consists of a fairly extended theoretical discussion of culture and politics. Fundamental to the argument is an emphasis on process and relationship. Williams takes the essential insights of conservative philosophy about the organic connections of everyday life and uses them to build up an oppositional argument. His theoretical position in the book is regarded by Alan O'Connor as a deconstruction of concepts that have been given an ideological centrality : the creative mind, culture, individual and society. Williams challenges these terms from a historical perspective and recognizes that they are changing ideas, which have their own history (O'Connor 103).

The first part of the book opens with an examination of the nature of creative activity as basic to understanding the relation between communication and community, which has been established in *Culture and Society*. Tracing the long history of the word "creative", Williams finds that the general movement is away from the Aristotelian concept of the universals which in the nineteenth - century is a move away from belief in God. Since "creativity" can no longer be moulded by universals or a transcendental idea, it is increasingly held to exist within the individual artist. Creativity is a special kind of seeing. Williams on the other hand argues that, the idea of the creative mind serves a complex ideological function. He deconstructs the notion of individual seeing by using scientific studies of human perception, which show that we learn to see a thing by learning to describe it. There is no

ordinary or natural seeing with which creative seeing can be contrasted. As Williams says "The emphasis that matters is that there are essentially no "ordinary" activities, if by "ordinary" we mean the "absence of creative interpretation and effort". Creativity cannot be said to be the special endowment of the individual artist and all other activity described as ordinary. The activities, which have been described in these terms, are deeply social and human (O'Connor 1989: 104). Williams here makes a case for a democratic theory of art, which was opposed to the humanist theory of art that emerged during the Renaissance, the classic exponent of which in English was Philip Sydney.

In orthodox terms literature has been restricted to aesthetic writing and its study has taken the form of a largely evaluative criticism. F.R. Leavis is a strong case in point. But, Williams insists that there are "multiplicity of writing". Accordingly in *The Long Revolution*, he has argued for the recognition of creativity as an everyday activity rooted in perception itself, rather than as a special, instrumental feature of the artistic temperament alone (Higgins: 130).

The "creative" act of any artist is in any case the process of making a meaning active, by communicating an organized experience to others. Therefore he says "To see art as a particular process in the general human process of creative discovery and communication is at once a redefinition of

the status of art and the findings of means to link it with our ordinary social life" (LR 37). The traditional idea of art as "creative" implied a dichotomy between art and ordinary experience, with damaging consequences. The fact that all activity depends on responses learned by the sharing of descriptions does not allow for separation of "art" on the one side and "work" on the other, that is, a division between 'Aesthetic Man' and 'Economic Man'. The modern definition of culture thus insists on a community of process, i.e., the sharing of common meanings, common activities and purposes. Similarly communication is the process of transforming unique experience into common experience. Williams establishes the inextricable link between culture, communication and community in the following way:

Since our way of seeing things is literally our way of living, the process of communication is in fact the process of community: the sharing of common meanings, and thence common activities and purposes; the offering, reception and comparison of new meanings, leading to the tensions and achievements of growth and change (LR 38-39).

Communication is intrinsic to culture as a way of life and not just a means for commenting upon it. Williams proposes in the Second Chapter of *The Long Revolution* a refreshingly new approach to the study of culture as pivotal to his project. This is diametrically opposed to the traditional approach to art wherein each department of life is seen as separate from the other. As he says each kind of activity in fact suffers if it is wholly abstracted

and separated: politics and art, together with science, religion, family life and the other categories we speak of as absolutes, belong in a whole world of active and interacting relationships, which is our common associative life. Such a position enables Williams to reconcile the meanings of culture as “creative activity” and “a whole way of life” and to make it a part of the larger programme of understanding “ourselves and our societies” (*LR* 40).

Though it is possible to define “culture” variously as ideal, documentary and social, such definitions are limited in their own ways. In his view, an adequate theory of culture must include all the three areas of facts facilitating the theory to see “the whole process as a whole” and relate particular studies to the “actual and complex” organization. Accordingly he defines the theory of culture 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” (46). A key word in this kind of analysis is “pattern”. Cultural analysis begins with the discovery of patterns of a characteristic kind.

Employing a chemical metaphor Williams says that the general organization is a “complex whole”:

We learn each element as a precipitate, but in the living experience of the time every element was in solution, an inseparable part of a complex whole. The most difficult thing to get hold of, in studying any past period, is this felt sense of the

quality of life at a particular place and time; a sense of the ways in which the particular activities combined into a way of thinking and living (*LR 47*).

These are recoverable things and are, what Eric Fromm calls, the “social character” (*Fear of Freedom* (1942)) or Ruth Benedict, the “pattern of culture” (*Patterns of Culture* (1935)). These are usually abstract things. Therefore another concrete concept is evolved to be used as a tool, which is “neither the character nor the pattern, but as it were the actual experience through which these were lived” (47). This phenomenon is noticeable in the contrast between generations, in the account of our lives by some one from outside the community, in the differences in speech, style or behaviour of an outside learner of our ways. It is for Williams, a central concept because it is on it that communication depends and so crucial to a definition of culture.

The term I would suggest to describe it is *structure of feeling*: it is as firm and definite as 'structure' suggests, yet it operates in the most delicate and least tangible parts of an activity. In one sense, this structure of feeling is the culture of a period: it is the particular living result of all the elements in the general organization (*LR 48*).

In matters of social character or the general cultural pattern, there may be similarities between two generations. But each new generation will have its own structure of feeling: the new generation responds in its own ways to the unique world it is inheriting, yet feeling its whole life, in certain ways,

differently, and shaping its creative response into a new structure of feeling. However we can make only an approach, an approximation, using any channel (*LR* 49).

In this respect Williams distinguishes three levels of culture: 1) the lived culture of a particular time and place, only fully accessible to those living in that time and place; 2) 'the recorded culture' of every kind, from art to the most everyday facts: the culture of a period and 3) the 'culture of the selective tradition'. As the factor connecting lived culture and period culture, class interests govern art. The task of criticism is to show by analysis how particular forms of selectivity operate, that is, the real relation on which they are based. Williams calls this procedure 'documentary analysis', an explorations of the real patterns of the work which will lead out to social analysis . It involves relating a work to its period, making the interpretation in conscious, by showing historical alternatives, and to relate the interpretation to the contemporary values on which it rests. In this process the selective tradition cannot fully be relied because while it creates a general human culture and the historical record of a particular society, it involves the rejection of considerable area of living culture (*LR* 49-53). The classic case in point is F.R. Leavis's celebration of 'the Great Tradition' in fiction, in opposition to which Williams wrote his *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence* (1970).

As an example of actual cultural analysis or case study, Williams takes the period, the 1840s in England. The first and most striking fact about the period was its selective tradition which includes the growth of journalism, a higher range of important writers, a set of subsidiary writers, a wide variety of period authors and a huge trade in pornographic books. A great body of philosophical, historical, religious and poetic writing was also produced during the period. The social history of the period reveals certain crucial changes in cultural institutions, and processes, which the commercial exploitation of culture was making all the more complex. The general political and social history of the period was also characterized by a host of features including new legislation, socio-political consciousness, and expansion in heavy industries and in capital investment (*LR 57-58*).

The two main analytical tools that Williams employs are 'Social character' and 'Structure of feeling'. The first one is adopted from the work of Erich Fromm, *The Fear of Freedom* (1942) and refers to the value systems of behaviour and attitudes taught formally and informally. A social character is the abstract of a dominant group. The strategy is to outline three social characters based on class—aristocratic, middle and working—each with its own values attributed to it. Of these the dominant one is the middle class, with its values of work, effort, thrift, sobriety, piety and success. However, if we are to get some understanding of the whole way of life of a period, all these three social characters have to be studied in relation to one another (*LR 61*).

Williams now looks at the social character of England in the 1840s. The dominant social character was formed by a developed sense of the morality of the industrial and commercial middle class. But the 1840s interestingly show the interaction of other different social characters: Tory charity against Whig rehabilitation; brutality and repression against positive civilization through institutions. In this context Williams points to one important difficulty of the "social character" concept, namely, that in stressing a dominant abstraction, it seriously underestimates the historical process of change and conflict brought about by the life lived in its shadow and by the alternative social character. As victims of repression and punitive rehabilitation, the working-class people were beginning to formulate alternative ideals which involved the most radical of criticisms: the rejection of a society based either on birth or on individual success, the conception of a society based on mutual aid and co-operation. The middle class social character remains dominant, and both aristocrats and working people, in many respects, come to terms with it (*LR* 62-63).

Williams, next makes an analysis in respect of the concept "structure of feeling". This is a term first coined by Williams in the early study *Preface to Film* (1954) and developed by him later in *The Long Revolution* and *Marxism and Literature* (1977). The phrase refers to the thoughts and feelings of a representative generation, which expresses "a very deep and wide possession" and takes shapes in consciousness. Williams suggests that a

new generation will shape its response to changed circumstances in a changed structure of feeling. Though the phrase is often considered to be the major invention of Williams's sociology of culture, attempts to clarify the meaning of the term have not been very successful.

Williams himself makes a connection with Lucien Goldmann's notion of "genetic structure". This however, is not a uniform theory about the society; it is primarily evident in the dominant productive group. The fiction of the 1840s is a clear illustration of this concept. At the outset there is a class society with the stress on wealth rather than birth. It is characterized by the conviction that the poor are so by their own faults, and their stupidity and depravity are stressed, their mutual help ignored. It is also characterized by the absolute sanctity accorded to marriage; the manipulation of plot to bring sexual offenders to actual suffering; and the fight against weakness as one of the main creators of humble virtue. The crucial principle is that that money is central to success. Williams argues that the novels and popular fiction teach us something about the ways in which conflicts are experienced and resolved. The structure of feeling may be more articulated and intensified in literature but it gives a sense of the real relations and of the social conventions, which placed limits on what people could do (*LR* 63-66; *PL* 157; O'Connor 83).

Similarly, the issue of empire is a complex fact in fiction, and is related to real factors in society. It is the source of unexpected legacy, an "escape

route”, “the weak of every kind could be transferred to it, to make a new life”. In terms of capital and trade, the empire had been one of the levers of industrialization, and was to prove one major way of keeping the capitalist system viable. The structure of feeling, thus, conveys the sense that there could be no general solution to the social problems of the time; there could only be individual solutions: the rescue by legacy or emigration, the resolution by some timely change of heart. This popular structure of feeling is identical with the one the literature of the time conveyed, including a general romanticizing of the past as we see in some of the poems of Tennyson and Arnold (*LR* 66-67).

Williams, now looks at culture in a new way by making two more conceptual moves. The first is to explore the fundamental relation between organism and organization, that is, the individual and society. Each organization is an embodiment of relationships, the lived and living history of responses to and from other organizations. Organization is enacted in the organism, and to know either fully is to know the other. Williams here recognizes the uniqueness of the individual in the social process and observes that, “This recognition of individual uniqueness, and of the relation of its creativity to general human patterns, is of course, the permanent basis of the case for democracy as a system of government” (99). In problematising the individual in his social analysis, Williams draws upon the symbolic interactionist perspective of G.H.Mead, namely, that the self is socially

created and interacts with others (82). Thus Williams advocates a new individualism as a central doctrine of democracy:

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. Any lesser, restrictive system is simply wasteful of our true resources; in wasting individuals, by shutting them out from effective participation, it is damaging our true common process (*LR* 100).

In this way through an interlocking process of organism and organization Williams proposes to resolve the conflict between the individual and society. This kind of approach defines his mode of cultural analysis through the study of patterns and relationships, in a whole process. The self is socially created and interacts with others and in turn shapes social experience and character. In order to refine ideas of conformity and non-conformity to society William draws upon a series of categories, which can be applied, to individual in different situations. Individuals may belong to more than one of these categories during their lives (84-93). In a typology, these social categories could be presented vis-à-vis the individuals' perception of society (Eldridge and Eldridge 87):

Social category of Individuals	Perception of society
Member	Community
Servant	Establishment

Subject	Imposed system
Rebel	Tyranny
Exile	Absent / Lost
Vagrant	Meaningless

For Williams, the concept of the individual was, in the first instance, a liberating one, set against the society, which controlled and directed the people's lives from above. But it remains the case that the individual as a member of community is, to use Durkheim's term, a social individual. The question then is how can we identify and encourage a process that sustains and nurtures personal and social growth. For Williams this is nothing less than the quest for a participatory democracy.

The second concept employed by Williams in his analysis of society is designated as "images of society". A society or a human organization is described in terms of a leading element or an "organizing principle". Williams is unhappy about the English social thinking, which is largely King-centred, and which, in turn tends to sidestep the larger corpus of society, namely, the people. Such a system produces an absolute order where liberty does not mean freedom but a "permissive area in the margin of an unquestionable duty", and precludes any "creative interpretation of society as a flexible human organization". Similarly the image of society perpetrated by the nation state subordinates the needs of actual persons. Therefore the very social order itself has to be questioned. The dominant social images —

the absolute order, the organized market, the elite and the mass, and the image of human brotherhood – tend to reduce society to two spheres of interest, two kinds of thinking, two versions of social relationship: politics (the system of decision), and economics (the system of maintenance) (LR 111). Williams takes Socialism to task for being reductionist that way:

We must learn to see it as a conditioned reflex to various forms of class society, in which the true nature of society – a human organization for common needs – was in fact filtered through the interests in power and property which were natural to ruling groups. It has been the gravest error of socialism, in revolt against class societies, to limit itself, so often to the terms of its opponents: to propose a political and economic order, rather than a human order. It is of course necessary to see the facts of power and property as obstacles to this order, but the alternative society that is proposed must be in wider terms, if it is to generate the full energies necessary for its creation (LR 112).

As Eldridge and Eldridge point out, much of this idea had continued relevance to British society in the 1980s and 1990s (84). Indeed the term “authoritarian populism” coined by Stuart Hall to describe “the strong government/free market” Thatcher administration captures something of the connections implied here (1988).



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In this context Williams justifies the tradition, which he has described in *Culture and Society* on the ground that it bases social thinking on general humanity, rather than on the 'needs of a received system'. Socialism has to be

much more alert and cautious in this aspect if it should not turn simply a “late form of capitalist politics”: “The moral decline of socialism is in exact relation to its series of compromises with older images of society and to its failure to sustain and classify the sense of an alternative human order” (CS 114). The effect of such a state of affairs on art is degradation:

Thus art is degraded as a mere reflection of the basic economic and political process, on which it is thought to be parasitic; or it is idealized into the separate sphere of aesthetics—if Economic Man, then Aesthetic Man. But the creative element in man is the root both of his personality and his society; it can neither be confined to art nor excluded from the systems of decision and maintenance (CS 115).

Therefore it is necessary to recreate from the present complex of interests and disciplines, an adequate sense of a general human organization. The truth of a society cannot be found in any absolute formula; but on the other hand, in the actual relations “between the system of decision, the system of communication and learning, the system of maintenance and the system of generation and nurture” (116). Williams suggests that it is a critical task to make the essential connection between the systems rather than endorsing separations: “making connections” is a central emphasis in Williams’ works (Eldridge and Eldridge 1994; Higgins 3). As he states, “Our contemporary experience of work, love, thought, art, learning, decision and play is more fragmented than in any recorded kind of society, yet still, necessarily, we try

to make connections, to achieve integrity, and to gain control, and in part we succeed" (CS 117). The emphasis therefore falls on the creative aspect of society in various fields: "Politics, economics, aesthetics, psychology . . . each . . . in part a creative effort, to explore new situations and to reach for an understanding which is also a response and a way of control and change" (117).

From this theoretical position, in a way anticipating the effects of the empire on the culture and society, he looks at history, i.e. history of change by conquest. This will have a radical impact on economy, system of learning and communication, and language, and in consequence a whole structure of social relations will emerge. In short, social change is a long process, a Long Revolution, involving both emphasis and counter emphasis and operating through the industrial revolution, democratic revolution and through the history of cultural expansion. In this context it is worth observing that in the matter of recognition of the fragmentary nature of contemporary experience as a consequence of industrialism and technological change, Williams's thought marks a post-modernist strain (Jameson xiv; Pinkney 11-17). At the same time, in emphasizing democratic practice and in envisioning a revolutionary process of change and in stressing upon the need to "make connections" between the various spheres of life experiences and thereby underscoring a sense of general human organization, he presents the credentials of a Marxist critic.

In Part II of *The Long Revolution* Williams reviews some important elements of cultural expansion constituting cultural history, comprising a creative area of changes and conflicts of the whole way of life and thus revealing the shapes of British society. In Chapter I “Education and British Society”, he is making a strong plea for a public education designed to express and create the values of an educated democracy and a common culture in place of a system punctuated by the free play of the market (155). It marks a continuation of the connection between education and culture already addressed in the *Culture and Society*. Williams stands in the tradition of public educators, with his own curriculum proposal and clearly distinguishes himself from those who associated culture with elites (Eldridge and Eldridge 87).

Recurring issues like minority/mass, elite/democracy, and high/low inform Williams’s discussion of the significance of an expanding culture. These are continued in his accounts of the growth of the reading public, the popular press, and of Standard English. The underlying question in each case is the significance of growth for cultural expansion.

The growth of the reading public underscores the fact that tastes and judgements change in accordance with developments in economic and social history of the period. As cases in point Williams draws attention to both Elizabethan popular drama and the nineteenth — century novel which were

condemned as low and idle but are now recognized as part of standard literature. It would therefore be a mistake to put the issue of quality in simple class terms when the matter, in fact, has to be seen in the wider context of education as well as forms of production. Education can serve a double function here. It can develop critical sensibilities and awareness of literature and thus take the reader well beyond the 'addiction' to ephemeral writing; it can also remind us of the way literature is produced and distributed. The awareness of changes in these practices allows us to think of futures, which might assist a reading public in a democracy (*LR* 158—172).

A parallel development, which is of major importance in cultural expansion, is the growth of the popular press. Williams insists that changes in the nature of popular forms have to be related to their economic, political and social context. In the late nineteenth-century the relationship between ownership, new technology, production costs and the role of the advertising provided a crucial nexus out of which the mass readership was created and sustained. Thus the readership was being turned into a market, an expansion counterproductive to the development of an educated democracy (*LR* 173, 178, 211). These questions surfaces again in Williams's treatment of the theme of communications.

Language is another important factor in the cultural formation. The idea of a common culture is intrinsically related to the idea of a common

language. The long revolution involves a cultural expansion of the English language so that it can be understood beyond the dialects and accents of local communities and regions. The development of an expanded community of speech is a pre-requisite for a participatory democracy. Thus, the development of standard English, itself a product of the public schools and middle classes and fostered by the broadcasting and education systems implies "no longer a common but a model language, represents the full coming to consciousness of a new class of speech: now no longer merely the functional convenience of a metropolitan class but the means and emphasis of social distinction" (*LR* 220). But Williams endorses the view that a common culture can live with more diversity and flexibility in language and will be the better for it. That way it can challenge Standard English in so far as it functions as an expression of class power.

Williams's inquiry into the social history of English writers convinces him that the relations between literature and society varies considerably in changing historical situations and this in turn suggests a theoretical context for the discussion of mobility:

As a society changes, its literature changes, though often in unexpected ways, for it is a part of social growth and not simply its reflection. At times, a rising social group will create new institutions, which, as it were, release its own writers. At other times, writers from new social groups will simply make their

way into existing institutions, and work largely within their terms (*LR* 243).

In the Chapter, "The Social History of Dramatic Forms" Williams observes that in contemporary society drama is more widely disseminated than ever before. This is not so much because of theatres, which can run into financial difficulties, but because of the development of cinema, radio and television. Moreover the very flexibility of these new media has made new forms of experimentation possible. This makes it a revolutionary period when all kinds of creative response to the new media are possible and when they are reaching new audiences. Drama can tell us something about our actual social history and can contribute to a heightened social consciousness. In this way drama becomes not only a social art but also a major and practical index of change and creator of consciousness (*LR* 273). Williams thus hopes that in a dynamic way drama would contribute to an expanding culture.

In the next Chapter "Realism and the Contemporary Novel", Williams claims that a new realism is necessary if we are to remain creative. His argument is for a kind of novel "which creates and judges the quality of a whole way of life in terms of the qualities of persons", that is, "creations of human beings who . . . are . . . absolute ends in themselves" (*LR* 278). After a brief discussion of domestic, bourgeois and socialist realism, he offers a four-fold classification of realism in the contemporary novel: the social documentary, the social formula, the personal documentary, and the personal

formula. The documentary concentrates on a particular context and looks at a defined way of life — a mining town, a ship or whatever — and the characters are simply illustrations of the way of life. The formula looks at particular social relations against the backdrop of an imagined society. They work with assumptions about the relations of the individual to society. According to Williams, the realist novel needs a community to relate to. This new realism as a creative task, as with drama, will have to be dynamic, not static:

The truly creative effort of our time is the struggle for relationships of a whole kind, and it is possible to see this as both personal and social: the practical learning of *extending* relationships. Realism, as embodied in its great tradition, is a touch stone in this, for it shows in detail, that vital interpretation, idea into feeling, person into community, change into settlement which we need as growing points, in our own divided time. In the highest realism, society is seen in fundamentally personal terms, and persons through relationships, in fundamentally social terms. The integration is controlling yet of course it is not to be achieved by an act of will. If it comes at all, it is a creative discovery, and can perhaps only be recorded within the structure and substance of the realist novel (*LR* 287).

Williams concludes that the achievement of realism is a continual achievement of balance, and the absence of balance in the contemporary novel is both a warning and a challenge. Though any effort to achieve that

kind of a balance will be complex and difficult, both the effort and a new realism are necessary in order to remain creative.

In the last Chapter of *The Long Revolution* entitled "Britain in the 1960s" Williams gives a description of contemporary Britain, offering an account of the essential language – the created and creative meanings – in the context of the historical process, which he had termed the "long revolution". The British society of the 1960s, while it was clearly punctuated by the positive effects of the industrial revolution, the cultural expansion and, the democratic revolution, was increasingly becoming consumerist with the result that society was not controlling its economic life, but was in part being controlled by it.

The weakening of purposive social thinking is a direct consequence of this powerful experience, which seeks to reduce human activity to predictable patterns of demand. If we were not consumers, but users, we might look at society very differently, for the concept of use involves general human judgements – we need to know how to use things and what we are using them for, and also the effects of these particular uses on our general life – whereas consumption, with its crude hand-to-mouth patterns, tends to cancel these questions, replacing them by the stimulated and controlled absorption of the products of an external and autonomous system (*LR* 297).

Therefore it is necessary to achieve some 'realistic sense of community' so that 'true standard of living' will not continue to be distorted. Williams points

out that many works done by men like administration and general services cannot be thought of as economic activity in the terms of the consumer and the market. The product of such work is almost wholly manifested as life and experience, as opposed to things, and lacks any discoverable exchange value. Therefore such non-economic activities should also be taken into consideration in a realistic understanding of community with a view to ward off the danger of fitting human beings to a system, rather than a system to human beings (300).

As Williams views it, capitalism fosters a distorted sense of society. Its vision of society can only be the market and its inherent system of wage — labour reduces the meaning of work to its wages alone. In contemporary Britain, capitalism was changing. The patterns of thinking and the behaviour promoted by it had never been stronger; there was the widespread extension of the ethic of selling. Quite ironically, Socialism, which was the main challenge to Capitalism “has almost wholly lost any contemporary meaning”, the Labour Party has degraded into “merely an alternative power-group”, the trade union movement is also in the decline. These damaging developments have caused a rethinking in Williams. In *Culture and Society* he claims that institutions of the labour movement were a great creative achievement of the working people and also the right basis for any good society of the future. Now he recognizes that the motives for their foundation and consequently their practice, must be seen as mixed. Sectional defence and sectional self-

interest result in the decline of the morale of the institutions and vitiate them. These changes have so deeply damaged any alternative principle in the economy as to empty British socialism of any effective meaning. Despite the crude economic cynicism that was rampant, Williams continues to look at these institutions for effective alternative patterns. The challenge to create new meanings, and to substantiate them, will have to be met if that apparently oblivious future is in fact to be realized. As he puts it, "After all, a dog doesn't keep a man and then take the lead himself" (*LR* 305, 306).

The question of class in Britain in the 1960s appears uncertain and confused. There was a transition from a social stratification based on birth to one based on money and actual position. The distinction between middle—class and working—class was now blurred, the traditional definitions have broken down, and the resulting confusion is a serious diminution of consciousness (325).

So far as culture is concerned, its apparatus is in irresponsible hands subject to the free play of the market and the finance capital, resulting in rigidity, lack of openness, flexibility and commitment to genuine variety of expression. As these cultural apparatuses serve essentially as congeries of financial interests, they need, according to Williams, reorganization and a new sense of direction wherein freedom of expression and public utility are vouchsafed. Thus, he envisages a cultural organization, which would greatly

extend the freedom of cultural producers by the sensible application of public resources to cut out their present dependence on dominant but essentially functionless financial groups (*LR* 338, 340, 345).

William hopes that the quality of British cultural life would be improved by such an approach. This could not however be an overnight transformation. He is presenting a case for social change—changes in economy, working relationships, democratic institutions and in education are all relevant to cultural change. He suggests that even advertising could be so reorganized as to facilitate a healthy cultural growth. He believes that cultural poverty and inadequate democracy can be fruitfully combated through a process of “long revolution” (*LR* 346, 352, 355).

As Stuart Hall observes the project of *The Long Revolution* was in a radical sense, a “settling of accounts” – a text of the break. Its difficulty stems from the ambitiousness of its project. Though the theorizing often falters, and the argument falls back on a sort of abstract generalization, the pressure to formulate was exemplary (Hall, “Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms” 61). The book created an oppositional argument using elements of science, social psychology and historical research. It belonged to no discipline though it helped to create the new discourse of Cultural Studies in the 1960s. When it appeared in 1961 it was in many respects a lone book. *The Long Revolution* in fact attempts to enclose a theory of culture on much

surer grounds. Both *Culture and Society* and *The Long Revolution* represented a powerful response to the post-1945 hardening of attitudes in politics and education. In his review of *The Long Revolution*, E.P. Thompson summed up Williams's achievement:

with a compromised tradition at his back, and with a broken vocabulary in his hands he did the only thing that was left to him; he took over the vocabulary of his opponents, followed them into the heart of their own arguments, and fought them to a standstill in their own terms (qtd Eldridge and Eldridge 95).

In undertaking such a task Williams had to distance himself from some of his own earlier positions, and to subject their orthodoxy to critical and historical analysis (O'Connor 106). The next chapter is an attempt to examine yet another seminal interventions made by Williams which amount to a distinct aspect of his theorizations.

CHAPTER III

RAMIFICATIONS OF A MARXIST THEORY OF CULTURE

Williams has produced pioneering works on the relationship between culture and communications and on the sociology of culture. His critical works on drama, fiction and poetry are also refreshingly original. These works mark a significant departure from the entrenched notions of literary studies in English. They form the inalienable parts of the 'culture and society' tradition, which he had already established. They also stand out by virtue of their Marxist orientation.

1. Culture and Communications

The centrality of communications in social life is an important aspect of William's theoretical explorations. He was perhaps the earliest writer to devote a whole book on communications intended both as polemic and proposal on that subject. As a seminal text, it presents Williams's criticism of the concept of the "masses" and challenges such related concepts as "mass culture" and "minority culture".

The problem of communications figures in the concluding part of *Culture and Society*, where he records his opposition to the idea of "mass communications" and emphasizes its centrality in the idea of "community."

The theme is again taken up with much vigour in *The Long Revolution*, where he proposes to take a stance different from the "massification" of society, which is constituted by the extension of industry, democracy and communication as for example, in America (348). He holds the view that within the parameters of democratic practices, "Any adequate cultural organization must be open, flexible, and committed to genuine variety of expression" (340) so that a society can wrest its cultural apparatus from the grip of such "irresponsible hands" as financiers and speculators whose sole concern is the terms of the market, namely, profit and control. Such a state of affair would lead to "cultural poverty" and "inadequate democracy" (352).

The importance of communications in social life has been recognized by James W. Carey in his book *Communication As Culture* (1989) in which the author follows Williams's analysis. According to him Williams's work underscores the relation between science and society, and is responsible for some of the widespread interest in the area. He argues that this interest in communications stems from a derangement in our models of communication and community. There is in our understanding of society an oscillation between a political order and an economic order. But then, there could also be the sharing of aesthetic experience, religious ideas, personal values and sentiments and intellectual notions — a ritual order within which communication is problematic (Carey 32-34).

In his 1961 essay "Communications and Community", Williams says:

It is impossible to discuss communication or culture in our society without in the end coming to discuss power. There is the power of established institutions and there is increasingly, the power of money, which is imposing certain patterns of communication that are very powerful in the society as a whole (qtd Eldridge and Eldridge 98).

The connection between communication and society was an important preoccupation with Williams and he keenly explored this possibility in many areas such as Elizabethan drama in the sixteenth century England, the rise of the press in the nineteenth century, and film and television in the twentieth century. This concern finds expression even in his 1974 inaugural lecture, as Professor of Drama in Cambridge. In this lecture entitled "Drama in a Dramatized Society" he points out the complexity and centrality of new forms of communications and the way these enter into the texture of social existence:

Till the eyes tire, millions of us watch the shadow of shadows and find their substance, watch scenes, situations, actions, exchanges, crises. The slice of life, once a project of naturalist drama, is now a voluntary, habitual, internal rhythm; the flow of action and acting of representation and performance, raised to a new convention, that of a basic need (*WS* 13).

Understanding the nature of communication is crucial to the understanding of society and culture. For, forms and patterns of

communications are woven into the very fabric of society. They are human constructions, and so in principle, subject to criticism and the possibilities of change. In his essay "Communication and Community" he says that communications have the appearance of a wall, made up of stones of power, the nearer one gets to the wall, the more one is aware of its height and strength. As against those who are at the commanding height of the cultural apparatus, the cultural critic is a person of little power. Nevertheless it is necessary to explore and analyse the nature of communication systems to understand the kind of society we live in, their significance to future, and for the future of democracy (Eldridge and Eldridge 99).

Williams's work *Communications* (1962) is intended as an introduction to a new field of enquiry i.e., the interaction between the process of general communication and the various institutions, with a view to understanding modern society. The book originated from a talk Williams gave in 1960 about the contemporary press for the National Union of Teachers Conference entitled, "Popular Culture and Personal Responsibility". Published as a Penguin special, the book attempted to combine the aims of producing a teaching book using methods of analysis which he had developed for classes in Adult Education as well as a programmatic work for institutional change, designed to serve Left political movement at a time when there were no party policies in the area of communications at all (O'Connor 10, 18, 125). Accordingly he worked out very detailed schemes for changes in three stages:

immediate, terminal and long-term, expecting to develop a new kind of left politics in the area of communications. Instead of total public ownership or state control of the media, the book proposed a combination of public ownership of the basic means of production with the leasing of their use to self-managing groups to secure maximum variety of style and political opinion and to prevent any bureaucratic control.

At the very outset, Williams makes a distinction between 'communications' and 'communication':

I mean by communications the institutions and forms in which ideas, information and attitudes are transmitted and received. I mean by communication the process of transmission and reception (9).

As he views it, the development of powerful new means of communication has coincided historically, with the extension of democracy and with important changes in the nature of work and education. These developments have created quite new kinds of social problems and have affected a change in some of our basic ideas of society. As a result of the changes society is now a form of communication, through which experience is described, shared, modified and preserved. This accounts for one type of crisis of the twentieth century society, that is, the new means of communication have been abused for political control (as in propaganda) or for commercial profit (as in

advertising). Therefore it is imperative to conceive of an alternative version of human society so that we may protest against such abuses (10 - 11).

Williams is opposed to the tendency of regarding communications as secondary. Communications is as important an activity as politics or economics. In fact the struggle to learn, to describe, to understand, to educate, is a central and necessary part of our humanity and is itself, a major way in which reality is continually formed and changed. Society, in this sense, is not only a network of political and economic arrangements but also a process of learning and communication:

Communication begins in the struggle to learn and to describe. To start this process in our minds, and to pass on its results to others, we depend on certain communication models, certain rules or conventions through which we can make contact. We can change these models, when they become inadequate, or we can modify and extend them. Our effort to do so, and to use the existing models successfully, take up a large part of our living energy. The history of a language is a record of efforts of this kind, and is as central a part of the history of a people as its changing political and economic institutions (*Communications* 11-12).

As social life and patterns of communications are inextricably intertwined, it is misleading to speak of 'reality' and the communication about reality.

The crisis in modern communication has been engendered both by the speed of invention and by the inability of finding the right institutions in which these technical means could be used. Therefore it is necessary to examine the process of general communication in modern society *vis-à-vis* the shapes of these institutions. In this way, in examining the process and the institutions we are also looking at our society and its characteristic relationships in new ways (12).

Williams examines the history of modern communication in England right from the beginning of printing in 1500 and observes two important aspects: the remarkable expansion of audiences, and the ownership of the means of communication assuming the shape of financial organizations in the manner of an industry. Of course, all these developments fluctuated with changes in political history. The widespread dependence on advertising money has the dire consequence of subordinating all the basic purposes of communication — the sharing of human experience — to the desire to sell. The proprietor and the organization of communication is no longer for use or for opinions but for profit — a shift which has affected the very substance of communications. As Williams points out, the human effects of such tendencies are bound to be serious, even if such concerns are dismissed as idealism in the interest of selling — a perversion, because one cuts oneself down to its size (*Communications* 24 - 25).

Williams makes a two-fold historical analysis of the situation. First, there is the extension of communication as part of the extension of democracy and second, as a process of human growth. But then it involves contradictions between democracy and limited ownership: between genuine extension and the desire to sell which denies the cultural condition of democracy. This emphasizes the need to choose between genuinely alternative directions for the future (26 - 27).

In an extensive content analysis of contemporary British newspapers and magazines, Williams meets with two facts — first the increasing connection between the methods and content of advertising and editorial material, and second, the marked division of material into classes which normally keep to their own world. As a result certain interests tend to become specialized to and identified with particular classes (as, serious politics and traditional arts with the elite minority). And this typification is a very serious social tendency. Thus a division of readers or listeners into 'the masses' and 'the minority' (elite) become inevitable social facts or communication models (*Communications* 99 - 103).

Williams protests against the idea of treating the people as "masses" for the description does not refer to actual people living and growing in different ways but an amorphous category with fixed habits. "But this identification is a product of history, and could change". The idea of "mass

communication" is based on the above fallacy and so is inadequate for several reasons. First, the concept of the "masses" does not imply neither respect for people nor the sense of growth that underlies responsibility. Second, the idea of "classes", whether social or academic groupings, does not allow for flexible ideas about people and will divide culture into separate areas with no bridges between them. Third, the emphasis on profit will not provide for training new things and offering new ideas and experience. Fourth, the emphasis on using the channels as a medium for advertising and selling will not direct them to consider things necessarily relevant to the real problems of the new living itself (108 - 109).

Williams is also unhappy about such classifications as "High" and "Low". The English minority has associated the great tradition (High) with itself and the newly emergent "mass culture" with the "Low". The minorities, which assumed that they alone had the inheritance and guardianship of the great tradition in fact, turned out to be wrong. In the twentieth-century, the emergence of new forms as the film, the musical, and jazz has been seen as 'low', a threat to 'our' (high) standards. But then, the development of a form makes the prestige of an old form problematic, as for example, "the great period of the novel came more than a century after the form had become popular and had been dismissed as 'low'". It realized possibilities, which nobody then could have foreseen. Therefore Williams argues that the formula that "low" equals "unfamiliar" is one of the perennial cultural traps because

those who assume that they are the high tradition by virtue of their person, tastes and habits easily fall into it (111). These are the problems which crop up in what Pierre Bourdieu calls "the cultural field" (*Communications* 113-20), which is characterized by a division between dominant or official culture and popular culture, abstracted from economic and technological determinations, but ultimately over-determined by them.

The widespread interest in the modern period in entertainment rather than in art (the "great tradition") leads to a conflict between "high culture" and "mass culture". Consequent on the historic change in taste, especially with the advent of television, there is a standardization of art and entertainment so much so that we have no absorbed interest in anything, but simply an indifferent acceptance bringing together, what Coleridge called "indulgence of sloth and hatred of vacancy." There is no enjoyment, nor particular attention but just passing the time. In so deadly an atmosphere a great tradition simply cannot live. The result, then, is a new condition: "a frightening combination of hostility and a vacuum" (*Communications* 112). The culture of the "masses" is often identified as popular, indiscriminating, vulgar and inferior—a low culture. The crux of Williams's argument is that we need to reconsider the role of "the great tradition" in social life. Rather than seeing it as the exclusive property of the elite groups in society, we should see it as a common inheritance, which, through education and communication, should be made as widely available as possible. Besides, the great tradition is

to be seen as a living, developing activity and need not be confined to the minority or the privileged. In developing this point Williams makes a clear distinction between popular culture and synthetic culture:

We find instead a synthetic culture, or anti-culture, which is alien to almost everybody, persistently hostile to art and intellectual activity, which it spends much of its time in misrepresenting, and given over to exploiting indifference, lack of feeling, frustration, and hatred. It finds such common human interests as sex, and turns them into crude caricatures or glossy facsimiles. It plays repeatedly around hatred and aggression, which it never discharges but continually feeds. This is not the culture of 'the ordinary man'; it is the culture of the disinherited (*Communications* 115).

The theme has already appeared in *Culture and Society* and *The Long Revolution*. In Britain, this kind of bad work is due to the American influence, which has rendered, the country "culturally an American colony". As the influence is not of the best American culture, but the import and imitation of the worst, the pseudo-Americanism is a way out of the English complex of class and culture, which instead of solving anything merely ritualizes the emptiness and despair. Williams very succinctly points out how this development takes place:

Most bad culture is the result of this kind of social collapse. The genuinely popular tradition is despised, the great tradition is kept exclusive, and into the gap pour the speculators who know

how to exploit disinheritance because they themselves are rooted in nothing (*Communications* 115 - 116).

Williams considers the question of violence, sex, and values in the context of communication. He observes that antipathy for violence and sex can be ascribed to Puritanism and, allowance for these can be on the grounds of "artists freedom to publish" or "protecting the immature" or "perversion or confusion of our values." Anyhow this reality defines the freedom of cultural contribution, which also involves a definition of individual freedom. Both however imply a sense of social control. As Williams puts it,

But it is not only for the sake of individuals that this freedom should be guaranteed. A good society depends on the free availability of facts and opinions, and on the growth of vision and consciousness – the articulation of what men have actually seen and known and felt. Any restriction of the freedom of individual contribution is actually a restriction of the resources of the society (*Communications* 124 - 125).

The point then is, how communication "is actually to be achieved?" Williams's cryptic answer is, "The thing has to come out as the man himself sees it." (125) Communication is not only a system outside man; it is also a system, which is part of himself, an internal communication system, or a way of putting the experience into a communicable form. That is, if one mind has grasped it (the experience), even if only the mind that also created it, then it may be open to other minds (126).

In this regard Williams makes the theoretical assertion that the society is in some ways already present in the act of composition. And when we look back at a period "we can see how much even highly original individuals have in common in their actual work, and in . . . their structure of feeling with other individual workers of the time, and with the society of that time to which they belonged." (126) Williams says that this deep social reality of communication has to be kept in mind when we consider the institutions in the field. Otherwise it will result in imposing injunctions on them, which will be a constant and serious danger. According to him the only useful institutions in cultural organization are those, which are designed to guarantee freedom (127).

Now, so far as the system of communication is concerned, the pertinent question is how a measure of control and a measure of freedom can be combined. As part of this consideration, Williams distinguishes four systems of communication: authoritarian, paternal, commercial and democratic (*Communications* 130-37). In an authoritarian system, communications are seen as part of the total machine through which a minority governs a society. Here communication is a monopoly of the political system and its purpose is to transmit instructions, ideas, and attitudes of the ruling group. As a matter of policy, alternative instructions, ideas and attitudes are excluded. A paternal system asserts the duty to protect and guide. It transmits values, habits, and

tastes which are its own justification as a ruling minority, and which it wishes to extend to the people as a whole.

The commercial attitude to communication is opposed to both authoritarianism and paternalism. Here works are openly offered for sale and openly bought as people actually choose. In this way it claims to assure freedom of communication. But since this freedom depends on the market, it can run into difficulties. As the central motive in this system is profit, individuals or groups with enough capital to finance the artists will become decisive in the communication system. Such groups will often be quite unrepresentative of the society as a whole.

In a democratic system of communication all men have the right to offer what they choose and to receive what they choose. It is opposed to controls of all types, which can assume the shape of tyranny. But then, it is important to define the general nature of a cultural system compatible with democracy. There are two related considerations in this process: the right to transmit and the right to receive. Institutions of public service, which should not slide into paternal or authoritarian systems, must guarantee these freedoms. The idea of public service must be distinct from the idea of public monopoly. A further principle should be that the active contributors have control of their own means of expression. Such a system, Williams believes, will contribute to cultural democracy, complimentary to general democracy

(*Communications* 134-35). All these four systems are either actively practiced or locally experimented upon in contemporary Britain. But there has been over the last generation, struggles between the paternal and commercial system, in which the commercial has been winning (137).

Williams lastly proposes, several radical measures with a view to ensuring quality, transparency, and democratic method of functioning in the field of communication through educational agencies, institutions, and governmental machinery. He conceives of a cultural organization in which there could be genuine freedom and variety, protected alike from the bureaucrat and the speculator. And then the means of communication could be used for the people's most general human purposes. This idea of communication, which was a direct continuation of the Workers' Education Association (WEA) debates in which Williams was actively involved, about the nature and purpose of education is also a general political argument about communication and democracy (Ferrara 100). The book ends with suggestions for teaching communications with immediate and medium term policy suggestions, and with an argument about long-term socialist goals. As a long-term goal he proposes that the means of production and distribution of news, music, film, video, and information of all kinds, must be controlled collectively by cultural workers themselves.

There is a strain of Left-Leavisism very much at the core of Williams's theory of communication. While Leavis was completely opposed to all new media, Williams's attempts to show that it is not the actual communication processes that are at fault, but only the way in which they are used. He claims that the idea of mass-communication depends more on the intention of the speaker or writer than on the particular techniques employed. In his studies on the technologies and cultural forms of television, radio and the press, he has provided historical evidence for his claim that the contexts of these mass communications were not defined until sometime after their technologies were developed. Indeed they need not have been "mass" communications at all. Williams's concern is not only to dismantle the various versions of technological determinism, which prevail in discussions of the media but also to emphasize the interaction between the technology and the social context in all forms of mass communications (Johnson 171).

Raymond Williams was reported to have said in the early 1970s at a London meeting that "the study of communications was deeply and disastrously deformed by being confidently named the study of 'mass communication.'" (qtd. Carey 40). To this Stuart Hall, then Director of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham replied that at his Centre they had considered a number of labels including "communications" to describe their work. However Hall opposed the word "communications" for he believed that the word would narrow the field of

study and isolate it substantively and methodologically. Substantively, it narrows the scope of study to products explicitly produced and delivered over the mass media. The study of communications is then generally isolated from the study of literature and art, on the one hand, and from the expressive and ritual forms of every day life – religion, conversation, and sport – on the other. The word "culture" which in its anthropological sense directs us toward the study of an entire way of life is replaced by the word "communication" which directs us to the study of one isolated segment of existence. Methodologically, the word "communication" isolates us from an entire body of critical, interpretive and comparative methodology that has been at the heart of anthropology and the study of literature as well as from modern Marxism. James W. Carey dismisses this argument as a misunderstanding and claims that our emphasis on communications and mass communications has not divorced us from the study of speech, writing and other contemporary products (41-42).

Williams had argued that the time had come to bury, the term "mass communications" as a label for departments, research programmes and conferences. According to him, the term was disastrous for three reasons. First, it limits studies to a few specialized areas such as broadcasting and film and what is miscalled "popular literature" while there is "the whole common area of discourse in speech and writing that always needs to be considered." Second, the term "mass" has become lodged in our language in its weakest

sense – the mass audience – and stands in the way of analysis of "specific modern communication situations and of specific modern communication conventions and forms." Third, because the audience was conceived as a mass, the only question worth asking was how, and then, whether, film, television, or books influenced or corrupted people. As Carey puts it, what is distinctive in the Williams – Hall argument is this: "What is called the study of culture can also be called the study of communications, for what we are studying in this context are the ways in which experience is worked into understanding and then disseminated and celebrated" (Carey 41, 44).

In *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* ([1974] 2004) Williams argues that Television is a distinct cultural product, because it operates at the interface between the elite and the popular, the commercial and the public, the state and the citizen. It is true that television offers a technologically and institutionally distinct form of cultural framing and expression. However, William rejects any form of technological determinism: "Technologies may constrain, but they do not determine" (XI).

Therefore, Williams makes a case for alternative technologies towards the end of the book. Because of his commitment to the human, as opposed to the technological, project, his writing refuses capitulation. As Roger Silverstone points out, technologies lead double lives, and television is no exception. They are both contemporary tools for the 'long revolution' towards

an educated and participatory democracy; they are also the tools of counter-revolution in which the hold of capital on everyday lives is very strong (XII-XIII). Thus television lends itself to two strands of social history viz., as a technology (7-12) and, as the uses of the technology (12-18).

Clifford Geertz's work, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973), and many other works in phenomenology, hermeneutics and literary criticism clarify the objectives of a cultural science of communications and have defined the dimensions of an interpretive science of society. As Carey observes, the task now for students of communications or mass communication or contemporary culture, is to turn these advances in the science of culture toward the characteristic products of contemporary life: news stories, bureaucratic language, love songs, political rhetoric, day time serials, scientific reports, television drama, talk shows, and the wider world of contemporary leisure, ritual, and information. To square the circle those were some of the conventions, forms and practices, which Raymond Williams felt, had slipped when the field of study was confidently named mass communications. As Carey notes:

It is unfortunate that to mention cultural studies to most communications researchers resurrects the image of the arguments concerning mass and popular culture that littered the field a few decades ago. That was part of the disaster Raymond Williams referred to Yet many who worked in popular

culture were on the right track. The question they both raised and obscured was a simple but profound one: what is the significance of living in the world of meanings conveyed by popular art? What is the relationship between the meanings found in popular art and in forms such as science, religion and ordinary speech? How in modern times, is experience cast up, interpreted, and concealed into knowledge and understanding? (67-68).

Marshall McLuhan had emphasized the centrality of communications in human life in his assertion that the one thing of which the fish is unaware is water, the very medium that forms its ambience, and supports its existence. Similarly communications through language, and other symbolic forms, comprises the ambience of human existence. The activities we collectively call communication – conversations, giving instructions, imparting knowledge, sharing significant ideas, seeking information, entertaining and being entertained – are so ordinary and mundane that it is difficult for them to arrest our attention. Moreover when we intellectually visit this process, we often focus on the trivial and unproblematic, so inured, are we to the mysterious and awesome in communication (Carey 67). Williams, however, attacks the theories of Mc Luhan whose heraldic metaphors of medium as message and as massage, are seen as both ideological and offensive. They represent the worst kind of formalism, abstracted from meaning and divorced from history. If the medium really is the message, nothing is left for us to do or say (*Television X-XI*).

In *Changing Concepts of Time* (1952), Harold Innis, the Canadian theorist, states that the emergence of vast monopolies of communications involved a continuous, systematic, ruthless destruction of elements of permanence essential to cultural activity. He recognizes that the speed and distance of electronic communication involves not only the provision of entertainment and information, but also an enlarged possibility of social organization, centralization and imperialism in matters of culture and politics. This is especially important when we consider attempts made by the most electronically advanced cultures, which colonize and politically control the "outer space" (137).

This perspective underlines the significance of cultural studies, or what James Carey calls, a "cultural science" of communication. Clifford Geertz views that the culture of a people is an ensemble of texts. Similarly, a cultural science of communication views human behaviour, or more accurately, human action as a text. The task then is to "construct a reading" of the text, a cultural reading. The metaphor of a text emphasizes that the task of the cultural scientists is closer to that of a literary critic than to a behavioural scientist (60-61). Considering the views of Walter Lippman and John Dewey on communication, mass media and public life which glaringly downplay the role of state and class power – in fact to the extend of even depoliticizing the public sphere – James W. Carey concludes that:

Communication is at once a structure of human action – activity, process, practice – an ensemble of experience, forms and a structured and structuring set of social relations. To describe communication is not merely to describe a constellation of practices of enshrined ideas; it is also to describe a constellation of practices that enshrine and determine those ideas in a set of technical and social forms (86).

In this context it is worth considering an important concern of the critical theorists of the Frankfurt School. A crucial dimension of their theory is their cultural criticism and critique of mass culture. Inherently self critical, it offers a well-articulated standpoint for thematizing social reality. Its significance lies in the fact that unlike, the current postmodern theories which attack all forms of thought in an undifferentiated manner, critical theory seeks an emancipatory alternative to the existing order against all relativistic and nihilistic excesses. Essays by Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse, T.W. Adorno, Leo Lowenthal, Jurgen Habermas and Siegfried Kracauer are of particular relevance in the field of communication and mass culture in relation to democracy. They attest to the fact that social research cannot be averse to the way communications affect and define social life, especially how they have been used by powers that be for specific ends. For, they recognize that such considerations will go a long way in the understanding of culture. The work of the Frankfurt School has taken up the challenge quite seriously and produced a body of theory and analyses problematizing the whole gamut of

social sciences including communications. Against all relativistic and nihilistic excesses, critical theory seeks an emancipatory alternative to the existing order. And it was in the area of cultural criticism and critique of mass culture that the members of the school have become justly famous (Broner and MacKay 1-3).

Williams's stress on democratization of the means of communications may well be understood in the context of some of the insights of the critical theorists of the Frankfurt School. He shared Siegfried Kracauer's conviction that typical artifacts of mass culture and other surface manifestations of a society can disclose its basic traits as well as the most important historical trends of an epoch. Kracauer's essay "The Mass Ornament" (1927) uncovers some basic features of contemporary capitalist society where massification of audience before spectacles of the "Distraction factories" (Kracauer's term for "culture industries") takes place. The essay anticipates the emergence of totalitarianism by portraying the ways in which masses can be mobilized and manipulated through mass culture. As Kracauer warns:

undertakings which attempt to reconstruct a form of state, a community, an artistic formulation, without considering our historical place – having as bearers human beings, already affected by contemporary thinking, but beings who by all rights no longer exist – cannot hold their own against the baseness of the mass ornament (154).

The Frankfurt critics maintained that the "culture industries" were now playing an increasingly important role in managing consciousness and obscuring social conflict. Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947) developed this standpoint as a new discourse about the role of mass communication and culture in the constitutions of contemporary societies. Adorno and Horkheimer hold that the culture industries were organs of mass deception, which manipulated individuals into accepting the current organization of society. That way the culture industries were engaging in sophisticated forms of ideological indoctrination, using entertainment "to sugar-coat the ideological content of oppression while eroding cultural standards in order to quell any forms of oppression which might contest the given order".

They claimed that what was passed for happiness in the present was a pale imitation of the real thing:

The culture industry perpetually cheats its consensus of what it perpetually promises. The promissory note which with its plots and staging, draws on pleasure in underlay prolonged, the promise, which is actually all the spectacle consists of, is illusory: what it actually combines is that the real point will never be reached (Horkheimer and Adorno 139).

In his essay "The Culture Industry Reconsidered" Adorno argues that "mass culture" is not a "popular culture" rising from the experiences and concerns of

the people, but rather a form of "administered" culture imposed from above (85). The essay thus summarizes many of the Frankfurt theorists' insights regarding the new socio-cultural forms by which neo capitalist societies legitimate and reproduce themselves. Raymond Williams's consistent opposition to the word "mass communication" and "mass culture" can be fruitfully understood in the light of the above theoretical perspective.

A strong opposition to the domination of the elites and a vigorous argument for democratization and decentralization in the field of communications and culture in general forms an important component of Williams's theory of society and culture. Jürgen Habermas's essay "The Public Sphere": (An Encyclopedia Article) can be read in this context. He has argued that unlike an earlier stage of capitalist society, where the individual developed his ideas in a free "public sphere" which protected him from the state, the advanced industrial society has redefined that sphere in terms of an artificially induced public opinion which binds the individual to the existing order and undermines his critical capacities. The essay provides both a historical sketch of the transition to our current media dominated society and a normative model for a more democratic public sphere (136-142). Such free and unrestrained communication would foster public debate, as well as the democratization of everyday life and the promulgation of generalizable interests necessary to ascertain and institutionalize the "common good".

Similarly in his *One-Dimensional Man* (1964), Herbert Marcuse argues that advanced industrial society integrates and absorbs all forces of opposition so that the subjective conditions for conflict between classes as well as between the individual and society, vanish at the very time that the "objective" reality of exploitation and injustice intensifies. His essay "From Ontology to Technology: Fundamental Tendencies of Industrial Society" analyses the new forms of social control in "one dimensional society" and the diminution of the "other dimension" of social critique, rebellion and utopian thinking which present alternatives to the existing order (Marcuse 119-127).

Williams's radical proposals for "using our means of communications for their most general human purposes" (178 - 9) which will ensure "a cultural organization in which there could be genuine freedom and variety, protected alike from the bureaucrat and the speculator" as an alternative to the existing systems of communications which are shaped by new kinds of technological determination and finance from the powerful parnational companies and, his prospective vision that "communications is, in modern societies, a central social, cultural and political issue" (189) situate Williams precisely in the Frankfurt school tradition. Therefore there is no wonder when we perceive concerns in Leo Lowenthal's essay "Historical Perspectives on Popular Culture", where he makes the case for a critical approach to the study of mass culture with the suggestion that social research, rather than taking the phenomena of modern life including the mass media at face value should

place them in a historical context (191), coalescing with Williams's insistence to see the communication-society interactions "in the perspective of our general cultural development" and his hope that "there is the work that remains to be done, and the work that needs to be done better" (189). Such a project invariably demands the widening of disciplinary boundaries. Williams's pioneering work in formulating the terms of a sociology of culture forms the subject of the next section.

2. A Sociology of Culture

Raymond Williams's work *Culture* (1981) makes a case for a sociology of culture, apparently a novel project in the field of criticism. Within traditional categories of literary criticism, the sociology of culture was looked upon as a doubtful area, an underdeveloped phenomenon, "a loose grouping of specialist studies". But once it was recognized as the point of convergence of very different interests, and methods, there was a shift in emphasis. As Williams puts it,

The modern convergence, which the contemporary sociology of culture embodies, is in fact an attempt to rework, from a particular set of interests, those general social and sociological ideas within which it has been possible to see communication, language and art as marginal and peripheral, or as at best secondary and derived social processes. A modern sociology of culture, whether in its internal studies or in its interventions in a more general sociology, is concerned above all to enquire, actively and openly, into these received and presumed relations, and into other possible and demonstrable relations. As such it is not only reworking its own field, but putting new questions and new evidence into the general work of the social sciences (*Culture* 10).

Williams has identified culture as a distinct area of human practice, but one, which has received too little sociological attention. In his scheme of things

the various components of culture, namely, institutions, formations, means of production, cultural identification especially in art and particular forms of art, cultural reproduction and the organization of culture are all part of general history. But as separate histories, they can put sociological questions to general history and can thus evince potential areas for research.

The term culture is a point of convergence of two main interests: a) an emphasis on the informing spirit of a whole way of life, most evident in specifically cultural activities – a language, styles of art, kinds of intellectual work, and b) an emphasis on 'a whole social order' within which a specifiable culture is seen as the direct or indirect product of an order primarily constituted by other social activities. These positions are classified as a) idealist and b) materialist. Each position implies a broad method in a) illustration and clarification of the 'informing spirit' as it manifests in the cultural interests and values of a "people", and in b) exploration from the known or discoverable character of a general social order to the specific forms taken by its cultural manifestations.

Upto the second half of the twentieth century the sociology of culture was broadly compounded of works done from these two positions. But Williams's work marks a shift in emphasis. His basic premise is that any adequate sociology of culture must be a historical sociology. From this perspective he builds up his arguments within the terms of the contemporary

convergence between (1) the anthropological and sociological senses of culture as a distinct 'whole way of life', encompassing a distinctive 'signifying system' as involving in all forms of social activity; and (ii) the sense of culture as 'artistic and intellectual activities' broadly defined as all the 'signifying practices' – from language through the arts and philosophy to journalism, fashion and advertising.

Williams explains the conditions, which necessitate a sociology of culture. The project of cultural studies has been generally concerned with manifest cultural practices and production. It is therefore necessary to make a social analysis of specific cultural institutions and formations as well as the actual relations between these and the material means of cultural production and cultural forms. Accordingly Williams's scheme for a sociology of culture hinges on the following points:

- 1) The institutions and formations of cultural production.
- 2) The social relations of its specific means of production.
- 3) The ways in which, within social life, 'culture' and 'cultural production' are socially identified and distinguished.
- 4) Specific artistic forms.
- 5) The processes of social and cultural 'reproduction'.
- 6) General and specific problems of cultural organization.

It is evident that there is in this scheme the convergence of two authentic sociological perspectives, namely, the 'production perspective' and the 'social relations perspective' (Crane 164-5, 181-2; 263).

The sociology of culture at the level of institutions has to take into account both historical and contemporary diversity. The diverse factors range from the relationship between instituted artists and markets, and the role of the post-market institutions, which include the modern patronal, the intermediate and governmental institutions (*PL* 33-56). It is therefore important to retain the full range of classification of institutions and types of relations, as the means of specific analysis, rather than work with the pre-sociological formulas of "the artist" and "his public" or "the cultural superstructure" and "the economic base" (*Culture* 56).

Forms of organization and self-organization are also much closer to cultural production. Williams considers early forms of internal (i.e. within a single national social order) organizations like the "bardic rules, guilds, academies, exhibitions, professional societies and movements". In modern cultural contexts three types of formations could be identified, namely,

- (1) Those based on formal membership with varying modes of internal authority or decision, and of constitution and election.

- (2) Those organized around some collective public manifestation, such as an exhibition, a group press or a periodical or an explicit manifesto, and
- (3) Those in which there is conscious association or group identification, either informal or occasional, limited or general (*Culture* 68).

Similarly, types of external relation are classified as:

- (a) Specializing, as in the cases of sustaining or promoting work in a particular medium or branch of an art or style;
- (b) Alternative, as in the cases of the provision of alternative facilities for the production, exhibition or publication of certain kinds of work, in exclusion of existing institutions; and
- (c) Oppositional, in which the cases represented by (b) are raised to active opposition to the established institutions, or to the conditions within which there exist (*Culture* 70).

In addition to formations within a single national social order, as mentioned above, there could also be 'international' or 'paranational' cultural formations. Owing to the institution of an effective world market in some sectors of art, music and literature, by the mid twentieth century, there came up a corresponding awareness of larger cultures like European literature, Western music, and twentieth century art with a different and broader level of

sociology. Williams argues that such an analysis of formations is indispensable to fill in the gap between the general history and the history of particular arts and individual studies. This broader sense of history is necessary to move on to the next social process, namely, cultural production (*Culture* 85-86).

It remains a fact that whatever be the purposes cultural practices may serve, their means of production are unarguably material. However, their invention and development form a remarkable but underplayed chapter of human history. It is therefore necessary to define two areas for analysis: first, the relation between the material means and the social forms within which they are used; and second, their relation to the specific (artistic) forms which are manifest cultural production (87-88).

An important general distinction can be made with continuing social and sociological effects, between (1) the class of material means which depends wholly or mainly on inherent, constituted, physical resources (like the arts of spoken poetry, of song and dance) and (2) that other class which depends wholly or mainly on the use of transformation of non-human material objects and forces (like painting and sculpture). No history of the arts could be written without paying full attention to both. These were there very early in human culture as widespread, popular practices.

As Chandra Mukerji argues, to find a language to discuss how material world is mobilized to construct ways of life we can turn to that "slightly dusty but hardly well-worn concept, material culture": "Material culture is made up of the objects that people both derive and distinguish from the natural resources – around them to make a visibly human environment in which to organize group life" (145-146).

Social relations became much more complex and variable when man began to indulge in practices based on the use or transformation of non-human materials, objects and forces. Williams identifies five types of such practices:

- (i) Combination of the use of external objects with the use of inherent physical resources;
- (ii) Development of instruments of new kinds of performance, as in musical instruments;
- (iii) Selection, transformation and production of separable objects, which carry cultural significance;
- (iv) Development of separable systems of signification, as most notably in writing; and
- (v) Development of complex amplificatory, extending and reproductive technical systems (*Culture* 90-91).

In the case of the first three types the problem of access is not very acute. But as a culture becomes richer and more complex, involving a high degree of specialization in artistic techniques, social distance of many practices becomes much greater. Consequently the relation between the "artist" and his "spectator" or "public" turns out to be a serious issue.

A material system such as writing has, from the beginning, a radically different status. As a cultural technique, writing – a non-human means of cultural production – is wholly dependent on forms of specialized training not only for producers but also and crucially for receivers. The question of literacy thus becomes central to cultural practices. A remarkable work in this context is Richard Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy* (1957) in which he opens up whole new areas of working-class culture to critical scrutiny. The book, which in its methodology combines social history, anthropology and cultural criticism, presents an ambivalent attitude to popular culture. The first section of the book, "An "Older" Order" is a sympathetic and celebratory account of working class culture organized around family, and neighbourhood rituals while the second section, "Yielding Place to New" laments the dangerous influence of new forms of Americanized popular culture on working-class life. They are manifested as "a Candyfloss World" of popular songs, "spicy magazines and titillating novels" (223-250).

Hoggart particularly condemns the emerging youth culture of Britain in the 1950s, which he calls the "juke-box boys" who produce "a sort of spiritual dry-rot" (248). While maintaining the traditional, evaluative procedure of Leavisite criticism, Hoggart insists that the closed world of English studies be transformed into a "recognizable discipline". He thought of achieving this aim through the new field of contemporary cultural studies, which he divides up into three parts: the historical-philosophical; the sociological; and the literary-critical. Of these, the literary-critical is the most important (Hoggart 255). Williams's sociological perspective which recognizes types of practices, their transformation, signification and significance and their specificity appears to be much more precise and progressive than the model of Hoggart.

Williams sketches how social relations of writing gained momentum through stages of development:

Writing moved from (i) a supporting and recording function, in societies in which oral composition and tradition were still predominant, through (ii) a stage in which this function was joined by written composition for oral performance and (iii) a further stage in which composition was additionally written only to be read, to (iv) that later and very familiar stage in which most or virtually all composition was written to be silently read, and was at last, for this reason, generalized as 'literature' (*Culture* 94).

The emergence of the concept of "author" with a high degree of "authority" attached to it, is a logical sociological consequence of this process (112) and through further processes of reproduction the primacy of the author gets entrenched and embedded in the sphere of culture.

Reproductive technology in various ramifications has become a major cultural mode. The reproducible symbolic visual image became a device of defining a social area of credits and power. Thus reproduction of the image of a god through the technique of casting, or portrait-busts of kings and emperors operate simultaneously as "works of art" because of their fine workmanship, and as religious icons or ideological markers. For, "What can properly be called art is still, in majority, an inherent and inseparable element of some other purpose" (*Culture* 96).

The social effects of the complex of technical changes have been diverse. On the one hand, this radically affected the position of the writer, scholar and the artist as producers. On the other hand, the changes correspond to the stages of overlap and transition between patronal and market relations. They have exerted a decisive influence on questions of artistic and cultural independence and innovations (98).

Two types of relations between social and cultural production and reproduction could be distinguished. In the early production modes, the relations were symmetrical owing to the parity between the purposes of

production and reproduction. But as technical reproduction developed, as in the political empires and the related imposition of religious systems, relations between dominant and subordinated cultures appeared to be "asymmetrical". Many important problems of the social relations of culture crop up from this asymmetry. There are three major areas of tension, conflict and struggle within which this asymmetry can be found: licensing, censorship and other forms of control; the market in conflict with dominant political and cultural authorities; and the uneven and changing relation between popular culture and the new forms of production and reproduction. Through all these phases in different ways, the state, the church and the market becomes the crucial factors (agents) which produce asymmetry (*Culture* 99-101).

In contrast to individual means of production, when cultural production becomes a group activity, there emerges a range of relationships, which include new divisions of labour inside cultural process, as forms of class divisions, ownership and management of the means of production. In a group production like drama, for example, division of labour consists of primarily actors, singers, musicians, dancers, and writers. In a wholly coordinated production, both acting and new staging techniques were seen to be necessary and desirable. The role of a 'producer', 'director' or 'manager' is a product of this process (*Culture* 114-15).

Specific economic conditions are decisive factors in the new reproductive technologies. Within conditions of organized market the individual capitalist owner or proprietary family was replaced by forms of "combine arrangements" which fuses ownership and control of the means of cultural production by a wider (non cultural) productive and financial area. Its theoretical importance is that this conglomerate is dominant in modern cultural production (*Culture* 117).

'Cultural reproduction' as a critical conceptualization was first developed by the French sociologist and cultural theorist Pierre Bourdieu in the early 1970s, in the context of modern system of education which he saw as "reproducing" the culture of the dominant classes. Such mechanisms of mass socialization ensure this group's continued dominance and perpetuate their covert exercise of power. According to Bourdieu, the relation of power and domination at work in the social world is articulated through the stratification of culture. He presents his critique of contemporary society in terms of such metaphors as "Cultural Capital" and "habitus". Cultural capital is a formulation drawn from political economy. As Bourdieu puts it, "there is, diffused within a social space a cultural capital, transmitted by inheritance and invested in order to be cultivated" (qtd. Young, *Knowledge* 192). As Chris Jenks observes in his book *Culture* (1997), the idea of cultural reproduction makes reference to the emergent quality of the experience of everyday life, albeit through a variety of theoretical positions:

The concept serves to articulate the dynamic process that makes sensible the utter contingency of, on the one hand, the status and determinacy of social structures and, on the other, the innovation and agency inherent in the practice of social action. Cultural reproduction allows us to contemplate the necessity and complementarity of continuity and change in social experience. To that end it both preserves the homeostasis between the elements of any semiotic system, such as culture, but also provides for the possibility, and inevitable nature, of its evolution (116).

Cultural reproduction is a theme in contemporary social investigation, which variously refer to a sense of social continuity achieved through modalities of change. As a dominant form it appears as a classical Marxist dichotomy between *essence* (continuity) and *appearance* (change). Much of the British work on cultural reproduction emerges from a Marxist tradition. As a Marxist method this is an epistemological inquiry initiated in *The German Ideology*, refined in *An Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy* and the *Grundrisse* and one reaching its fruition in *Das Capital*. Thus, in the section on "Wages" of *Das Capital*, Volume I, Marx argues that wages produce a distorted and distorting image of the relationship between people in the market place, i.e. between the owners of the means of production and the working group. Labour is treated as any other commodity, which has an exchange value.

The consumption of labour generates a value in excess of its original unmobilized state. This peculiar property of labour, which is called "labour power", is what is actually being appropriated in the *appearance* of wages as providing a fair exchange for the consumption of labour. It thus generates a "surplus value" or a profit for the capitalist. The *essence* of the wage's relation is, then, the true relation of "exploitation", and whatever changes might occur in the appearance of wages (trade union bargaining, wage increases, improved conditions of service), the mechanism of exploitation as the essence, is always reproduced. In Marx's terms, this is an example of how a market culture is reproduced. The linking concept for this contradiction or discrepancy between appearance and essence is, of course, ideology. Ideology becomes the process, both conscious but largely unconscious, through which a distortion, blurring, generalizing and decontextualizing of realities occur, all to the benefit of one particular group within the society. The strength of the Marxist model is that it provides a pattern and a battery of concepts for the analysis of any cultural phenomenon extending from the material forms like property, artifacts or commodities (things-in-themselves), to the ideational like language, knowledge and subjectivity itself (PL 122-24).

The Durkheimian sociology provides a cultural reproduction theory in opposition to the Marxist approach. Here cultural reproduction is not meant to reveal its occurrence behind the distorted ideological mask of change but rather to search for the appropriate collective secular credo that will ensure

reproduction of solidarity in the face of change. Reproduction is not taken to be intrinsically evil, but a binding force in the face of potential fragmentation, the condition of 'anomie'. His perspective makes a case for the very necessity of cultural reproduction, the necessity of conformity through change. His societal forms are not evolutionary but morphological. He views reproduction with optimism, indeed with positivism; its metaphors are consensual rather than divisive and its motivation is integrative (Jenks 124-25).

The structuralist perspective on the cultural reproduction offers no uniformity of approach but an internally divisive spectrum of attitudes towards human affairs. It remarks the classical epistemological dichotomy between *essence* and *appearance* in terms of the continuum between *depth* and *surface*. So, for Levi-Strauss who was primarily instrumental in popularizing this geological metaphor, events of a culture as we experience them, are the surface appearances or manifestations of underlying patterns at a deeper level, both "synchronic" and "diachronic". For Saussure, the underlying patterns or structure of any cultural phenomenon is to be understood in terms of this linguistic analogy. According to this model the conventions from which meaning emerge, reproduces culture. Culture is a conventional yet deep structural practice; cultural symbols and representations form its surface structure. Culture is thus contingent upon reproduction (Jenks 127-28).

In a society only a selective group becomes the 'natural' inheritors of 'cultural capital' by virtue of their location within the class system. What is being explored in social analysis is the possibility of the cultural process of stratification and privilege that is self-sustaining and self-perpetuating. In this way Bourdieu moves from the ideological function of culture into an awareness of its peculiar efficacy in structuring the system of social relations by its functioning. The concept of "habitus" constitutes "the principle that regulates the act, within social relations; " it is "the system of modes of perception, of thinking, of appreciation and of action". The possessors of the dominant group *habitus* are the inheritors of cultural capital. The 'habitus' provides a link between the structuring of social relationship and the culture of society and in that respect it is very much akin to Williams's concept of "structure of feeling"

As Chris Jenks points out, Williams presents a "genotypical reading of reproduction" which in juxtaposition to non-Marxist reading is positive and vibrant (122). In Williams's idea of "reproducibility", the image is generative rather than replicative and it offers the possibilities of change and new combinations. Here is the theorizing of the new (the idea of birth) or coming order and the social is conceived of through change, reformation or even revolution. Williams argues that a culture is inherently reproducible:

What is true of 'a culture', at its most general level – that it is never a form in which people happen to be living, at some isolated moment, but a selection and organization, of past and present, necessarily providing for its own kinds of continuity – is true also, at different levels, of many of the elements of cultural process. Thus a form is inherently reproducible; that is its necessary definition as form. Signals and conventions are inherently reproductive, or they lose their significance. Language as such, or any language or system of non-verbal communication, exists only to the degree that it is capable of reproduction. A tradition is the process of reproduction in action. Thus many of the key elements of cultural process are brought together by this concept (*Culture* 184).

The sense of reproduction as appropriate to cultural application includes such processes as education and tradition. Education claims transmission of an absolute and universal knowledge or culture. In practice, it happens to be only a selective version of both. As an instrument of cultural reproduction, education can be linked with economic relations, institutions of state and other political powers, religion and family forms. Similarly tradition in the sense of cultural heritage can be shown to be a *desired* continuity of past elements as defined by existing social relations (187). Sociologists like Bourdieu (1977) have shown that there are fundamental and necessary relations between this selective version and the existing social relations.

In examining the question of the relations between social and cultural change, it is necessary to define some relatively stable relations of domination and subordination. As part of this task Williams distinguishes between three levels of cultural reproduction: the residual, the dominant and the emergent. Cultural reproduction occurs at the level of the dominant in different ways such as forms (classical, neo-classical, bourgeois and Marxist), modes (dramatic, lyrical, narrative), genres (tragedy, comedy, epic, romance), and types (bourgeois drama, realist novel etc.). The residual is a form of cultural alternative to the dominant in its most recent reproductive forms (for instance, the idea of an 'organic' society as a pre-existing alternative to modern capitalism and socialism). The emergent, on the other hand, is related to but not identical with the innovatory. In contemporary social analysis formal determination in terms of the dominant or the emergent is difficult owing to the complex relation between innovation and reproduction. But in historical analysis the issue is not problematic because the emergent becomes the emerged, and then often dominant (193-96; 204-205).

Within sociology, identification of the 'art' or 'work of art' is a crucial problem. 'The work of art themselves' is a socio-cultural category of the highest importance, but just because of this it cannot be empirically presumed. While art can be justified on grounds of its aesthetic purpose, which is a matter of human perception, it cannot be readily defined on that ground for, perceptions are not reducible to specializations (120-123).

Similarly the conventional distinctions between what is 'art' and what is 'not art' represent a hardening of specific judgements into class presumption because they are actual elements of social organization. Therefore sociological categories within the field of art are to be recognized as integral to the works of art themselves. Sociologically, then, art can be defined as a social process.

Williams considers Lukacs's (1969) attempt to define the specificity of art by distinguishing three phases of human practice: the "practical," the "magico-religious," and the "aesthetic". Although, these phases mutually overlap, there is an observable general tendency to distinguish and to value kinds of work which serve societal purposes as 'recognitions' of people in a shared physical universe with diverse interactions. It is in the range and power of human activity and attention, which can be found in different social orders and in different historical periods, that the impulse to categorize "the aesthetic" begins and seems justified (*Culture* 127-29).

The arts, as social forms, have their own signals, the most important being occasion and place. The signal system reminds us of the historically and culturally variable social organization and social function of art and thereby indicates the complex sociology of art forms. From this perspective it is possible to write a history of each art form. The ideology underlying or deduced from them must be most critically scrutinized.

There is no point in categorizations of positions as formalist and sociological since both attempt to define and solve problems of social and cultural form. Williams illustrates the point by analysing the soliloquy in English Renaissance drama. Far from being a 'device,' the soliloquy is "an innovating series of formal elements which can be shown to be inseparable from new conceptions of personality and new senses of the limits and contradictions of available social relations." Thus as a new compositional mode and a new kind of content, the soliloquy is a potential evidence of an important cultural process: the formation of a specific form within a general form. Therefore the analysis of soliloquy has to be formal on the one hand and social on the other. Actual evidence of the general socio-cultural process is in fact abundant in the particular form. In this sense the sociology of culture has to include as a major emphasis, *the sociology of forms* (*Culture* 139-143).

The structuralist approach, on the other hand, is incompatible with the sociology of culture, because while it reveals fundamental forms of social relationships, it holds that the basic cultural structures are either independent or relatively autonomous from the social history and practice. This position does address questions of cultural change (Bocock 230). Williams, quite wryly comments on its tendency to override other kinds of knowledge and analysis: "This may race the blood but it does not usually survive much actual inquiry" (*Culture* 143). Likewise, *the genetic structuralism* of Lucien

Goldmann ([1964] 1975) makes an *a priori* exclusion of knowable areas of a culture by stressing that relations between form and historical transition exist only at a certain major level, and that other available work and relations are 'ephemeral' and therefore negligible. This position renders Goldmann's argument unacceptable to Williams: "It is the condition of any adequate sociology of culture that it is open, in principle and practice, to all possible evidence" (*Culture* 144).

There was often a gap between the general social history and sociology and the specific analysis of form. The missing link was an adequate theoretical account of the conditions of a practice (relative autonomy) so that the specificity of a practice could be affirmed and the inevitable relations between different practices explored (145). These problems are addressed as methodological dilemmas in the sociology of art (Bowler 247-265). As Goldfarb has observed, "the arts' place in society is situated, and their day today functioning is explained, but their real distinctiveness, their broader cultural and political significance in the historical development of society is ignored" (quoted in 248).

As Anne Bowler argues, the methodological argument for the autonomy of art poses a direct challenge to the principle of aesthetic neutrality. Artistic works and practices are neither a reflection of society nor a secondary byproduct of some presumably more basic or "objective" social

mechanisms (Bowler 252) Williams's decisive rejection of a base/superstructure model of art and society has been a problematic within Marxist aesthetics as well as within sociological approaches to the study of art where the work of art continues to appear as the manifestation of some other social processes (*Keywords* 165-6). Williams's critique of the concepts of base and superstructure as well as the post-structuralist theories of discourse and power which point to the active role of language and other sign systems in society (Barthes, 1972; Foucault, 1980, 1984; Williams, 1977) have all been influential in this respect.

In his sociological approach Williams has adopted the concept of "specificity" from Bakhtin, which is identical with Goldfarb's term "distinctiveness" of aesthetic forms and practices (Williams 1977, 1989; Goldfarb 1985, 1989). Therefore an adequate sociology of culture has to come to terms with questions of genre, form, content, narrative, representation, aesthetic convention and intertextuality only by direct argument with the work of art (Bowler 252).

Williams's discussion of the social history of dramatic forms is an attempt to understand the conditions of literary practice. According to him, materials for the sociology of culture are much more readily identifiable in drama. Within the complex possibilities of drama as a multivocal form, new kinds of univocal speech like soliloquy were embedded as well as protected:

Thus it was above all in drama that the otherwise general processes of change in conceptions of the self and society were articulated and realized. The ways in which the same changes entered the written single poem or philosophical discourse or narrative are quite different, and of a less powerful kind. For it was above all in the conditions of dramatic practice that these exploratory and still uncertain relations could be practically composed: in the speech forms, most evidently, but also in the fertile complex of shifting relations between the multivocal and the univocal, and between the man speaking in a role and the man speaking as and for himself (*Culture* 147).

Forms of art embody certain types of social relationships. Williams discusses the point with reference to Greek tragedy and English Renaissance drama. In Greek tragedy he traces the social articulation of the dramatic to pre-dramatic activity. From the pre-dramatic form, the dithyramb or choric hymn there gradually emerged dialogue between actors and with that, the total exclusion of the chorus. In the process of this formal maturity, drama emerged as a universal and autonomous general form. That way the emergence of drama was "sociologically precise" and it embodied different social relations (*Culture* 150).

Within the different social orders of Renaissance England, there was the development of a form of dramatic speech with deliberate diversity, which was linguistically co-extensive with the whole range of society. That way, the socio-linguistic range was producing not a single form but a *community of*

forms, a phenomenon more evident in its English successors—in the Restoration, Elizabethan and Jacobean drama. Shakespearean tragedy, for instance, admitted an open interaction of social order and social disintegration, which in Jacobean tragedy was substituted by the forces and terms of power and were extraordinarily dramatized as the "war of all against all" (*Culture* 154-57).

Restoration forms like the heroic drama and the comedy of manners have a distinct sociology punctuated by the rationalization of absolute power in a period of bloody civil war. The heroic drama could abstract and isolate a sovereign moral order represented as internalized and projected conflict of individual ambitions, desires and restraints. The comedy of manners, on the other hand, presents an unmistakably bourgeois world, highly competitive and self-displaying in which money and property, rather than political power, were the real social preoccupations (160-1).

In the immediately succeeding phase there emerged in England, in the first half of the eighteenth century, another form called the bourgeois drama. This form is outstanding in the history of English drama as an exceptionally ideological class-consciousness of a new social order. Its emergence is an indication of the way in which a once powerful form could decay from within. According to Williams, the following are the determining factors of the

bourgeois tragedy from which the distinctive deep signals and conventions of modern drama originated:

1. The material of drama came to be defined as contemporary.
2. Its material came to be indigenous in the sense that there was a congruity between the time, place and milieu of the dramatic action and performance.
3. There was the generalization of a quasi-colloquial form of dramatic speech in full development.
4. There was the new social extension and inclusiveness so that all lives, regardless of rank, could become the material of serious drama.
5. There was a new secularism, i.e. human action was portrayed in exclusively human terms (*Culture* 163-67).

A key point in the development of bourgeois drama was the emergence of naturalism. As a dramatic form, its distinctive quality was a specific variation of secularism. It was not a merely neutral abstention from supernatural interventions or agencies but a positive emphasis, which produced newly perceived relations between human actions and a material environment. Such a physical grasp of the man-made world was profoundly characteristic of the bourgeoisie, and especially the capitalist social order. The material location of its dramatic convention was the relation between

men and things in the new urban industrial economy, a point excellently illustrated in Ibsen's *The Wild Duck* (*Culture* 168-69).

In the early decades of the twentieth century, three kinds of forms emerged, each sustained by a distinctive ideology: Symbolic abstraction, subjective expressionism and social expressionism. Both subjective expressionism and social expressionism were breaks beyond materialism. Symbolic abstraction, in contrast, was an attempted break back. It was associated with political and cultural reaction and so sought to cancel both the naturalist and the general bourgeois emphases (cf. the plays of Yeats and T.S. Eliot). The movement rejected each of the five factors of bourgeois drama and evolved a new symbolism of the 'unconscious' of the individual.

The impulse of subjective expressionism was the dramatization of isolation and exposure: the cry of the lost individual in a meaningless world. Both the given material environment and the given social relationship were radically excluded from the form. While it is still bourgeois in form, sociologically, it is radically detached from the bourgeois as a class in society. Social expressionism developed through the works of Toller and Kaiser, the epic theatre of Brecht and to modern radical drama. It typically "projected and polarized" the contending social forces, while social realism typically "described" and "represented" them (*Culture* 175-78).

Williams observes that there was the dominance of a single literary form in earlier societies. But the modern extended societies produces alternative forms with its complexities as well as conflicts. Therefore a theory and an analysis based purely on 'form' is not tenable. As Williams puts it, "On the contrary the historical basis of all socio-formal analysis should be seen as reinforced by the historical character of this shift from singular to multiple forms of cultural composition" (*Culture* 180).

In the last Chapter of the book Williams discusses the concept "organization." Here he makes an attempt to indicate the complex interrelations between all the previous concepts. In his view the modern history of culture is, in fact, a search for concepts. Williams finds that the sense of culture, which stems from a relational range of meanings as "whole ways of life," "states of mind," and "works of art" constitute too wide a generality and too narrow a specialization. Of course, it is necessary to distinguish the various systems – economic, political and generational – and to discuss these in their own terms. At the same time, they are necessarily elements of a wider and more general signifying system – a social system. Since they are relations between conscious and communicating human beings, it would be wrong to reduce them to the signifying system alone, for this would reduce all human actions and relationships into functions of signification. However since a signifying system is intrinsic to any system, Williams embarks on a definition of culture from that perspective.

Accordingly, culture is defined as a *realized signifying system*. Such a definition of culture has a double function, namely, 1) to make room for the study of manifestly signifying institutions, practices and works and 2) to activate the study of the relations between these and other institutions, practices and works (*Culture* 207-208).

The social organization of culture as a realized signifying system is embedded in a whole range of activities, relations and institutions. Williams finds this theoretical conception to be more effective than the sense of culture as a whole way of life, an anthropological position that he developed in his *Culture and Society*. It has the great merit of emphasizing a general system – a specific and organized system of acted and activated practices, meanings and values. It is especially powerful against the habits of a polarized, separate analysis, historically developed within the capitalist social order, which, in theory and practice, compartmentalises life into economic, political, private, spiritual, leisure and the like. At the same time, if culture is a whole way of life, there can be a crucial absence of significant relational terms beyond it. For the general, relational terms of anthropology – "culture"/"nature" – are inadequate to account for highly developed and complex societies where there are several levels of social and material transformations, as for example, in a monetary currency system, human dwellings, communication or the range of the arts (*Culture* 210-11). Indeed the area of these transformations justifies the idea of culture as a signifying system. And, in this way, culture is an

extensive and complex range of direct and indirect organizations to which production and reproduction were connected areas. Williams hopes that through such an analysis, where the conflicts between theory and method are resolved, an empirical sociology of culture could be extended to critical discourse (*Culture* 213).

Sociology itself has concentrated on the more evident institutions and their effects. These cultural areas which are of direct interest to general sociology has been defined as the "social status and formation of intellectuals," and is concerned with the class status and class connection of the intellectuals. Williams finds that the few studies undertaken by Gramsci (trans 1971) and Manheim (1936, 1956) are not fully satisfactory because in these there are unresolved theoretical problems, which directly affect the methods of inquiry.

The very definition of intellectuals is problematic. As Gramsci said, "all men are intellectuals . . . but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals" (qtd *Culture* 215). His distinction between "traditional" and "organic" intellectuals makes a reference only to class relations. It is not complete as a definition. It is then necessary to interpret the specific activities and relations, which led to those modern definitions of "intellectuals" by general historical and social principles. Indeed ideas and concepts are the specialized concerns of "intellectuals" and are both produced and reproduced

in the whole social and cultural fabric. Of course, participation in the process is socially and historically variable (215-17).

In developing and complex societies, there are markedly uneven relations between cultural producers and the general social system. It may be either due to the "relative autonomy" or the "relative distance" of cultural producers (artists and intellectuals), which are socially and historically variable in terms of integration, which is characteristic of the particular social order. Since these are questions crucial to cultural sociology, at this stage, Williams finds that Weber's and Manheim's sociological formulation of a "relatively uncommitted intelligentsia" is of no use, for the very idea begs the cultural questions of relative autonomy and relative distance. Similarly the emphasis on ideology in relation to cultural production falls short of a working sociological theory of cultural production and organization. The Althusserian argument is that a prevailing social order produces, and is reproduced by, a general ideology. The intellectuals (cultural producers) and their cultural work is then definable as the practice of an ideological state apparatus (Althusser 1971). But, Williams maintains that,

More generally, the empirically unsustainable emphasis on the *state* ideological apparatus can be replaced by the more plausible proposition of control of the ideological apparatus by a dominant *class*, working in general institutional and market

terms as well as (or rather than) directly through state organizations (*Culture* 222).

Therefore Williams offers three kinds of amendment with a view to provide initial sociological explanation to the Weber-Manheim definition of culture. First, there are the specific conditions of asymmetry between a capitalist market and a bourgeois social order. Second, there are the conditions of internal institutional reproduction, which have developed criteria of independent intellectual work, forming basis for original or critical production. And third, a dominant social order of this type does not exclude important organizations based on different, alternative or oppositional, social and social-class interests. These three institutional conditions can be empirically investigated, in relation to actual production, with historically and locally variable results (222-23).

The condition of general asymmetry between the market and the established social order, privileged cultural institutions like the universities which lead to complex sectoral formations, alternative and oppositional formations are all sociologically important cases within the area of culture. Sectoral complexities often occur within a radical intelligentsia when positioned between a political governing system and active cultural production. These are the complex realities explored in Gramsci's (trans 1971) analysis of "hegemony" and of "organic" intellectuals. In practice, this constitutes the most difficult problem faced by alternative and oppositional

cultural work. These are the sociological terms of reference within which the problem of the intellectuals or cultural producers can be specifically analysed (*Culture* 227-28).

Williams concludes his analysis with a few general historical and contemporary considerations. First, in a period of industrial urbanization and of universal education and general suffrage, the relation between cultural minorities and general socio-cultural organization has become problematic. The real dynamics of the socio-cultural process are most evident in the transformations of popular culture by the bourgeois market and by the state educational and political systems. Political, economic and administrative bureaucracies interlock with the expansion of cultural and educational bureaucracies and compose an organizing – a realized signifying – system. Secondly, the institution of extended markets (an international and even a world market) is a major historical development, which radically affects cultural organization. This involves cultural imports by dominant groups as well as cultural exports leading to new forms of "multinational" cultural combine. The sociology of cultural organization thus has to be shifted from the emphasis on single society systems to cultural production on a trans-national and para-national scale (228-31).

The third major historical development in cultural sociology is the crucial role of information processes. The production and distribution of

ideas and information have affected most kinds of work. It has become a qualitative part of modern economic organization as well as administration and political systems. In this way fundamental changes in the character and distribution of labour processes have radically affected the definition of cultural production and reproduction. There emerges an essentially altered situation involving contradictions between cultural consumption, forms of cultural production and distribution as well as the determining forms of political and economic control. Therefore cultural sociology has to take into consideration these altered and alterable relations. As a new discipline, it has to do with a wide variety of related subjects and their active contemporary relations in a social order. A fully responsible sociology of culture has to be analytically constructive as well as constructively analytic (*Culture* 231-33).

As Barry K. Gills argues, the key political tension in the coming era will be between the forces of neoliberal economic globalization, seeking to expand the freedom of capital, and forces of social resistance, seeking to preserve and to redefine community and solidarity. He, therefore, makes a case for acts of resistance by which we will establish our *solidarities* and our *identities*. By advocating a doctrine of the inescapable technological determination of the future, neoliberal economic globalization entrenches teleology of capital. Being both ahistorical and apolitical, it attempts inculcate the mythological notion that the political process is now merely a 'transmission mechanism' from 'capital logic' to society. When globalization,

thus, implies "the death of politics", it feeds on political cynicism, defeatism, and immobilism (3, 5-6).

It is interesting to see that in conceptualizing resistance to globalization, a cultural perspective as the one defined by Williams has been resorted to. Christine B. N. Chin and James H. Mittleman argue that in the teeth of globalizing tendencies, resistance movements shape and are constitutive of cultural processes. Assuming culture as "specific and different whole ways of life" (Williams 1977), they attempt to delve the constitutive role of power in shaping cultural critiques of economic globalization as well as patterns of struggle by revisiting the works of three master theorists of resistance: Antonio Gramsci's concept of "counter hegemony", Karl Polanyi's notion of "counter movements" and James C. Scott's idea of "infra politics" (everyday forms of resistance circulated as "hidden transcripts") (30-31).

As Fred Inglis points out *Culture* was a book, which Williams wrote in a trice (302). But then, it can be seen as a significant theoretical buttress to Cultural Studies. As the Italian critic Fernando Ferrara says, the centrality of cultural studies in Raymond Williams's thought is strictly linked to the complexity of his views of society and politics:

In order to grasp the complexity of all the practices, institutions, forces and discourses, which make up that many-sided whole we now call 'civil society', in order to 'see where we are' and also to work out a model capable of transforming our

whereabouts by abolishing the negative forces and by 'liberating . . . our real . . . energies,' a deep comprehension of what culture actually is and an accurate description of the forms of consciousness, of the institutions, and of the practices which make up its complex whole is necessary. This centrality of culture implies that it is a system of mediating (not merely reflecting but also partly determining) the essential forces and movements of the structural base. Williams's view of the meaning and function of culture is both the cause and effect of his peculiar type of Marxism (Ferrara 104-5).

Pierre Macherey has presented another perspective, which is akin to a sociological one, in his critique of the fallacies of interpretation and explanation:

As Lenin has demonstrated in relation to Tolstoy and as we shall try to show in relation to Jules Verne and Balzac, what begs to be explained in the work is not that false simplicity which derives from the apparent unity of its meaning, but the presence of a relation, or an opposition, between elements of the exposition or levels of the composition, those disparities which point to a conflict of meaning. This conflict is not the sign of imperfection; it reveals the inscription of an *otherness* in the work, through which it maintains a relationship with that which it is not, that which happens at its margins (79).

Absence of a sociology of culture was a serious lacuna in English theory. In his memorial lecture on Lucien Goldmann (1980), Williams suggested that English literary sociology began from the need for a radical,

critical group to locate and to justify its activity and identity, and that much of the English work in literary sociology came from "practical criticism" (*Culture* 17-18). Williams, thus, emphasizes the relation of sociology to literary criticism:

To have a sociology concerned only with abstract groups, and a literary criticism concerned only with separated individuals and works, is more than a division of labour; it is a way of avoiding reality of the interpenetration, in a final sense the unity, of the most individual and the most social forms of actual life (*Culture* 29).

Such an emphasis on a sociology of literature, or better, a sociology of culture was a penalty which modern English criticism paid for the victories of the thirties' criticism which moved from the plain of a critical minority to minority culture and minority education or "from the richness of past literature to a use of the past against the present, as if, the past and never the future, were the only sources of values" (28). This was a position counter productive both sociologically and culturally:

[. . .] the most active relations between literary and social studies, and the most fundamental and continuing relations between literature and real societies, including present society, have in effect been pushed away from attention, because in theory and in practice any critical examination of them would disturb, often radically, our existing social relations and the

division of interests and specialisms which both expresses and protects them (*Culture* 28).

In his early theoretical works like *Culture and Society* and *The Long Revolution*, Williams had turned to a more effective way of looking at the different levels of culture – lived culture and selective culture. He has now moved away from his attempts to reconcile the different levels of meaning in the term 'culture' which was his prime concern to the concrete realization of a common culture in its relationship to the structure of society. In so doing, he makes a transition from what was essentially an idealist approach to culture in his book *Culture and Society* to the recognition of the relationship between ideas and the social structures in which they are embedded. It is in the next important theoretical work *Culture* that this transition in Williams's approach to culture was fully developed (Johnson 167-68).

In the interface between the human and the material, as theory matures, cultural materialism arrives at a vital sociological premise. Dolimore and Sinfield have emphasized this formulation towards the conclusion of their "Foreword" to *Political Shakespeare* (1985):

Finally cultural materialism does not pretend to political neutrality. It knows that no cultural practice is ever without political significance . . . cultural materialism does not, like much established literary criticism, attempt to mystify its perspective as the natural, obvious or right interpretation of an allegedly given textual fact. On the contrary, it registers its

commitment to the transformation of a social order, which exploits people on the grounds of race, gender and class (VIII).

To develop this kind of an idea of a work or a cultural object, one requires a distinct critical practice, like the one, which Catherine Belsey (2003) calls "productive":

As readers and critics, we can choose actively to seek out the process of production of the text: the organization of the voices which constitute it and the strategies by which it smoothes over the incoherences and contradictions of the ideology inscribed in it. A form of criticism which refuses to reproduce the pseudo-knowledge offered by the text provides a new knowledge of the work of literature. Such a criticism does not simply reject the classic realist text as an object of consumption, imposing a form of censorship on the move of writing, which remains dominant in our society, but works to foreground its contradictions and so to read it radically. Such a criticism finds in the literary work a different object of intelligibility: it produces the text (130).

The production perspective of culture derives from Marx's idea of the forms of production, which he developed in *Capital* while discussing the wage form. The most important point Marx makes about the wage form is its deceptive nature. It lies in the capitalist extraction of profit from the worker's labour by underpaying them. Thus profit arose from the unequal exchange on the labour market. Both profit and surplus are forms of production. The wage form itself had to be analysed, and shown to be illusory, because the

mechanism of exploitation was hiding behind it. The illusory character of the wage follows from the fact that the condition under which it is paid is the agreement to perform a certain quantity of labour, while what is really being bought and sold is worker's labour power. The wage form is illusory in the sense that it hides the exploitation that goes on underneath it. It is a real and necessary appearance of the underlying mode of surplus extraction of capitalism (Himmelweit 575). As Marx puts it,

Capitalist production is not merely production of commodities, but something more. Essentially it is the production of surplus value. The worker does not produce for himself, but for capital. No longer, therefore, does it suffice that he should simply produce. He must produce surplus value. Only that worker is now "productive" who produces surplus value for the capitalist, and thus promotes the self-expansion of capital The concept of the productive worker, therefore, does not merely imply a relation between work and useful effect, between the worker and the product of his labour; but also a specific social relation of production, a relation that has come into existence through a historical process, and one thanks to which the worker is characterised as the direct means for promoting the self expansion of capital. To be a productive worker, therefore, is not a piece of good luck, but a misfortune (*Capital* 552).

What determines the magnitude of the value of a commodity is the amount of labour needed for its production, not the objectified form of that labour. The

worker then, under pressures of the market, sells this "amount of labour" which Marx calls "labour power" (585).

Marx argued that, as a connected whole, and in the perpetual flux of its renewal, every social process of production is, at the same time a process of reproduction:

The conditions of production are simultaneously the conditions of reproduction. No society can produce, that is to say reproduce, continuously, without continuously reconverting part of its products into means of production or the elements of fresh production. If the circumstances in other respects remain unchanged, it can only reproduce or maintain its wealth at the same level by replacing the means of production (the instruments of labour, the raw materials, and the auxiliary substances) consumed in the year, by an equal quantity of the same kind of articles which must be detached from the annually produced mass of products and be reincorporated into the process of production (621).

In a capitalist system both production and reproduction will be capitalist and the labour process in both cases are means to achieve the self-expansion of capital.

In the "Preface" to *A Contribution to A Critique of Political Economy* (1859) Marx stated that the mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. Material production refers to activities, which generate goods and services; social, political and

intellectual life refers to activities that generate ideas, beliefs and opinions of whatever kind, economic or otherwise. From the production theory of society Marx generated a production theory of social change. In his hypothesis Marx drew attention to the material transformation of the economic conditions of productions including technological changes. In the course of technological development Marx predicted a conflict between material productive forces and existing relations of production – between technology and job descriptions. These job descriptions like self, wageworker, feudal lord, company director, can be expressed in legal terms as property relations. Those property relations are but a legal expansion for the existing relations of production. In Marx's view, the conflict between technology and those property relations, which have a bearing on the productive process, heralds an epoch of social revolution; this happens when those property relations no longer promote the development of productive forces but fetter them:

At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come in conflict with the existing relations of production, or – what is but a legal expression for these same thing – with property relations within which they have been at work hither to. From forms of development of productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. They begin an epoch of social revolution, with the change of the economic foundations the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed. In considering such transformations a distinction should always be made between the material

transformations of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic, or philosophic – in short, ideological forms in which man become conscious of this conflict and fight it out. Just as our opinion of an individual is not based on what he thinks of himself, so can we not judge of such a period of transformation by its own consciousness; on the contrary, this consciousness must be explained rather from the contradictions of material life, from the existing conflict between the social productive forces and the relations of production (*Capital* 390-91).

Marx expected that at the culmination of an epoch of social revolution, the entire immense superstructure would be more or less rapidly transformed owing to the change in economic foundations. Therefore the material transformation of the economic conditions of production could be precisely charted. This, rather than with superstructural phenomena (the consciousness which is defined by social being) is the point at which social analysis must begin. Marx singled out legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic ideas, beliefs and opinions as forms in which men become conscious of this conflict – with the economic foundations – and fight it out. These are ideological forms of thought (Carver 41).

The above discussion provides the framework in Marx's terms of how a market culture is reproduced. Ideology, then, is a linking concept to account for the contradiction or discrepancy between appearance and essence.

Ideology becomes the process, both conscious but largely unconscious, through which a distortion, blurring, generalizing and decontextualizing of realities occur, all to the benefit of one particular group within the society. Thus Althusser conceptualizes a general theory of ideology in which the function of ideology is to secure cohesion in society by the domination of one class. It is a "representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (Althusser 153). It "interpellates" individuals and constitutes them as subjects who accept their role within the system of production relations:

In every social formation, the base requires the support [*Trager*] function as a function to be assumed, as a place to be occupied in the technical and social division of labour. This requirement remains abstract: the base defines the *Trager*-function (the economic base and the political or ideological superstructure as well), but the question of *who* must assume and carry out this function, and how the assumption of it might come about, is a matter of *perfect indifference* to the structure (base or superstructure) that defines this function: it doesn't want to know anything about it (as in the army).

It is ideology, which performs the function of designating the subject (in general) that is to occupy this function: to that end, it must *interpellate it* as subject, providing it with the reasons of-a-subject for assuming the function. Ideology interpellates individuals by constituting them as subjects (ideological subjects) and therefore subjects of its discourse and providing

them with *the* reasons-of-a subject (interpellated as a subject) for assuming the functions defined by the structure as functions-of-a-Trajer. These reasons-of-a-subject appear explicitly in its ideological discourse, which is therefore necessarily a discourse that relates to the subject to which it is addressed and therefore necessarily includes the subject as a signifier of this discourse; that is why the subject must appear in person among the signifiers of ideological discourse. In order for the individuals to be constituted as an interpellated subject, it must recognize itself as a subject in ideological discourse, must figure in it: whence a first specular relation, thanks to which the interpellated subject can see itself in the discourse of interpellation (Matheron 51-52).

In this way ideology is articulated with the economic and political structures by which the *Trajer* function transforms it into a subject-function. Thus ideology *is* personal, 'concrete'; it is not blank, but as the ideology of 'mass' industry explicitly says, 'personalized' (56).

Among Western Marxists, Adorno consciously struggled to turn the arguments of mandarin cultural despair in an ultimately positive direction. He implicitly drew on the typically mandarin distinction between culture and civilization, but at the same time warned against the fetishistic hypostatization of *Kulture* as a realm of pure values above society. Though he distinguished between high and mass culture, he never forgot that "all culture shares the guilt of society" (*Prisms* 26). At the same time, he did not allow himself to

feel that nostalgia for lost communities, which animated many of his contemporaries, even as, at times, he seemed to yearn for the realm of the presumably authentic individuals of early bourgeois culture. While he distanced himself from regressive fantasies of organic wholeness in the past, he also rejected all attempts to posit any new ones of the present. The materialist in him balked at the domination of objective otherness did not imply in idealist dreams of a fully constitutive meta-subjectivity, nor was he impressed with the claims of thinkers like Martin Heidegger to have located a realm of Being prior to the split between subject and object. In fact, unlike most mandarins, he took seriously the demands for personal, corporeal gratification revealed by psychoanalysis whose insights he sought to incorporate into his version of critical theory (Jay 19).

What brings him closer to Williams is that like most leftist intellectuals of the time, Adorno's cosmopolitanism precluded any sectarian, ethnic or religious identification. The Marxist orientation in both Adorno and Williams is quite obvious. In the "Afterword" to *Capital* Marx had written that the "philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it" (Marx 158). Almost in the same vein Adorno asserted that,

The only philosophy which can be responsibly practised in face of despair is the attempt to contemplate all things as they would present themselves from the stand point of redemption. Knowledge has no light but that shed on the world by

redemptions: all else is reconstruction, mere technique. Perspectives must be fashioned that displace and estrange the world, reveal it to be with its rifts and crevices, as indigent and distorted as it will appear one day in the messianic light (Minima Moralia 247).

Williams's theorization of the social as conceived of through change, reformation or even revolution evidently comes within the above critical tradition.

As a member of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory, Adorno's critique is a Hegelian-Marxist response to the existentialist rejection of critical reason. But his critique goes beyond a counter critique of existentialism and aspires to be a critique of the ideology inherent in its German formulation. He wants to salvage the notion of subjectivity from the idealist tendency of existentialism. At the same time, he wants to show that this theory has become a mystification of the actual process of domination. Thus, as Trent Schreger argues in the "Foreword" to *The Jargon of Authenticity*, Adorno's critique is within the tradition of Frankfurt School's critique of ideology:

The intent of critical theory is to reconstruct the generation of historical forms of consciousness in order to demonstrate how they misrepresent actual social relations and thereby justify historical forms of domination. In this way dialectical reason is actualized by critical theorists who in their reflective critiques of the basic categories of historical consciousness, seeks to reconcile men and women to the actuality of their historical

possibilities. So conceived, critical theory is a theoretical moment of the "class struggle" (IX).

In *The Jargon of Authenticity*, Adorno applies the method of immanent criticism to contemporary German existentialists (eg., Buber, Jaspers, Heidegger etc.). His basic thesis is that after World War II the philosophical perspective of existentialism became an ideological mystification of human domination – while pretending to be a critique of alienation. Adorno argues that use of existentialist terms become a jargon: a mode of magical expression which Walter Benjamin called an "aura". In the "aura" of existentialism the historical need for meaning and liberation was expressed, but in a way that mystified the actual relation between language and its objective content. Adorno's critique focuses on the jargon's incapacity to express the relation between language and truth, in that it breaks the dialectic of language by making the intended object appear "present" by the idealization inherent in the world itself:

The sign system of language, by its mere existence, takes everything, to begin with, into something that is held in readiness by society; and it depends this society in its own form prior to all content. That is what reflection stands firm against. However, the jargon drifts with the current, and would be glad to increase it, in union with the regressive formations of consciousness (41-2).

Adorno observes that in its semantic directions positivism has constantly noted the historical break between language and that which it expresses. Linguistic forms in the process of reification have outlived what they once referred to, together with the context of that reference. The completely demythologized fact would withhold itself from language; through the mere act of intending, the fact becomes an 'other' in terms of accessibility at least:

That without language there is no fact remains, even so, the thorn in the flesh and the theme of positivism, since it is here that the stubbornly mythical remainder of language is revealed Looked at in reverse, the tenacious residuum of what in archaic in language becomes fruitful only where language rubs itself critically against it; the same archaic turns into a fatal mirage when language spontaneously confirms and strengthens it The jargon shares with positivism a crude conception of the archaic in language neither of them bothers about the dialectical moment in which language, as if it were something else, wins itself away from its magical origins, language being entangled in a progressing demythologization. That particular neglect authorizes the social using of linguistic anachronism (*Jargon* 43).

There is then a disproportion between language and the rationalized society, which drives the authentics to plunder language, for they notice that one cannot speak absolutely without speaking archaically. In the objectification of the archaic is repeated that which in any case happened to language

historically: "The nimbus in which the words are being wrapped, like oranges in tissue paper, taken under its own direction the mythology of language, as if the radiant force of the words could not yet quite be trusted" (43). Language, mythology and reification thus make the jargon practicable along the whole scale of linguistic uses, reaching from Sermon to advertisement.

Adorno's analysis continues Marx's analysis of the fetishism of commodities, in that the symbolisms of the jargon do not represent actual social relations but rather symbolize only the relations between abstract concepts. Lost in the fetishisms of the jargon is the actuality of the historical development of higher consciousness. That the subject itself is formed, and deformed, by the objective configuration of institutions is forgotten, and thus reified, in the jargon's pathos of archaic primalness. Consequently, there is a loss of the objective context of human society and an idealistic compulsion of all historical consciousness into the sphere of self-experience (xiv).

As Martin Jay points out, the Marxist in Adorno deeply distrusted any concept of culture that forgot its tainted origins in social inequality. In *Prisms* Adorno insisted that all culture "ekes out its existence only by virtue of injustice already perpetrated, in the sphere of production, much as does commerce" (26). To isolate culture as something superior to society; free from its constraint was to ignore the pervasive power of the dominating totality into which modern life had coalesced. As he argues in *Prisms*,

The greatest fetish of cultural criticism is the notion of culture as such. For no authentic work of art and no true philosophy, according to their very meaning, has ever exhausted itself in itself alone, in its being-in-itself. They have always stood in relation to the actual life-process of society from which they distinguish themselves (23).

Therefore, the very hypostatization of the concept of culture as a coherent reality transcending specific works of art was a dangerous development. In his essay "Culture and Administration" Adorno wrote, "The process of neutralization – the transformation of culture into something independent and external, removed from any possible reaction to praxis makes it possible to integrate it into the organization from which it untiringly clears itself."

Again Adorno and Horkheimer had paradoxically contended that, "To speak of culture was always contrary to culture". This is because as a common denominator culture already contains in embryo that schematization and process of cataloguing and classification which brings it within the sphere of administration (131). What brings about this situation is the total reification of consciousness produced by the cultural industry. He claimed that what was passed for happiness in the present was a pale imitation of the real thing:

The culture industry perpetually cheats its consumers of what it perpetually promises. The promissory note which, with its plots and staging, it draws on pleasure is endlessly prolonged:

the promise, which is actually all the spectacle consists of, is illusory: all it actually confirms is that the real point will never be reached (139).

For Adorno, an art that expressed the palliatives of mass culture for what they were, more accurately expressed the pain of modern existence and was thus ultimately on the side of genuine pleasure. He contended that, "the secret of aesthetic sublimation is its representation of fulfillment as a broken promise. The culture industry does not sublimate; it represses" (140).

Adorno was strongly opposed to the deliberately mystifying function of culture industry. Pursuing Marx's analysis of the fetishism of commodities, he contends that the products of the culture industry were not works of art that were then turned into commodities, but were rather produced from the very beginning as fungible items for sale in the market place (*Minima* 278).

The distinction between art and advertising was obliterated, as cultural products were created for exchange rather than to satisfy any genuine need. As Adorno and Horkheimer say,

The principle of idealistic aesthetics – purposefulness without a purpose – reverses the scheme of things to which bourgeois art conforms socially: purposefulness for the purpose declared by the market. At last, in the demand for entertainment and relaxation, purpose has absorbed the realm of purposelessness (*Dialectic* 158).

Like other economic commodities, a phantasmagoric smokescreen that engendered false consciousness masked the productive origins and functional purpose of cultural objects. As Lowenthal puts it, in a phrase Adorno liked to cite, "mass culture is psychoanalysis in reverse" because instead of curing authoritarian personalities, it helped to spawn them (Jay 122).

Adorno was proposing a dialectical theory of culture, which most resist both the abstract dichotomy of culture and material life and the no less abstract denial of their distinction. In an aphorism entitled "Baby with the bath-water" from *Minima Moralia*, he spelled out his argument:

Among the motifs of cultural criticism one of the most long established and central is that of the lie: that culture creates the illusion of a society worthy of man which does not exist; that it conceals the material conditions upon which all human works rise, and that, comforting and lulling, it serves to keep alive the bad economic determination of existence. This is the notion of culture as ideology, which appears at first sight common to both the bourgeois doctrine of violence and its adversary, both to Nietzsche and Marx. But precisely this notion, like all expostulations about lies has a suspicious tendency to become itself ideology (43).

In his analysis of culture, Adorno insisted on its critical as well as ideological dimension:

If material reality is called the world of exchange value, and culture no matter what refuses to accept the domination of that

world, then it is true that such refusal is illusory as long as the existent exists. Since however, free and honest exchange is a lie, to deny it is at the same time to speak for truth: in face of the lie of the commodity world, even the lie that denounces becomes a corrective (44).

In comparison to Williams, whose method was largely empirical, Adorno was determined to preserve a critical vantage point (through a largely immanent critique) towards cultural issues which he felt was severely jeopardized by the empirical approach of mainstream sociologists of culture. However in order to buttress a genuinely critical theory Adorno was also resorting to a strain of transcendent critique through the consideration of such categories as imagination, memory, and experience as a defence of speculative theory against sociological empiricism (Jay 117-18).

As Ernst Fischer observes, the artist in the capitalist age found himself in a highly peculiar situation. Productivity, extending everywhere and to all areas of human experience, destroyed all direct relationships between producer and consumer:

Commodity production extending every where, the increasing division of labour, the splitting up of the job itself, the anonymity of the economic forces – all this destroyed the directness of human relationships and led to man's increasing alienation from social reality and from himself. In such a world art, too, become a commodity and the artist a commodity producer. Personal patronage was superseded by a freemarket

whose workings were difficult or impossible to comprehend, a conglomerate of nameless commoners, the so-called 'public'. The work of art was subjected more and more to the laws of competition (49).

The Communist Manifesto has famously recorded the cultural consequence of rabid production with great farsightedness.

Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social relations, everlasting uncertainty and agitation, distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier times. All fixed, fast-frozen relationships, with their train of venerable ideas and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become obsolete before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into thin air, all that is holy is profane . . . (45-46).

Seen from this perspective Adorno's assertions on language becomes authentic: the jargon of authenticity is ideology as language, without any specific content. The jargon conveys only the most external aspect, that thinking oneself superior which marks people who elect themselves, a personal elitist claim:

The jargon of authenticity, which sells self-identity as something higher, projects the exchange formula into that which imagines that it is not exchangeable; for as a biological individual each man resembles himself. That is what is left over after the removal of soul and immortality from the immortal soul (*Jargon* 75).

The jargon is then used to effect a "permanent metaphysical subvention." The social basis for this is provided by mediations in the market economy, which have strengthened the consciousness of alienation, the shortening of the routes between the whole and atomised individual subjects, and the technical program of the means of communication where the technical intermediations go unnoticed to the effect that a bare "confrontation" is passed for as "meeting". Thus,

In the encounters where the jargon prattles, and of which it prattles, it sides with that which it accuses, by the word "encounter," namely the over-administered world. It accommodates itself to that world through a ritual of non-accommodation (80).

It thus proves once again Adorno's dictum that, "Culture is the condition that excludes the attempt to measure it" (qtd. in Jay 118).

In his *Criticism and Ideology* (1976), Terry Eagleton presents a production perspective, which is a comparable instance of conceptualization in the sociology of culture. According to Eagleton the literary text is the product of a specific over determined conjunction of the elements of formation, which he sets out as General Mode of Production (GMP), Literary Mode of Production (LMP), General Ideology (GI), Authorial Ideology (AuI) and Aesthetic Ideology (AI). The text is so constituted by this conjunction as to actively determine its own determinants – an activity which is most

apparent in its relations to ideology (63). Eagleton offers this formulation as a critique of the materialistic aesthetics as defined by Williams in his *Culture and Society*, which Eagleton sees as flawed by humanism and idealism. Though Williams has properly insisted on the reality of art as material practice, the constituent structures of that practice have received little systematic analysis in his work. This is the ground of Eagleton's critique (44). He defines the GMP as the dominant mode of production, which characterizes a social formation. It is 'general' in the sense of being distinct from the Literary Mode of Production (LMP), by which is meant the dominant mode of literary production in a society. The relations between LMP and GMP are dialectical, in that new productive forces developed for purposes specific to the LMP may enter into the field of general production. Then, in developed capitalist social formations, the most significant relation of LMP to GMP is that of the LMP's function in the reproduction and expansion of the GMP (49).

Theorizations on the penetration of the production/reproduction perspective on culture have recently been encapsulated in the concept of "everyday life". As a key term in cultural analysis, first conceptualized and theorized by Henri Lefebvre (1991) "everyday life" expresses an emphasis upon the forms and meanings of a common or popular culture, rather than explosive province of an elite. The reference signals a broadly political perspective on cultural production and consumption, and a belief that the

routine or banal in daily life is in fact a complex field of contested cultural meanings. Lefebvre is credited with introducing the concept to Western Marxism by extending the concept of "alienation" in the early writings of Marx and Engels to all aspects of experience in post-War capitalist societies. He distinguishes between the "perceived space" of everyday social life, the "conceived space" of planners and speculators, and a third sphere of "lived space", as alternatives which art and literature have helped keep alive. Everyday life under capitalism can therefore be redeemed and given new social meanings through the creative re-appropriation of its given products and structures (Brooker 96 –97).

The sociological proclivities of "culture" have been well articulated by Eagleton. As he puts it, since the 1960s, the word "culture" has veered upon its axis to mean almost exactly the opposite. It has now become a site where national, sexual, ethnic, and regional and the like identities are affirmed and problems in these areas articulated. Culture has, thus, become part of the very lexicon of political conflict itself. It is a phenomenon, which is ingrained, in the very texture of contemporary everyday life in ironically diverse ramifications:

In Bosnia or Belfast, culture is not just what you put on the cassette player ; it is what you kill for. What culture loses in sublimity, it gains in practicality (*Idea of Culture* 38).

Considering culture in specific relation to Imperialism, Edward Said had also recognized culture as a terrain of combat: "Far from being a placid realm of Appollonian gentility, culture can even be a battle ground on which causes expose themselves to the light of day and contend with one another" (XIV).

We have seen that Williams has defined the terms of a sociology of culture as an essential equipment for an active and adequate critical practice. It now entails an examination of the ways in which he deploys such a method and defines a distinctive critical practice. The next section is an attempt in that direction.

3. Paradigms of Critical Practice

The focus of this section is on a select area of Williams's literary criticism. The works examined here are *Modern Tragedy* ([1966] 1969), *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht* ([1968] 1971), *The Country and the City* (1973) and *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence* ([1970] 1973). In these works we see a fusion of both his theory of literature and his critical practice. These works present Williams as a critic attempting to interrogate the literary tradition as part of a political endeavour. By examining artistic processes and products in new ways, he looks for the possibility for alternative social formations. As Bernard Sharrat points out, each book of Williams could be regarded as an intervention in or a situated response to literature and culture (131-49). Accordingly each of the above books could be seen as setting a new paradigm of critical practice in its respective area.

Williams's dramatic criticism and literary analysis provide a social critique, extending beyond biographical and stylistic details to considerations of material conditions and changes in the relationship between the individual and the society (Eldridge & Eldridge 122). The examination of social and material conditions in relation to dramatic analysis is a reflection of Williams's conception of culture. In his analysis, he employs the concept "structure of feeling" as "an experience communicated in a particular form through particular connections", as an existential concept, which extends from

the particular to the general (*ENDL* 12). That way it incorporates the sense of totality, of a whole way of life. This is analogous to his description of culture as "one which become almost identical with a whole common life" (249).

Drama was a chief preoccupation of Williams throughout his professional life. He occupied the chair for drama in Cambridge for quite a long time and his inaugural lecture was on "Drama in a Dramatised Society" (1985). In the 1940s and 1950s he chose drama as a topic of research, which in itself was a challenge to the Leavisian antipathy to drama (Barish 419-20). As Ian Wright points out, plays were always discussed in *Scrutiny* as if they were poems with little sense of the specific qualities of drama as performance (47). Indeed Williams's early work on drama were influenced by Leavis's idea of the qualities of 'experience' in literature and its formation. However Williams's interest from the start was on drama as a cultural form and the ways in which forms of drama change in history (O'Connor 80).

Modern Tragedy is an attempt to rewrite the 'tragic tradition'. Observing contemporary life, Williams finds that there is tragedy in "the life of a man driven back to silence in an unregarded working life", and in "the loss of connection built into works and a city, and men and women broken by the pressure to accept this as normal, and by the deferment and corrosion of hope and desire" (13). Moreover, the concept of tragedy is applied, on a wider scale, to an action of war and, crucially to social revolution. Williams

explores the historical changes in the definition of "tragedy", arguing that "it is to these pressures, of contemporary ideology and experience, that we must relate the idea of tragedy which is now temporarily dominant, but which is offered as at once historical and absolute" (*MT* 45). Earlier he had stated "critical terms and assumptions are inadequate when they are denied by our experience of literature for the description and analysis of which experience they exist" (*RC* 88-9).

Williams argues that there is no point in the conventional rejection of events as mere accidents. Such events as a mining disaster, a burnt-out family, a broken career, or a smash on the roads, are also painful events and so are tragic. Reluctance to recognize them as such amounts to a failure of understanding.

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 publication of George Steiner's *The Death of Tragedy* (1961) and the predominance of that work in the arguments around tragedy in the 1960s was the provocation for the writing of *Modern Tragedy* (Eagleton, *Perspectives* 133). Steiner argues that metaphysical commitments make the

writing of tragedy impossible in the modern period. As he says: "The metaphysics of Christianity and Marxism are anti-tragic" (324). But Christopher Butler opposes the argument on the ground that metaphysics of these types are not essentially so involved because the argument makes a false empirical assumption. And he further argues, concurring with A.C. Bradley, that it is disasters for which human agents can properly be called responsible (and not the all powerful gods, or natural processes including all types of diseases) that are tragic in the full sense of the term (Butler 84). A.C. Bradley says that "no mere suffering or misfortune, no suffering that does not spring in great part from human agency, and in some degree from the agency of the sufferer, is tragic" (81).

Williams makes a radical shift from the conventional idea of tragedy by emphasising the crucial notion of "experience". The relationship between experience, understanding and language is made peculiarly difficult by focusing upon death, but as a key term it is stretched to cover different areas of thought and feeling:

However men die, the experience is not only the physical dissolution and ending; it is also a change in the lives and relationships of others, for we know death as much in the experience of others as in our own expectations and endings. And just as death enters, continually, our common life, so any statement about death is in a common language and depends on common experience. The paradox of 'we die alone' or 'man dies

alone' is then important and remarkable: the maximum substance that can be given to the plural 'we', or to the group name 'man' is the singular loneliness. The common fact, in a common language, is offered as a proof of the loss of connection (*MT* 57).

Williams had expressed, in *Preface to Film* (1954) even a decade before the publication of *Modern Tragedy*, a concern to "generalize" about "the varieties of dramatic experience that have been called tragic" and "to distil from these works some absolute essence called Tragedy" (4).

Modern Tragedy is divided into three parts. Part one "Tragic Ideas" has four essays, part two is an analysis of modern tragic literature and part three is "Koba", a tragedy written by Williams. In the first essay of part one, "Tragedy and Experience", Williams makes a case for the modern tragic experience. Surveying the history of the idea of tragedy he criticizes a dominant contemporary ideology, according to which, tragedy is an immediate experience, a body of literature, a conflict of theory and an academic problem. His own sense of tragedy is distinct from this. He finds that in the modern period, tragedy has become at once more personal and more general:

I have known tragedy in the life of a man driven back to silence, in an unregarded working life. In his ordinary and private death, I saw a terrifying loss of connection between men, and even between father and son: a loss of connection which was,

however, a particular social and historical fact: a measurable distance between his desire and his endurance, and between both and the purposes and meanings which the general life offered him (*MT* 13).

On the other hand, conventionally, tragedy is considered to be a particular kind of event, and a kind of response which are "genuinely tragic" and which the long tradition embodies (17).

Modern interpretations of Greek tragedy, having abstracted from a general Necessity, isolates a tragic law. But uniquely this was a choral tragedy. The specific and varying relations between chorus and actors are its true dramatic relation. But eventually as culture changed, the chorus was discarded. Williams discussed this point in the context of the sociology of dramatic forms (*Culture* 149-50). Thus consequent on the change in the 'structure of feeling' the unique meaning of tragedy weakened. But this was unnoticed in popular interpretations. The transition from classical to the medieval makes this point clear. In medieval literature, tragedy was understood as narrative. Its key word is Fortune. The crucial change was from a culture in which the metaphysical and social categories were indistinguishable, to a culture in which they were, by the changed nature of the metaphysical, quite simply opposed (*MT* 23).

In the Renaissance period, with the dissolution of the feudal world, the tragic literature made new connections. Tragedy was very much mutable.

The political distinction between King and Tyrant has replaced the simple exposure of 'eminence' and the emphasis on 'affects' (*MT* 23). Broadly, the idea of tragedy ceased to be metaphysical and became critical, and the development was complete in the neoclassical critics of the seventeenth century who recognized the new significance of exalted rank in tragedy. It was in tune with the "grand" style (*gravis*) of the period. But Lessing reformulated the whole order. A theoretical rejection of neoclassicism, a defence of Shakespeare, and an advocacy and writing of bourgeois tragedy was the major contribution of Lessing. It is useful to see these changes historically, as examples of the 'selective tradition'. Thus, the Elizabethan tragedy dramatizes a very complicated relationship between elements of an inherited order and elements of a new humanism (30).

All drama after the Renaissance was secular and the only fully religious tragedy was the Greek. Yet the decisive factor was not the context of institutions, but the wider context of beliefs. Elizabethan drama was thoroughly secular in its immediate practice, but it undoubtedly retained a Christian consciousness. Neoclassicism was then the first stage of substantial secularisation (30).

There was the increasing emphasis on a rational morality, which affected tragic action in an important way: it insisted on relating suffering to moral action, and so required the tragic action to demonstrate a moral scheme.

In contrast to Eighteenth century conception of a static human nature, a new bourgeois moral emphasis developed. The concept of decorum, which implied a belief in redemption rather than in dignified endurance, was its concomitant. In this sense, tragedy views suffering as a consequence of error; happiness as a consequence of virtue – a "poetic justice". The insistence on "poetic justice" became a matter of ideology, an "adjustment" within the tradition of church and humanism (*MT* 31).

When it comes to Hegel, the important component of tragedy was not suffering as such but its causes. His definition of tragedy was centered on a conflict of ethics, which, then, is limited to certain cultures and periods. Hegel's emphasis on the necessary conflict, and on the tragic issue as a resolution, has been widely influential. Bradley shifted the emphasis to self-division and self-restitution to produce a psychological rather than an ethical theory of tragedy. The history of spirit in the world loses its general and objective character and becomes a process working within individuals (35).

Under the influence of Marx, a major shift in emphasis occurred and the objective character of the history of spirit was at once reaffirmed and transformed. The conflict of ethical forces, and their resolution by a higher force, was seen in historical and social terms. Social development was viewed as necessarily contradictory in character, and tragedy as something occurring at those points where the conflicting forces must, by their inner nature, take

action and carry the conflict through to a transformation. Here Marx was adopting a description of a spiritual process from Hegel and making it a description of a social process (*MT* 36).

After Hegel, in the work of Hebbel, tragedy became the conflict between the individual and the "Idea" which through social and religious institutions, both shapes and limits him. Tragedy is, then, fundamentally associated with the great crises of human growth: the Greek conflict "between man and fate", and the dualism of man in the Renaissance. This is the first theoretical formulation of a subsequently important area of modern drama: the new form of liberal tragedy (36).

Schopenhauer presents a view radically opposed to this, namely, the secularisation of Fate. Suffering in the sense that the will to live becomes dead purifies the heroes of tragedy. Within this kind of an absolute negation, Nietzsche found, paradoxically, a new kind of tragic affirmation, an aesthetic of tragic delight in man's inevitable suffering, which the action of tragedy shows in order to transcend it. Tragedy thus dramatises a tension, which it resolves in a higher unity (38-39).

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche holds that tragedy is "an Apollonian embodiment of Dionysiac insights and powers" (qtd *MT* 39). It creates heroes, but in order to destroy them, as a way of asserting the primal unity and joy of life. "The hero, the highest manifestation of the will, is

destroyed, and we assent, since he too is merely a phenomenon, and the eternal life of the will remains unaffected" (qtd *MT* 39). Tragedy in Nietzsche is related to determining a cultural crisis. It becomes a powerful idea through which the opposition between humanity and contemporary society is expressed and dramatised. And further this widespread experience was lifted at once into an absolute and generalized idea, into an opposition between 'life' and 'the phenomenal world' which was transcended by tragedy. The action of tragedy is not moral not purgative, but aesthetic: ". . . tragic myth, through the figure of the hero, delivers us from our avid thirst for earthly satisfaction and reminds us of another existence and a higher delight . . . not through his victories, but through his undoing" (qtd *MT* 40).

Another historically important element in Nietzsche's argument is his account of myth: "only a horizon ringed about with myth can unify a culture The disappearance of tragedy also spelled the disappearance of myth". And the cause of this disappearance, in Greek culture, was the rise of the 'Socratic spirit', which considers knowledge to be the true panacea, and error to be radical evil. Ever since Socrates, the dialectical drive toward knowledge and scientific optimism has succeeded in turning tragedy from its source. A rebirth of tragedy could occur "only when science had at last been pushed to its limits, and, faced with these limits, been forced to remove its claim to universal validity" (qtd *MT* 41). The Cambridge School of Classical Anthropologists interpreted tragedy on the basis of 'myth' and 'ritual' which

not only serves to rationalize a post-Christian metaphysic, but the conversion of the ritual figure to a form of the modern hero (*MT* 42-43).

Tragic experience is commonly affected by the fundamental beliefs and tensions of a period. It is possible to realize through it the shape and set of a particular culture. Though tragic theory is interesting in this sense, there is no point in assuming a permanent, universal and essentially unchanging human nature. Rejection of such a notion amounts to transforming the problem in opposition to the universalist character of most tragic theories: "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" (45-46). There is however a tendency (in modern tragic theory) to deny the possibility of "modern tragedy", even after almost a century of important, continuous and insistent tragic art. This could be explained partly on the ground of the incapacity to "make connections" within the whole (modern) structure and partly on the ground of the academic training of the nineteenth century theoreticians who systematised a valuation of the past against the present and a separation between critical theory and creative practice. It is therefore necessary to make a break within this theory in order to critically evaluate the tragic art produced in the modern period and to see the controlling structures of feeling. From that perspective the major points of the theory will be order and accident, the destruction of the hero, the

irreparable action and its connection with death, and the emphasis on evil (46).

Williams rationalises the point by rejecting the distinction between an event and the response to an event in an absolute way:

[. . .] in the case of ordinary death and suffering, when we see mourning and lament, when we see men and women breaking under their actual loss, it is at least not self-evident to say that we are not in the presence of tragedy But where the suffering is felt, where it is taken into the person of another, we are clearly within the possible dimensions of tragedy (*MT* 47).

The dismissal of such apparently tragic events as mere "accidents" is an indication of the fact that "the ordinary academic tradition of tragedy is in fact an ideology" (48). So "what is in question is not the process of connecting an event to a general meaning, but the character and quality of the general meaning itself" (48).

It is only because of a preconceived and eventually systematised notion of order (of rank, position or titles) and its consequent abstraction and mystification in theory, that there was a refusal to find significance in ordinary tragic events. As a result even major theorists' attempts at a definition of tragedy fell victim to a stubborn sense of specificity:

Hegel's insistence on ethical substance, and his connection of this with a process of historical embodiment of the Idea, was a

major attempt to meet the new situation. Marx pushed the connection further, into a more specific history. But, increasingly, the idea of the permanent 'nature of things' became separated from any action that could be felt as contemporary, to the point where even Nietzsche's brutal rationalization of suffering could be welcomed as specific (*MT* 51).

The dire consequence of the situation was that "behind the façade of the emphasis on order, the substance of tragedy withered" (51). This, in effect, handicapped both theory as well as critical method. "The ideas of order matter, critically, only when they are in solution in particular works; as precipitates they are of only documentary interest" (53). Therefore at this stage it could be concluded that "The real action embodies the particular meaning, and all that is common, in the works we call tragedies, is the dramatisation of a particular and grievous disorder and its resolution" (53).

The common interpretation of tragedy as the irreparable action in which the hero is destroyed is a partial one. In almost all tragedies the hero is destroyed, but that is not normally the end of the action. Some new distribution of forces, physical or spiritual, normally succeeds the death, as for example, in Greek tragedy; the hero's death is followed by a religious affirmation; in Elizabethan tragedy, a change of power in the state. "We think of tragedy as what happens to the hero, but the ordinary tragic action is what happens through the hero" (*MT* 55). What constitutes tragic action, then, is the coming back of life after so much suffering and so important a death,

reaffirming and restoring the meaning of life. In other words "The life that is continued is informed by the death; has indeed, in a sense, been created by it" (56). In this sense tragedy cannot be generalized as the response to death, but as the bare irreparable fact.

Death is inescapable, but it has its cultural significance. In tragedy what is most valuable (life), and what is most irreparable (death) are set in an inevitable relation and tension. But when this contradiction is generalised as an absolute fact of human existence it amounts to the suppression of the relation and tension and then tragedy becomes not an action but a deadlock. Again, if this deadlock is claimed to be the whole meaning of tragedy, then, it is the projection into history of a local structure that is both culturally and historically determined. As such, isolation of death in the modern times amounts to the recognition of human loneliness and the loss of human connection and the consequent blindness of human destiny. It is then a theoretical formulation of liberal tragedy rather than a universal principle. The tragic action is about death, but it need not necessarily end in death. Death is a necessary actor, but not the necessary action. This is a recurrent pattern in contemporary tragic argument (*MT* 56-58).

The emphasis on evil in contemporary tragic argument is the result of a particular ideology. It could be so understood crucially in relation to the concentration camps. There is then, also, the inevitable contradiction: while

some men are imprisoned, others are liberated. Evil is neither an absolute condition, nor a transcendent one. It is a matter of ideology and so its appropriation to the theory of tragedy is significant. Tragedy shows that the fact of evil is inescapable and irreparable. Tragedy is then a theoretical reminder against the illusions of humanism (*MT* 59). Culturally, evil is a name for many kinds of disorder, which corrode or destroy actual life. In this way it is a common element in tragedy in different forms: vengeance or ambition or pride or coldness or lust or jealousy or disobedience or rebellion. Its full comprehension, in every case, is only possible within the valuations of a particular culture or tradition. Tragedy dramatises evil, but it is not transcendent but actual and indeed negotiable. It therefore teaches nothing but evil or it ends with evil absolute, but with evil both experienced and lived through. Therefore the ultimate critical concern is not with meanings alone but with the very tragic experience (61).

After examining tragedy and contemporary ideas, Williams moves on to an analysis of the relation between tragedy and revolution. This section is the most "individual" part of his study. Here he is concerned with "the structure of tragedy in our own culture" (62). Since the time of the French Revolution, the idea of tragedy has been seen as a response to a culture in conscious change and movement. The action of tragedy and the action of history have been consciously connected but the idea of tragedy has been explicitly opposed by the idea of revolution. However, there is a significant

connection between tragedy and revolution. The most evident connection is in the actual events of history. A historical sense of tragedy is that it is a cultural form of revolutionary action for humanity being shaped by history (*MT* 60).

A time of revolution is so much a time of violence, dislocation and extended suffering that it is natural to feel it as tragedy. But it becomes different when the events become history. Many nations look back to the revolutions of their history as to an era of creation of a precious life. "The successful revolution, we might say, becomes not tragedy but epic: it is the origin of a people, and of its valued way of life. When the suffering is remembered, it is at once either honoured or justified. That particular revolution, we say, was a necessary condition of life" (64). In the process, the social fact becomes a "structure of feeling". To a common sense, revolution is a tragedy, a time of chaos and suffering – a social disorder. The living alternative is neither the rejection of revolution, nor the calculation of revolution, not yet experienced. It is, rather, the recognition of revolution as a whole action of living men (65).

As tragedy can be reduced to the death of the hero, so revolution can be reduced to its crisis of violence and disorder. Revolution asserts the possibility of men altering their conditions; tragedy shows its impossibility, and the consequent spiritual effects (*MT* 65). In its actual course, the tragic

action often undercuts the commonsensical association between fundamental human values and the acknowledged social system. Though liberal tragedy inherited such a pattern, liberalism steadily encoded the conception of a permanent human nature and of a static social order with connections to a divine order. The early idea of revolution, in the modern sense, took its origins in the contradictions between these two (*MT 68*).

The idea of tragedy in the literature of naturalism is that of passive suffering, because it is based on the belief that man can only endure and can never really change his world. Endurance was mechanical, because man and his world are both understood to be the products of an impersonal and material process, which is liable to change through time. This naturalism, which began in liberalism, ends as a system challenged by liberalism. But this mechanical naturalism, while claiming its origin in reason, was theatrically and factually a mystification of real social activity and, as such, discredited reason itself. It was thus moving towards the other major liberal movement, namely, subjectivism and romanticism (*MT 69*).

Though Romanticism is the most important expression in modern literature of the first impulse of social revolution, its major thrust was towards the separation of revolution from society (*MT 72-72*). The Romantic attitude to Enlightenment's reason is decisive in that it was opposed to its abstraction into a mechanical system. This involved the alienation of the rational into a

system of mechanical materialism, which produced an "evolutionary" society from which human activity and aspiration were alienated. The liberal idea of revolution was a movement along an inevitable evolutionary process.

Anyway the relation between revolution and tragedy is inescapable and urgent. The revolutionary societies have been tragic societies. At this point the ideology of revolution as liberation fails and the ideology of tragedy takes its place either in the belief that man cannot change his conditions or that the rational control over social destiny is defeated by the inevitable irrationality of violence and cruelty (*MT* 74).

According to Williams, though socialism is the true and active inheritor of the impulse to human liberation, revolution is the inevitable working through of a deep and tragic disorder. In this context, Marx's early ideas of revolution seem to be "tragic". Revolution need not be identified with violence or with a sudden capture of power. "Even where such events occur, the essential transformation is indeed a long revolution" (76). But the litmus test of a revolution is the way in which it affects deep structure of relationships and feelings. "A society in which a revolution is necessary is a society in which the incorporation of all its people, *as whole human beings*, is in practice impossible without a change in its fundamental form of relationships" (76). Therefore revolution remains necessary even though it is

tragic and turns against other men in the process of combating denial of humanity to a class of men.

Revolution as the "total redemption of humanity" is born in "pity and terror" – degeneration, brutalisation, fear, hatred, envy – all are experiences of evil. Revolution is therefore opposed, on the one hand, on the grounds of privilege, and on the other hand, on grounds of violence, bitterness and revenge. Interpretation of revolution as a slow and peaceful growth of consensus is both a local experience and an ideology (false consciousness). The experiences of Korea, Suez, the Congo, Cuba, and Vietnam are not mere local upheavals or 'brushfires' but names of "our own crises". Contemporary names like Cosowa, Kuwait, Afghanistan, Checkoslovakia, Iraq, etc. could be added to the list. These were described as 'morally virtuous', 'peace-keeping' activities. The success part of the story ironically is "to acquiesce in a disorder and call it order, to say peace where there is no peace" (*MT* 80). Such false peace keeping and false appeal to order is common in the action of tragedy and accounts for the tragedy of revolution (80-81). Incidentally, such acts of "false commitment" as using the misery of others for political purposes are an act of false revolution, the most evident example being fascism. "The tragic action, in its 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" (*MT* 83).

As Williams suggests, there is in theory a fusion of tragedy and revolution; their only apparent difference being a matter of form: while revolution is a historical form, tragedy is a form of art: to both men are spectators:

We have to see the evil and the suffering, in the factual 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 evil, but the men who have fought against evil; not only the crisis, but the energy released by it, the spirit learned in it. We make the connections, because that is the action of tragedy, and what we learn in suffering is again revolution, because we acknowledge others as men and any such acknowledgement is the beginning of struggle, as the continuing reality of our lives. Then to see revolution in this tragic perspective is the only way to maintain it (*MT* 83-84).

The second part of *Modern Tragedy* is an analysis of modern tragic literature, both dramatic and fictional. Here Williams lists seven types of tragic literature:

- 1) The plays of Ibsen and Miller as instances of 'liberal tragedy' where the shift in emphasis is from hero to victim;
- 2) The plays of Strindberg, O'Neill and Tennessee Williams, as instances of 'private tragedy';

- 3) 'Social' and 'personal' tragedy as in the works of Tolstoy and Lawrence;
- 4) 'Tragic deadlock and stalemate' in the works of Chekhov, Pirandello, Ionesco and Beckett;
- 5) The plays of Eliot and Pasternak's novel as examples of tragic resignation and sacrifice;
- 6) 'Tragic despair and revolt' in the works of Camus and Sartre, and
- 7) A 'rejection of tragedy' in Brecht's plays (*MT* 87-204).

This is the logical upshot of his earlier discussion of tragic ideas and experiences. Pivotal to Williams's analysis of drama is the concept "structure of feeling", which in the case of Ibsen, for example, is manifested in the following instances:

The humanist exploration of the unknown reaches of life; the bourgeois preoccupation with humanitarianism and with money; the romantic intensities of alienation, remorse and perverted desire; the social recognition of dead institutions and limiting beliefs; all these are present in Ibsen, but as active combinations not as separate influences (*MT* 95-96).

He rejects the notion that tragedy is impossible in the twentieth century because contemporary philosophical assumptions are non-tragic. By an incisive analysis of their work from a cultural vantage point, Williams makes

another very significant observation. That is, the modern humanism is not to be adduced from the Enlightenment or Renaissance:

What is more important to notice is that the three characteristically new systems of thinking, in our own time – Marxism, Freudianism, Existentialism – are all, in their most common forms, tragic. Man can achieve his full life only after violent conflict; man is essentially frustrated, and divided against himself, while he lives in society; man is torn by intolerable contradictions, in a condition of essential absurdity. From these ordinary propositions, and from their combination in so many minds, it is not surprising that so much tragedy has in fact emerged (*MT* 189).

Modern Tragedy is a significant work in that it combines both theory and applied criticism. It is a vibrant attempt at situating modern tragic works in the context of socio-political premises. In this way, it could be seen as a radical endeavour to problematise literary works as historical phenomena, by questioning dominant interpretations of form, content and concept. It thus challenges standard academic usage of the term 'tragedy' and in the attempt to redefine it suggests connections, which have been lost or hidden (Eldridge and Eldridge 127).

As a novel oeuvre in literary study, *Modern Tragedy* has been subject to severe criticism. Walter Stein criticized the book for establishing its own deterministic framework, "a tendency to equate the problem of modern

tragedy more and more totally with the problem of tragedy and revolution" (Stein 187). Frank Kermode attacks Williams's writing style and his method of argument as "a personally satisfying structure of feeling" (Kermode 85). Stuart Hampshire describes his own response to *Modern Tragedy* as one of "wandering around in a circle, from the imagined social experience to the dramatic literature, and from the literature to the social experience", and suggests that such an approach could result in the sensation of dizziness on the part of the reader (qtd Eldridge and Eldridge 127). All these criticisms arise from Williams's use of the concept of "structure of feeling" as a critical tool, the vitality of which has been well brought out by Eldridge and Eldridge:

This concept is essential to Williams's analytical approach – enabling him to analyse specific issues while incorporating and implying related factors – as well as to his writing style, the precision over definitions sometimes appearing to contrast with the seemingly endless ramifications of his arguments However, the pendulum-like movement between the literature and the social experience is an inevitable aspect of Williams' methodological approach. When writing about one, he is, as implied by the concept of 'structure of feeling', writing about the other (127).

Williams's writing style and his continual attempt to challenge orthodox opinions are part of his political intention to extend the understanding of literature and its relationship to society. By examining artistic processes and products in new ways Williams seeks the possibility for

alternative social formations. This is an approach, which informs *Modern Tragedy* in its radical posture of analysis. On a wider scale, the concept of tragedy is applied to an action of war, and crucially to social revolution. Before relating common tragic experience to literature and theory, Williams explores historical changes in the definition of 'tragedy' and argues, "it is to these pressures, of contemporary ideology and experience, that we must relate the idea of tragedy which is now temporarily dominant, but which is offered as at once historical and absolute" (MT 45). Already he has made clear in the *Long Revolution* that "all the acts of men compose a general reality within which both art and what we ordinarily call society are comprised" (MT 69).

In the corpus of Williams's critical works *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht* ([1968] [1971]) occupies a unique position. This is a revised version of his earlier work *Drama from Ibsen to Eliot* (1964) and one, which presents a more developed critical perspective. In both the works Williams uses the concept of 'structure of feeling' as denoting practical experience which provides him with a means of examining history not just as product but as *process*. It enables him to analyse literary development in relation to patterns of *social* change where rigid determinism is being replaced by interrelationship. It has been argued that Williams's concept is closer to C. Wright Mill's notion of "the sociological imagination" for, in both, there is an attempt to conceptualise the interrelation between areas of individual and

general experience, private and public processes, and social structures and historical formations. As Mills clarifies, his concept,

enables its possessor to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals. It enables him to take into account how individuals, in the welter of their daily experience, often become falsely conscious of their social positions The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within the society. (Mills 5-7)

In *Marxism and Literature* (1977) Williams argues that 'structure of feeling' is also applicable to cultural theory in that it is,

a way of defining forms and conventions in art and literature as inalienable elements of a social material process: not by derivation from other social forms and pre-forms, but as social formation of a specific kind which may in turn be seen as the articulation (often the only fully available articulation) of structures of feeling which as living processes are much more widely experienced (133).

In his attempt to formulate a 'fully social theory of literature', Williams examines each element as part of a continuous and interrelational process, a point that accounts for the dynamism of his approach and concepts.

Williams's emphasis upon 'language as *activity*' and 'the *history* of language' – as a social and historical reality – is central to his theoretical position (21). Accordingly, there are two important analytical methods

adopted by him through out his critical works: (1) analysis of phenomena in process and (2) historical analysis. Both the methods serve to establish a sense of continuity, of movement and of connection. By adopting such a radically different approach Williams marks a break away from the influential works of F.R. Leavis and I.A. Richards.

It is again opposed to the disciplinary separation of literature and language studies at Cambridge University. As he states in "Cambridge English, Past and Present" (1985),

Language in history: that full field. But even within a more specialised emphasis, language produced in works through conventions and institutions which, properly examined, are the really active society. Not a background to be produced for annotation where on a private reading – naked reader before naked text – it appears to be relevant and required. Instead the kind of reading in which the conditions of production, in the fullest sense, can be understood in relation to both writer and reader, actual writing and actual reading (*WS* 189).

There is in this position an essential desire to penetrate received ideas and ideologies. Thus literary criticism is at once a criticism of orthodox methods and accepted values, and a reassessment of the history of literature, which also challenges dominant modes of analyses and definitions. This approach is closely connected to Williams's enthusiasm for 'realism' as a literary and dramatic form, which attempts to portray life as it is lived (Eldridge and

Eldridge 114). As Stuart Hall observes, the realism he promotes, is one in the 'Brechtian Sense', an artistic method that aims to expose apparent reality, and thus ideally, suggests the possibility for change (quoted in Eagleton *Perspectives* 63).

The interest in realism as an artistic form also reveals the political dimensions of Williams's literary criticism:

Allied with his struggle for social democracy, Williams's hopes for the future are the ever present force in his response to literature. His dedicated examination of language, and of the construction and alteration of definitions, enables him to attack the system of meaning and values generated by a capitalist society from an historical and theoretical vantage point. In this way Williams' literary critique is also a social critique (Eldridge and Eldridge 114).

As a critic who has made a daring move against the grain of the time Williams has argued that discovery of actual contemporary structures of feeling is the most important kind of attention to the art and society of one's own time (*DIB* 19).

Ibsen was a great stimulus for Williams to undertake a serious study of drama. He found in Ibsen problems, which were of utmost difficulty both theoretical and practical: 'which raise many radical questions in fields other than drama'. This accounts for the particular ideas and vocabulary which he had used in his criticism of drama. Williams's analysis of drama pivots on the

concepts of 'convention' and 'structure of feeling' (*DIB* 12), as he had already shown in *Modern Tragedy*. The relation between the two was first acknowledged by Williams in *Preface to Film*: "All changes in the methods of an art like the drama are related essentially, to changes in man's radical structure of feeling" (23).

The idea of 'convention' is basic to any understanding of drama as a form. 'Convention' in the sense both of 'tacit consent' and 'accepted standards' is an adverse term in criticism and so has much to do with cultural history. In drama, convention implies both the recognition of tradition (tacit consent) and experimentation (dramatic method). In many important works the relationships between the individual genius and the particular conventions through which it is expressed are inseparable. It is to explore this essential relationship that Williams uses the term "structure of feeling": "What I am seeking to describe is the continuity of experience from a particular work, through its particular form, to its recognition as a general form, and then the relation of this general form to a period" (*DIB* 17). Accordingly, in analysis, "We examine each element as a precipitate, but in the living experience of the time every element was in solution, an inseparable part of a complex whole" (*DIB* 18). The precise nature of the concept is laid down as follows:

To relate a work of art to any part of that whole 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. It is this, in the first instance, that I mean by the structure of feeling. It is as firm and definite as "structure" suggests, yet it is based in the deepest and often least tangible elements of our experience. It is a way of responding to a particular world which in practice is not felt as one way among others – a conscious "way" – but is, in experience, the only way possible. Its means, its elements, are not propositions or techniques; they are embodied, related feelings. In the same sense, it is accessible to others – not by formal argument or by professional skills, on their own, but by direct experience – a form and a meaning, a feeling and a rhythm – in the work of art, the play as a whole (*DIB* 18).

In a work of art, the living structure is recorded, which can be examined, identified and even generalized. The discovery of actual contemporary structure of feeling is the most important kind of attention to the art and society of one's own time.

Williams, is aware of the difficulty in the analysis of structure of feeling. The problem lies in the complexity of historical change, especially in modern drama and in the existence of alternative structures, even within a period and a society. However, he finds that there is a general historical development from Ibsen to Brecht, from dramatic naturalism to dramatic expressionism. According to him, the nature of this transition can be understood by analysing the relationship between the conventions and

structures of feeling of the major plays of the remarkable hundred years between Ibsen and Brecht.

In *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht*, analysis of the relationship between 'convention' and 'structure of feeling' is posited as the first critical task. Williams argues that changes of experience or feeling – arising from social crisis, technological development, new patterns of experience, and so on – lead to the establishment of new conventions and alterations in accepted standards. This process often involves struggle, friction and pressure, previous conventions being supported by a strong material base. Already in *Culture and Society* Williams has repeated his earlier claim made in *Preface to Film* that "changes in convention only occur when there are radical changes in the general structure of feeling" (156).

Williams examines Ibsen's works as a totality, with new or previously unacknowledged connections being suggested between Ibsen's later plays and his earlier work, connections arising from the continuity of theme, form, language and dramatic imagery. There is in this process an attempt to demystify the notion of 'tradition', to analyse developments in drama through a reassessment and revaluation of received ideas. Thus, while analysing Ibsen's plays, he attacks the orthodox interpretation of Ibsen's works as by "Ibsenites" like Shaw who set apart Ibsen's best plays as a period of decline. Williams insists, "we should not let biography usurp the functions of

criticism" (65). Biographical criticism often would "reduce every work to the neurosis of the author" (*PL* 196). What is required is to explore the real conditions of dramatic practice. Given that, the power of Ibsen's drama lies in the extraordinary creativeness in dramatic method. If Ibsen is the foremost in creating the consciousness of modern European drama (*DIB* 74), Strindberg is credited with creating a new convention of reality, namely, "critical naturalism" (81). Chekhov makes an important change from these two dramatists, and creates a new dramatic form in which major human crises are resolved in silence or are indicated by the slightest of gestures, to the effect that "our doubts about even the best of Chekhov's place are doubts about the strings" (106).

Drama from Ibsen to Brecht thus presents a more developed critical perspective, when compared with the earlier version *Drama from Ibsen to Eliot* (1964). As a result he comes out with different conclusions on the dramatic art and achievement of such writers as Strindberg, Chekhov, O'Casey and Synge. This new perspective corresponds with Williams's developed interest in film and television between the original and revised versions of his dramatic critique.

Eldridge and Eldridge point out that Williams is engaged in a two-tier task in *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht*: a reassessment and revaluation of orthodox views on drama on the one hand, and a reassessment of his own

previous critical outlook and methodological approach on the other. Between the two versions of the book there is the maturing of his writing style and critical approach to drama and, in consequence his analytical concepts acquire greater precision and meaning. It is not his method to look at the work of a specific dramatist as a settled, finished, given product. Conversely, he examines drama in terms of continuous, interconnected movement of styles, themes, methods, language and above all feeling. Thus his analytical outlook is informed by the development of his critical perspective (119). This point is especially evident in Williams's view of language as an active 'social' process. According to him, labels attached to dramatic forms as 'naturalist', 'realist', 'expressionist', 'absurdist', all involve an examination of ideological processes. Therefore, "we can go back behind the names, and make our own history, in our own terms" (*DIB* 332).

The book also presents a strong strain of comparative criticism. He is very particular in pinpointing the achievement of each individual dramatist in comparison to other dramatists. Commenting on the relationship between the convention and Chekhov's structure of feeling, Williams writes:

And what we then see is an important change, from both Ibsen and Strindberg. It is not the passionate overt conflict of early Strindberg, nor the savage internal inquiry, the fixed distortions of an alienated group, of Strindberg's later world. Again in the comparison with Ibsen, there is a crucial difference, beyond the

surface similarities. Chekhov saw, as clearly as Ibsen, the frustration and stagnation of the available forms of social life; his difference, in his mature work, is that he does not set against these, even in defeat and failure, an actively liberating individual (*DIB* 106).

Again, on the 'structure of feeling' in *The Three Sisters* and *The Cherry Orchard* Williams brings in the comparison with Ibsen:

The dramatic conventions of liberal struggle had been clear: the isolation of the individual; his contrast with his group; and then an action which took this forward-not to the point of change, which Ibsen could not see happening, but to the point where the effort and the resistance, the vocation and the debt, reached deadlock: the hero died still climbing and struggling, but with the odds against him As Chekhov explores his world, he finds not deadlock – the active struggle in which no outcome is possible – but stalemate – the collective recognition, as it were before the struggle, that this is so (*DIB* 106-107).

Williams's dramatic criticism and literary analysis provide a social critique, extending beyond biographical and stylistic details to considerations of material conditions and changes in the relationship between the individual and society. This was a procedure, which he had developed in *Culture and Society*, *The Long Revolution* and *Modern Tragedy*. This kind of critical attention is illustrated in his analysis of Synge's *Playboy of the Western World*. The community portrayed in the play is studied in relation to the social and economic condition of Ireland at the beginning of the twentieth

century. Williams argues that the "starved community" in Synge's play is a bitter comment on the Irish people of this period: 'the poverty and the fantasy, always so closely related, seen now as bitterly nourishing each other; grasped and projected into an exiled orbit' (*DIB* 137).

Williams's definition of 'structure of feeling' is thus attuned to his conception of culture. An effective application of this conception as a critical term is crucial to his critical practice. His definition of 'structure of feeling' as "an experience communicated in a particular form, through particular conventions" is an existential concept, which extends from the particular to the general and incorporates the same sense of totality, of a whole way of life, as does his description of culture as one, which "becomes almost identical with our whole common life" (*DIB* 19). And further, "It is not a question of applying an external form, and its rules, to a particular play [work]; it is how the experience and its means of communication relate, by a primarily internal criterion" (19). What is being defined is more than technique, but a practical way of describing changes in experience – the responses and their communication; and the "subjects" and the "forms" which make the drama important as a history (20).

The dramatic experimentations of the Irish dramatists W.B. Yeats, J.M. Synge, Sean O' Casey and James Joyce hinge on the recognition of the crucial interface between history and language, from which emerges a distinct

structure of feeling. As Williams observes, "The highest dramatic language is that which contains within itself the substance of the drama, which discovers and creates its emotional structure" (137). In the Irish dramas, the structure of feeling is one of emptiness, a terrible passivity.

Similarly, there were also experimentations in theatre by devising alternative actions and conventions. In Part III of the book Williams deals with plays in which "the central assumptions of the naturalist habit in drama has at once been finally realized and finally questioned" (157). It turns out to be a stage, which in Ibsen's terms shows "the perfect illusion of reality". The plays of Pirandello, Lorca and Eliot are typical cases in point. It can be adduced from their innovations that "The best dramatic conventions are usually those which the audience do not recognise as conventions; which we accept and assume so completely that our participation is immediate" (*DIB* 179).

Williams's revision of *Drama from Ibsen to Eliot* is to a great extent due to his fascination for Brecht, as the new title reveals. Williams does not hold the commonly held view of Brecht's drama as revolutionary, but regards it much more precisely as presenting not the means for transformation but, "modes of evasion, necessary to protect yourself against an oppressive society" (216). Brecht is viewed as dramatizing, and thus externalizing, forms of alienation in an already alienated world – which had previously been

dramatized primarily from the inside, or internally – producing what Williams terms a "dramatic negative": a way of seeing that permanently alters dramatic possibilities. This amounts to valuing an old world differently "a world purged now, by Brecht, of pity and acceptance – held at arms length, criticized, explained" (*DIB* 290).

Although Brecht is not the final playwright analysed in the book, the emphasis on Brecht provides a more interesting finishing point for Williams's analysis of the development of naturalism, for unlike Eliot, Brecht is so frequently separated from the dramatic tradition, which precedes him. Brecht is looked upon as a crucial point of reference to make a different critical overview of the drama of the last hundred years:

Looking back from Brecht, we see the drama of the last hundred years differently: see its consciousness and its methods from the outside, in a fully critical light. We do not, because of that, at all lessen our respect: the power of the masters is what it was. But the power of this different master is conclusive. With this last shift, a particular dramatic world – that of the individual against society – is now wholly seen. Without the substance created by others, Brecht's critical epilogue – his dramatic negative – could not have been written. But now that it has been written, in two or three great plays and in a wider achievement of a powerful and unforgettable dramatic consciousness, we have to struggle to enter, as Brecht himself insisted, a new kind of world (*DIB* 290).

Brecht's insistence on this 'new kind of world' suggests for Williams, overcoming of the distinctions between individual and society, and family and environment. Film and television could play a crucial role in the process. In *Politics and Letters* he suggests a new realism, involving a political (Socialist) and class (working class) struggle. This struggle involves the combination of three factors: 'the more mobile dramatic forms of the camera'; 'direct relationship with more popular audiences'; and, 'development of subjunctive actions' (224). Despite radical innovation occurring in theatre, Williams places hopes for change in the media of film and television. Likewise his literary analysis is part of his deep commitment for democratic socialism. His writing style and his continual attempt to challenge orthodox opinions are part of his political intention to extend the understanding of literature and its relationship to society. A similar politics is at work in the idea of art as material process and the notion of artistic freedom seen in relation to the freedom of society as a whole. In his essay "Art: Freedom as Duty", Williams has argued, "that the need for freedom in the arts is, above all, a *social* need"; and continued stating that:

the claim for the freedom of the artist is necessarily a claim for quite new kinds of freedom, an acknowledgement of the need for freedom for everyone in society. This sense connects with the deepest notions of an educated and self-managing democracy as the best cultural and political model, distinct from

the received models with which other ideas of art have been so commonly associated (qtd Eldridge and Eldridge 124-125).

The central critical concept, which is at work in Williams's study, *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence* (1973) is the "knowable community". Here Williams reassesses the literary 'tradition', as defined by F.R. Leavis and restores several writers rejected by that tradition. F.R. Leavis in his *The Great Tradition* (1962) made the provocative judgement that: "The Great English Novelists are Jane Austen, George Eliot, Henry James and Joseph Conrad" (9). In her essay "Re-reading the Great Tradition" (1982) Catherine Belsey argues that Leavis's critical discriminations established a literary topography, which authoritatively distinguished between what was major and minor, mature and infantile in the field of fiction. The criteria of greatness in literature which his critical discourse enunciated is an instance of authority-in-scandal in its polemical list of novelists as well as in the principle that the object of criticism is to isolate greatness and to see it as a property of authors (Belsey 121-22).

Williams, in particular, focuses on the works of Hardy in his attempt to undermine 'orthodox' analysis. He cites several important factors which contributes to what he call the 'crisis of the knowable community', such as the industrial revolution, urban expansion, the institutionalization of urban culture, legislation on public health and factory working hours. Thus the concept of community was quite uncertain during the 1840s. By identifying,

and naming this 'crisis of the knowable community', Williams sought to examine its relationship to changes articulated in the novel. In the 1940s the novel became the major form in English literature, but it was not the society or its crisis, which produced the novels.

The society and the novels – our general names for those myriad and related primary activities – came from a pressing and varied experience which was not yet history; which had no new forms, no significant moments, until these were made and given by direct human actions (*ENDL* 11).

The crisis of the "knowable community" is understood not simply as a result of socio-economic changes but something, which arises at the level of consciousness. The problem in the context of the 1840s interlocks with the methods derived from the "new historical consciousness; the new sense of society as not only the bearer but the active creator, the active destroyer, of the values of persons and relationships" (*ENDL* 26). This is the perspective, which informs his study of English novels from Dickens to Lawrence. Implicit in the idea is also the double correspondence – an increasing uncertainty about the nature of community being experienced and expressed along side the changing understanding of society.

O'Connor argues that the concept of 'knowable community' as a critical instrument "describes a strategy in discourse rather than the immediate experience of an organic community" (68). However, Eldridge and Eldridge

maintain that more than a method of discourse, the concept embraces immediate experience, for which Williams's own fiction is the clear proof. The knowable community concerns perceptions of self and others, ways of comprehending one's place within a social context. It also embodies a sense of relationships – between people, between people and place, and between people and possibilities (Eldridge and Eldridge 133). Williams himself has clarified that; "those novels which can attain an effective range of social *experience* by sufficiently manifest immediate relations possess a 'knowable community' " (PL 247).

Williams applies the idea of a 'knowable community' in relation to a specific form of narrative. He observes the changes occurring between the novels of Jane Austen, George Eliot and Thomas Hardy in terms of an extension of the "knowable community". The variety of social classes, which these novelists depicted led to increasing pressure on the formal structure of the novel. The experience of change, which Williams examines through the concept of the 'knowable community', is as experience, which is visible in the form and structure of the novel.

For Williams literary analysis is also a means of examining culture, his focus being on the "radical culture" and the "anonymous culture", areas largely ignored by academic work. Rejecting the Leavisian criteria of the "great tradition", he analyses Dickens's novels, emphasizing the "newness" of

Dickens's work: the reality of a new kind of city. Dickens is looked upon as a novelist of genius who emerged at the most critical point in English history – at the time of the critical remaking of the novel and of the critical emergence of a new urban popular culture (*ENDL* 28-29). However in *Politics and Letters* Williams is taken to task for giving credit to Dickens's abstractions of a non-social human quality and thus contradicting his emphasis on the interconnection of the personal and the social. Williams responds to the charge by upholding the predominant concern throughout his work: his concerted effort to analyse and reveal the oppositional elements in a dominant culture:

My present position, which I develop in *Marxism and Literature*, is that however dominant a social system may be, the very meaning of its domination involves a limitation or selection of the activities it covers, so that by definition it cannot exhaust all experience, which therefore always potentially contains space for alternative acts and alternative intentions which are not yet articulated as a social institution or even project (*PL* 252).

The problem faced by Williams in his literary analysis is serious: how to define and deal with forces present in a writer's work which do not neatly coincide with a recognizable calculus of socio-economic factors; how to treat such forces in a non-metaphysical and rational manner. Williams, however, tackles the problem in quite concrete terms: "the problem of these non-

traceable, or not immediately traceable, liberating impulses is in the most emphatic sense not only a question of literary analysis, but a very urgent contemporary political issue" (*PL* 256). If social criticism means the formation of a vision of the nature of man and the means of his liberation in a close and particular place and time, it is marvelously achieved and still profoundly active in Dickens (*ENDL* 58) whose literature at its most important process is "a whole way of seeing that is communicable to others, and a dramatization of values that becomes our action" (*ENDL* 59).

The relationships between literary analysis and politics is implicit in both the concept of 'structure of feeling' and to that of the 'knowable community'. Both are used as tools of literary analysis, which enable any critical examination to incorporate some form of social critique. They are also conceptual methods for examining phenomena "in process" as well as "in totality" – and his reference to 'the voice' in the novel further emphasizes the point. This term is employed in his analysis of changes in the novel and creates a simultaneous sense of narrative and writing style, and of the specific consciousness apparent in the novel.

The work of Hardy is of special interest to Williams because of a sense of shared personal experience, which is extended to that of a common condition. Williams asserts that,

He [Hardy] writes more consistently and more deeply than any of our novelists about something that is still very close to us wherever we may be living: something that can be put, in abstraction, as the problem of the relation between customary and educated life; between customary and educated feeling and thought. This is the problem we already saw in George Eliot and that we shall see again in Lawrence: it is the ground of their significant connection (*ENDL* 97).

Williams regards this observed experience of conflict as specific to a generation as well as related to more general changes in Britain, increasing mobility leading to new crises at both the social and individual level.

Williams's analysis of Hardy's work illustrates his overall approach to literary and dramatic criticism, namely, redefinition and re-formation. He rejects the stereotypical description of Hardy's novels as 'regional' or 'rural'. In contrast, Williams argues that the dominant pattern of Hardy's novels 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 who remain by some tie of family inescapably involved" (*ENDL* 62).

The feeling of 'pressure', which pervades Williams's analysis of Hardy's work, stems from his understanding of the novelist as "both the educated observer and the passionate participant in a period of general and radical change" (106). Hardy's most significant achievement hinges on this

aspect: despite the pressures of mobility experienced by Hardy, his major novels are rooted in the ordinary process of life and work. It is this ordinary culture, which Williams is himself attempting to restore through his reevaluation of the literary 'tradition' (Eldridge and Eldridge 136).

The study of the development of the novel from Dickens to Lawrence provides Williams a venue to attempt to 'connect and continue' (*ENDL* 185). The process of making connections is integral both to his reevaluation of received ideas and to his understanding of this tradition itself: 'It isn't something handed to us down. What is handed down with some weight is an establishment, and in every creative generations one of the first jobs is getting rid of those connections and then of course finding others (185-6). Such a procedure is integral to the kind of Marxist analysis attempted by Williams. The process is essentially related to Williams's concern to promote an historical awareness of social experience and social inheritance. There are similarities between this kind of project and the implications of Marx's 'Demystification process'. But then a considerable lack of alienation is observed in Williams's analysis of the development of the novel in relation to the 'knowable community'. Williams, however, criticizes the widespread dichotomy, often inherent in Marxist theory, between the public and the private. Williams does not adhere to the idea that the novel is concerned with the private world just because it is a product of individual creativity. The very concepts of the 'knowable community' and of the 'structure of feeling'

are, as analytical and methodological tools, themselves product of the contradictions of this public/private dichotomy (Eldridge & Eldridge 136).

In her discussion of Leavis's work, Catherine Belsey suggests that the Leavisian reading is *partial* in the sense that first, this way of reading manifests a prior commitment in its reproduction of the values and strategies of the texts it undertakes to judge, and second, it reduces the plurality of the original novel into the process. For Belsey the implication of a refusal of the Leavisian critical discourse is a more constructive strategy to treat English as a site of struggle, to generate a new critical discourse, to re-read the great tradition not for the sake of valorising it, but in order to release its plurality. In short, it is a conscious and explicit attempt to *produce* meaning, rather than letting it be recognised. Texts being plural, bring to bear on the raw material of the work, a discourse pertinent to the twentieth century which produces their meanings. Accordingly she views that "the interest in social relations as relation of domination and subordination is quite explicit in and recurrent in the novel" (Re-reading the Great Tradition 121-135).

Though the continuity from Hardy to Lawrence is central, there is a missing generation between *Jude the Obscure* and *Sons and Lovers*. Yet what happened between 1890s and 1914 is of great critical importance for the novel. Williams views this as a period of crises and of a parting of ways, into individual (psychological) fiction and the social (sociological) fiction. One

kind of fiction that emerged from the 1890s to the 1920s is described as modern, the critical celebration of which is self-perpetuating and thriving. Henry James, H.G. Wells, Forster, Bennet, Galsworthy and Conrad filled in the gap between Hardy and Lawrence. What is remarkable about this period is that socially, culturally, economically and politically a new phase of history began, namely, the emergence of writers who were 'English specifically' and who shared a common consciousness, and a common culture. This creative centre is named as the 'specifically English novel'. From this history, something new was fashioned, and that was the 'self-confident insulated middle class', which was making significant contribution to imaginative and intellectual culture (*ENDL* 123).

According to Arnold Kettle, ". . . there are in all novels which are successful works of art, two elements, emphatically not separate and yet to some extent separable. These are the elements of life and pattern . . . the good novel does not simply convey life; it says something about life. It reveals some kind of pattern in life. It brings significance" (13) And further, "Pattern is the quality in a book which gives it wholeness and meaning, makes the reading of it a complete and satisfying experience" (14). Williams's critical concepts, 'structure of feeling' and 'knowable community', in their implications, appear to be closer to Kettle's concepts. Kettle further clarifies that 'form' is important only in so far as it bears a real relation to the aspect of life that is being conveyed: the central core of any novel is what it has to say

about life (15). But it could be said to the credit of Williams that his concepts have the vitality to be used as tools of, (besides literary criticism), social, political and cultural critique as well as of literary criticism. However both Kettle and Williams shares identical concerns in historical analysis. Kettle views that the rise and development of the English novel, like any other phenomenon in literature, can only be understood as a part of history:

History is not just something in a book; history is men's actions. History is life going on, changing, developing. We too, are characters in history. Men make history. Every action of every man, consciously or not, is directed satisfactorily or not, towards the solving of the myriad problem, gigantic and trivial, complex and random, first of keeping alive and then of 'living', with all that the word, after centuries of experience, implies. Living alters. It alters according to the degree to which man masters his problems, wins new battles with nature, solves the countless difficulties and possibilities of existing alongside other men. History is the process of change in living (14).

Peter Widdowson in his account of the 1980s debate in the University of Cambridge faculty about what should constitute an 'English' syllabus and the debates among radical critics about the value of literature, about the principles by which to evaluate literature and about the validity of literature itself, explains how received notions of the whole "discipline" of literary studies were fundamentally challenged. Following the debate especially the Marxist-structuralist controversy about ideology, there emerged a body of

theory concerned to produce a fully articulated Marxist aesthetics, which focussed on the demystification of the myth of "literary value" (Re-reading 8). Such a conception was felt necessary if a materialist criticism was to develop the tools, as well as the models to penetrate the special space occupied by literature in the social process. This was termed a "crisis in English studies"; a question posed from within, as to what English *is* and how it should be reconstituted. From this understanding emerged instances of empirical projects which may help to occupy the space created between a moribund literary criticism and the pioneering theoretical work which has made that space available' (8) – in fact alternative critical works which placed canonic texts in different sets of relation to those of the literary tradition. Williams's criticism of drama, challenging orthodox criticism and of the English novel and rejecting the Leavisian canon could be seen as anticipating the problematic of the critic in English studies, on the ground of the re-reading potential in them based on such novel concepts as structure of feeling and the knowable community. As Williams himself, a member of the English faculty of Cambridge, said, "My only Community and inheritance in Cambridge is with some of the questions then posed and with the campaigning energy and seriousness that were brought to them. As these are now pushed away, disregarded even where they are nominally honoured, their largeness of spirit is indeed worth recalling" (*WS* 190).

In *The Country and the City* (1973) Williams takes up two levels of connections: temporal (between past, present and future) and spatial (geographical, between town and country, metropolis and province, advanced industrial societies and the Third World). The work is explicitly more Marxist than some of his other writings, though there is continuity in issues he faces and the procedure he adopts. He is contesting received images, received wisdom about the significance of literary record and attempts to make visible hidden connections with a view to enhance the understanding of society. It is thus a remarkable study involving a wide range of engagements with literary sources from Virgil to modern authors, from pastoral poetry to science fiction – and an attempt to situate the writing in particular times and places. As he states in *Politics and Letters*:

If you look at the implied relationships of nearly all the books I have written, I have been arguing with what I take to be official English culture. I have done that in different ways in different places, but always the people in my sights, whether to agree or disagree with, have been this other tradition (316).

Williams has clarified in the beginning of *The Country and the City* that the problem addressed in the book came out of personal pressures – his early life experiences in a Welsh valley, on the border with England. He was confronted with both national differences and the range of varied settlements around him: the village based on land, the industrial village and towns of

mining and steel production, the market town and the Cathedral city. This unique experience inspired him to look forward and back, in space and time, knowing and seeking to know their relationship as an experience and as a problem (11). Thus from the particular story of movement and change he was to come to general terms: a site of interaction between the personal and the political. Williams observes that the contrast between country and city as fundamental ways of life reaches back to classical times (9).

The relationship between the country and the city is not a simple one; it constitutes a "wider system", "not only of ideas and experiences, but of rent and interest, of situation, of power". And further, "The life of the country and the city is moving and present: moving in time, through the history of a family and a people; moving in feeling and ideas, through a network of relationships and decisions (17). Williams's approach to the problem is informed by the ideological positions including class interests. In *Politics and Letters* Williams summarises the intention behind the book:

My project . . . was . . . to try to show simultaneously the literary conventions and the historical relations to which they were a response – to see together the means of production and the conditions of the means of production (304).

Williams begins his analysis by considering the English country-house poems, which as a historical record would give the general impression of a golden age – the organic society later to be destroyed by capitalism. These

reflect a moment of domination by particular social groups in an ongoing study of the few controlling the many. The country-houses were closely associated with the court and were founded on patronage and therefore form part of "the story of the long corruption in which even the natural order is subsumed as part of the social order". They represent a period, which covers the break up of feudalism, the enclosure movement and the growing application of capitalist methods to agriculture. Williams argues that the process is one of mystification to which poetry contributes:

a moral order is abstracted from the feudal inheritance and break-up, and seeks to impose itself ideally on conditions which are inherently unstable. A sanctity of property has to co-exist with violently changing property relations, and an ideal of charity with the harshness of labour relations An idealization, based on a temporary situation and on a deep desire for stability, served to cover and to evade the actual bitter contradictions of the time (CC 44-45)

The country-house poetry, therefore, is not to be analyzed just in terms of the conventions of the literary texts but is to be socially situated and evaluated in its historic contexts. What emerges from such a procedure is demystification and dispelling of illusions so that the reality of particular societies and social changes become evident. Williams develops such an analytical strategy throughout *The Country and the City*. This could well be understood from Williams's approach to the traditional depiction of the

country as innocence and the city as corrupt. In fact, there is a strong and continuous movement and linkage between the country and the city, rather than separation. "The exploitation of man and of nature, which takes place in the country, is realized and concentrated in the city" (CC 48). The country-houses also are greedy and calculative and equally exploitative. This kind of analysis implies the social function of literature and the interests of individual authors. The 'town-country' contrast and comparison thus needs to be restructured: "the remedy was never a visitor's morality of plain living and high thinking, or a babble of green fields. It was a change of social relationships and of essential morality" (CC 54). That way, in place of superficial comparisons, real ones could be presented.

Ben Jonson's "Penhurst" and "To Sir Robert Wroth", Thomas Carew's "To Saxham" and Goldsmith's "The Deserted Village" refer to the conventional treatments of lost innocence and simplicities of rural life as well as to clearance, eviction, and evacuation, with the result that "one only master grasps the whole domain". There is juxtaposition between an idealized pastoral economy and the real material facts of dispossession. This relationship is indicative of the way in which Williams conceives of the relationship of literary to social analysis:

The present is accurately and powerfully seen, but its real relations to past and future are inaccessible, because the governing development is that of the writer himself: a feeling

about the past, an idea about the future, into which, by what is truly an intersection, an observed present is arranged . . . The structure becomes ambiguous only when this shared feeling is extended to memory and imagination, for what takes over then, in language and idea, is a different pressure: the social history of the writer (*CC* 78).

Poetry could register its protest against industry and trade and speak for nature only in exile. For Williams this is an anticipation of the Romantic structure of feeling to be found in Blake, Wordsworth and Shelley (*CC* 79).

Along with the myth and reality of the country and the city, Williams explores the notion of settlement. For him the issue has to do with the idealization of the past with its treatment of community as the organic or natural society. The contrast between settlement and movement is, of course, one way of distinguishing types of existence in country and city. However he does not want it idealized in a way, which ignores power relations and exploitations. The country-houses were the fruit of exploited labour as are evident from the disproportionate distribution of surrounding farms and cottages. They manifest a class society, which are

a visible stamping of power, of displayed wealth and command: a social disproportion which was meant to impress and overawe. Much of the profit of modern agriculture went not into productive investment but into that explicit social declaration: a mutually competitive but still uniform exposition, at every turn of an established and commanding class power (*CC* 106).

In Williams's view the process of enclosure increased the pressures on and controls over the subordinate groups. This produces an economic system of the landlord, tenant and labourer – a system of agrarian capitalism, which undermined the very possibility of community. Only by contesting it, could an active community be identified. Such a community (and culture) could be identified not as terms of a way of life but a way of struggle. Thus it forms a response to E.P. Thompson's critique of *Culture and Society* (Eldridge and Eldridge 185). As Williams writes,

In many parts of rural Britain, a new kind of community developed as aspect of struggle, against the dominant landowners or, as in the labourers' revolts . . . against the whole class-system of rural capitalism. In many villages community only became a reality when economic and political rights were fought for and partially gained, in the recognition of unions, in the extension of the franchise, and in the possibility of entry into new representative and democratic institutions. In many thousands of cases, there is more community in the modern village, as a result of this process of new legal and democratic rights, than at any point in the recorded or imagined past (CC 104).

Such communities could find alternative forms of dissent. Williams here points to a community grounded in resistance and based on alternative values of mutuality, co-operation and equality of condition. These are formed as collective responses to pressures from the dominant class, in circumstances

where individual responses on their own, however courageous, could not have changed or modified the system. The new communities reject the values and contest the power of the dominant class and point to a future grounded in democratic values. The energy and intelligence that went into this kind of activity forms a "shadowed culture": "working hard all their lives at a hard and ill-paid employment, they worked second lives for their own people" (CC 191).

The struggle for economic justice and democracy in a capitalist economy however, was not simply a rural matter. There is an extending connection in which country and city are inextricably related. This has links with Williams's idea of the 'knowable communities'. As he writes "Most novels are in some sense knowable communities". This idea sets up a contrast between the fiction of the country and the city. In the fiction of the city, experience and community would be essentially opaque; in the fiction of the country, essentially transparent (CC 165). Here Williams assumes an epistemological point about the role and position of the writer:

for what is knowable is not only a function of objects – of what is there to be known. It is also a function of subjects, of observers – of what is desired and what needs to be known. And what we have then to see, as throughout, in the country writing, is not only the reality of the rural community; it is the observer's position in and towards it; a position which is part of the community being known (CC 165).

The idea of the 'knowable community' has been extended to the discussion of the novels of Jane Austen, George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, D.H. Lawrence, Dickens and Conrad. From this analysis, Williams derives an alternative and continuing cultural tradition, which is opposed to the "official English culture". He also finds in this approach the possibility of contesting elitist versions of knowledge and of culture (CC 170-71). For, these novelists are aware, as a result of their mobility and education, that the 'knowable community' is different from the 'known community'. These novels document the real changes that were taking place in rural community in matters of law, economy, communication, education and politics (Hardy and George Eliot) and, are in contrast to the city life of the aristocracy and bourgeoisie (Jane Austen and Dickens).

In this kind of analysis, the city is important for Williams because it provides an alternative site for democratic struggle, to the more restricted local communities. The agrarian and industrial capitalism have to be contested if effective communities are to be realized. Two negative positions are to be resisted in this process – one the unreal views of the countryside and the other one which projects images of the urban future – both in fiction and politics:

The industrial-agricultural balance, in all its physical forms of town-and-country relations, is the product, however mediated, of a set of decisions about capital investment made by the

minority which controls capital and which determines its use by calculations of profit (CC 294-95).

Since the struggle is one of values, it is both political and cultural. Language here turns out to be a means of socialization into dominant taken-for-granted values and also a weapon for cultural struggle: "the most deeply known human community is language itself" (295). Therefore it is necessary to take seriously modern systems of communication, not least because they are in minority hands and serve to define reality. Modern communication, which reaches out from city to country creates a specific form of consciousness inherent in the dominant mode of production, in and through which men define themselves and their activities. Williams's position is not to celebrate or concede to this capitalist triumphalism but to identify it as a deforming phenomenon and encourage reasoned resistance to it. This kind of resistance includes the explicit recognition that, while it is a mistake to mystify the 'rural', it is also a mistake to marginalise the role of agriculture in the world as a whole. Even when much of the raw materials for the advanced countries come from the exploited third world, imperialism manoeuvres to underplay the realities of agricultural production. Moreover, socialists in their modernizing 'progressive' zeal have sidestepped the continuing and interconnected importance of the rural economy to the city. The significance of *The Country and the City* becomes very much pronounced at this critical

uncture. It would be seen as an original attempt to come to terms with the Marxist project of overcoming the division of labour:

For we have really to look, in country and city alike, at the real social process of alienation, separation, externality, abstraction. And we have to do this not only critically, in the necessary history of rural and urban capitalism, but substantially, by affirming the experiences which in many millions of lives are discovered and rediscovered, very often under pleasure: experiences of directness, connection, mutuality, sharing, which alone can define, in the end, what the real deformation may be (CC 298).

Thus, from a strategic vantage point, by re-reading pastoral poetry Williams attempts to map the capitalist interplay between town and country. But a definition of politics only in these terms would be, for him, the end of politics. Williams, the political thinker and activist, makes a case for a prospective politics, by identifying the weaknesses, the contradictions, the instabilities of Capitalism, in spite of its dynamic strength and pervasiveness. He also calls for the affirmation of different values which he thinks could be located in such alternative movements, as socialism, feminism, and ecology. This recognition then could be a positive move in the direction of the achievement of alternative values of mutuality, neighbourliness and sharing in opposition to capitalist values of profit and exploitation. Herein lies Williams's vision of new times, his resources of hope.

CHAPTER IV

**CULTURAL MATERIALISM:
PROSPECTS AND POSSIBILITIES**

Williams says that as a Marxist "I felt the excitement of contact with more new Marxist work: the later work of Lukacs, the later work of Sartre, the developing work of Goldmann and of Althusser, the variable and developing synthesis of Marxisms and some forms of Structuralism" (4). Besides, there was the influence of the Frankfurt school, notably the work of Walter Benjamin; the work of Antonio Gramsci, and decisively of Marx's *Grundrisse*, which was newly translated. This was during the 1960s and early 1970s. The newly acquired knowledge enabled him to "reopen" those "local and partial positions" of the late thirties and forties. Relying on insights from these theorists, Williams was to embark on a project of defining the terms of a cultural aesthetics. His theorizations in such works as *Keywords* ([1976] 1989), *Marxism and Literature* (1977) and *Problems in Materialism and Culture* ([1980] 1982) were to precisely lay down the terms of cultural materialism as a critical strategy, which in turn amounts to exploring the prospects and possibilities of a cultural Marxism.

Thus, the task of building up a radical concept of culture and society with a shared body of words and meanings to be used as reference points in analysis, though not exhaustive in anyway, was undertaken by Williams in

Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society ([1976] 1983). It was originally intended as an appendix to Williams's work *Culture and Society*, but it had to be taken out as insisted by the publisher Chatto and Windus. Williams explains the dimension and purpose of the book:

It is not a dictionary or glossary of a particular academic subject. It is not a series of footnotes to dictionary histories or definitions of a number of words. It is, rather, the record of an inquiry into a *vocabulary*: a shared body of words and meanings in our most general discussions, in English, of the practices and institutions which we group as *Culture and Society* (*Keywords* 15).

As an active vocabulary, it is a way of recording, investigating and presenting problems of meaning in the area of *culture and society*. These are keywords in two connected senses: they are significant, binding words in certain activities and their interpretation (certain ways of seeing culture and society); they are significant, indicative words in certain forms of thought (opening up issues and problems, in the same general area) (15).

The emphasis of Williams's analysis is deliberately social and historical. As he says, it is not that language simply reflects the processes of society and history. On the contrary, the central aim of his book is to show that certain important social and historical processes, which occur *within* language indicate that the problems of meanings and relationships are really integral:

In the matters of reference and applicability, which analytically underlie any particular use, it is necessary to insist that the most active problems of meaning are always primarily embedded in actual relationships, and that both the meanings and the relationships are typically diverse and variable, within the structures of particular social orders and the processes of social and historical change (*Keywords* 21-22).

There were changing usages of the term "culture" between the immediate pre-War and post-War periods – the 1930s and the late 1940s. The word earlier meant a way of describing and claiming social superiority and as a word, which encapsulated the arts (painting, writing, film making, theatre and the like). Now, two other meanings of the word were identified: "culture" defined as a way of referring to the formation of some critical values (as in the study of literature) and culture used in the anthropological sense of a "way of life" (which is close to some concepts of society). The later meaning was to stimulate Williams's critical powers and, in important ways, engaged him all through his life.

Williams underscores the interconnections between the words, which he linked with culture: class, art, industry and democracy. These words form a cluster and exhibit a sort of structure in their interrelatedness (*Keywords* 13, 22). The importance of the idea of 'culture' was thus noticeable in two apparently separate areas – *art* and *society*, and posed new questions and

suggested new kinds of connections (14) in complex ways. As Eldridge and Eldridge says:

What Williams came to recognize was that this was not some abstract intellectual mater but required attention to history. In order to understand something about the problem of the contemporary world considerations had to be given to how the past was interpreted and, indeed, how it could be reinterpreted. The articulation of connections, the changing social relations which both link and distinguish the past from the present, became for Williams a crucial task. This kind of work could not be confined to any one disciplinary category, although Williams himself starts from the standpoint of literature (Eldridge and Eldridge 41).

Concepts are, in their relation to other concepts, ways of seeing the world as well as ways of not seeing the world. An attempt at sorting out presences and absences in the process of seeing and understanding has political implications. Difference or change in the meaning of words can also be indicative of sites of struggles between different groups in society. Thus a careful examination of words on their usage in society would provide clues both to the locus of power in a society and to the sources of resistance to it. Therefore Williams's vocabulary contains "the keywords in which both continuity and discontinuity, and also deep conflicts of value and belief, are in this area engaged" (*Keywords* 23). What he, then, seeks to accomplish is not a neutral review of meanings, or the learning of a *tradition* or the acceptance

of a *consensus*, "but . . . a shaping and reshaping, in real circumstances and from profoundly different and important points of view: a vocabulary to use, to find our own ways in, to change as we find it necessary to change it, as we go on making our own language and history" (*Keywords* 24-25).

It has been pointed out that the sort of historical philology represented by *Keywords* is an entirely original venture in English (*PL* 175). Williams accounts for the mutability of the terms discussed in the book, which is opposed simultaneously to the Leavisian and the structuralist notions of language. *Keywords* presents

a notion of language as not merely the creation of arbitrary signs which are then reproduced within groups, which is the structuralist model, but of signs which take on the changeable and often reversed social relations of a given society, so that what enters into them is the contradictory and conflict ridden social history of the people who speak the language, including all the variations between signs at any given time" (176).

It counters the Levisian idealist notion of language as a continuous legacy, a single heritage of meanings, which were held to sanction particular contemporary values (176-77).

The book, when published after twenty six years, was seen as a creature deformed over time, for it was a book which developed from intellectually rough-and-ready origins, that is, from the notes prepared for the

evening classes for adult education. By the time he published the book, his thinking had gone well beyond its method to the holistic inquiries ventured upon in "Base and Superstructure". And further, Williams demonstrated not to have noticed the constitutive force of language, namely that, social reality is itself made out of linguistic institutionalizations (Inglis 246-47).

The intellectual effect of *Keywords* is akin to that of the Marxist critique of political economy—the demonstration that ideas and categories, which are deemed universal and timeless, are in fact eminently changeable and time bound. Given that, the possibility to write a socially explanatory history could start from the same philological ground. It is found necessary to locate "the shifts of usage", find the way it is generalized and identify its class relationships (PL 177-78).

The etymological composition of *Keywords*, however, weighs more towards Latin than Anglo-Saxon. Already in *The Long Revolution*, he has pointed out that after the Norman Conquest, i.e., prior to the emergence of a common language (again by the fourteenth century), there was a division between French and Old English, and English became the language of the uneducated and the powerless. Conversely, the greater part of the vocabulary of learning and power, together with the bulk of the vocabulary of a richer way of living came from Norman sources and, thus accounts for its special class stamp (LR 240). Thus, due to historical reasons, the problem of

democratic comprehension and appropriation of the whole resources of the language was probably particularly acute in England. From this Williams derived a sense of commitment which he expresses with a view to give the working class confidence in their ability to use terms, the complex social history of which they do not know and so are unsure about employing them (*PL* 178-9).

In a way, *Keywords* is a critique of English political culture. The book has been praised for having exposed the crudity and illiteracy of the current campaigns in the bourgeois media for the preservation of English language. Williams felt it necessary to attack the whole position of establishment journalists who mistake linguistic change for degeneration, and all those who try to co-opt words like "democracy" or "representation" for political purposes. For example as late as 1880, the dictionary definition of democracy in England was "a republican form of government," which shows the ignorance of the propagandists of the very legacy they were claiming to defend (*PL* 179-80).

Similarly, certain keywords, for instance, "unconscious" impinge on psychoanalysis to suggest a normal and continuous process of transition from the unconscious to the conscious. Williams explains that there is a process of transition between manifest speech and what Volosinov called "inner speech". These processes are very difficult to identify, but are also matters of everyday

experience, as in the case of a writer's "act of writing" itself (*PL* 181). In fact, the process of unconscious being articulated and becoming conscious is not a normal but a "specialized" process. On the other hand, the normal process is the socio-cultural development of language as the historical, or even further revolutionary possibility of that transition.

But then, there are certain periods of language, which impose silent areas and certain language situations, which are repressive. These are of special interest to Marxists, since there will always be deeply social and historical conditions for that silence. So, language is not only "a means of expression", but it is also evidently a "means of selection" (*PL* 182). In Williams's terms, the possibility of a pre-emergent as well as an emergent structure of feeling corresponds to this phenomenon.

From this perspective, Williams presents a Marxist critique of the Freudian psycho-analysis. He speaks of the unconscious in terms of an inner zone of silence, of pure repression. While in Freud the unconscious is always active in speech, for Williams's repression amounts to an abnormal displacement in the conscious. What psychoanalysis categorizes as unconscious is nothing but the "unwitting content" in conscious expressions, like saying more than we know or revealing more than we realize (*PL* 183). And further within Marxism, unlike social and economic relationship, the unconscious has never been seen as problematic. For Williams, fundamental

human drives are not derivatives of an idealist human nature, but simply biological, material conditions. Therefore Freud and Marx could not be combined in a facile manner:

There can be no useful compromise between a description of basic realities as a historical and universal and a description of them as diversely created or modified by a changing human history. Though the biological data may indeed be universal, our relevant actions are *biological and cultural*, and neither can be reduced to the other (*PL* 184).

In the early seventies Williams had extended discussions on "what Marxism and literature amounted to" in an international context, and *Marxism and Literature* (1977) was the result. Williams's individual history was of some significance in relation to the development of Marxism and of thinking about Marxism in Britain during that period. This is very much evident from the character of the present work: the first part of the book is a discussion of four basic concepts: "culture," "language," "literature" and "ideology" – none of which is exclusively a Marxist category, though Marxist thinking has contributed to them, at times significantly, in general unevenly. Therefore he took it upon himself to "examine specifically Marxist uses of the concepts" and was also concerned to "locate them within more general developments" (*ML* 5). Thus he was attempting to make Marxist thought interacting with other forms of thinking.

The second part of the book discusses the key concepts of Marxist cultural theory, from which he develops a Marxist literary theory. Through his analysis and discussions Williams develops a position which he has arrived at over the years, and one which at several key points, differs from the widely known Marxist theory:

It is a position which can be briefly described as cultural materialism: a theory of the specificities of material, cultural and literary production within historical materialism. Its details belong to the arguments as a whole, but I must say, at this point, that it is, in my view, a Marxist theory, and indeed that in its specific fields it is, in spite of and even because of the relative unfamiliarity of some of its elements, part of what I at least see as the critical thinking of Marxism (*ML* 5-6).

Though the book is wholly theoretical, Williams says, "every position in it was developed from the detailed practical work that I have previously undertaken, and from the consequent interaction with other, including implicit, modes of theoretical assumption and argument . . . set into a new and conscious relation with Marxism" (6).

The first concept that Williams discusses, namely, "culture", is a pointer to the centrality of this concept in all his thinking. Though the concept is central to modern thought and practice, it at once fuses and confuses the radically different experiences and tendencies of its formation. The word "culture" originally meant "the growth and tending of crops and

animals, and by extension the growth and tending of human faculties" (*ML* 11). In its modern development 'culture' as a concept is affected by the movement of other closely related concepts – "society" and "economy."

In the 18th century there developed the notion of "civilization" which was used in two senses – an achieved state, contrasted with barbarism and an achieved state of development, which implied historical process and progress (13). The terms "civilization" and "culture" (in its early sense as "cultivation") were in effect interchangeable in the late 18th century. As their eventual divergence occurred, culture was associated with religion, art, the family and personal life, as distinct from or opposed to "civilization" or society in its abstract and general sense. It was from this sense, that "culture" as a general process of "inner" development was extended to include a descriptive sense of the means and works of such development, that is, "culture" as a general classification of "the arts", religious and the institutions and practices of meanings and values. The religions emphasis weakened in course of time, and was replaced by what was in effect a metaphysics of subjectivity and the imaginative process. Culture, or more specifically 'art' and 'literature' were seen as the deepest record, the deepest impulse, and the deepest resource of the "human spirit" "Culture" was then at once the secularization and the liberalization of earlier metaphysical forms and began to include such categories as the imagination, creativity, inspiration, the aesthetic impulse and myth making.

In course of time, the term culture acquired the secular sense as an interpretation of human development. It stressed human capacity not only to understand but also to build a social order – i.e. "man making his own history." Vico was one of the earliest to emphasise this sense: "the study of the world of nations or civil world, which since men had made it, men could hope to know" (331). Vico's description of a mode of development which was at once, the shaping of societies and the shaping of human minds, is probably in effect the origin of the general social sense of "culture". Herder advanced the concept in *Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind* [1784-91].

The Marxist notion 'man makes himself' (material history) was an important intellectual advance in modern social thought. Again, the stress on material history especially within the necessary polemic of its establishment was in one special way comprised. Instead of making cultural history material, it was made dependent, secondary, "superstructural": a realm of "mere" ideas, beliefs, arts, customs, determined by the basic material history. There is in this position not only the element of reduction, but also the reproduction, in an altered form of the separation of 'culture' from material social life, which had been the dominant tendency in idealist cultural thought:

Thus the full possibilities of the concept of culture as a constitutive social process, creating specific and different 'ways of life', which could have been remarkably deepened by the emphasis on a material social process, were for a long time

missed, and were often in practice superseded by an abstracting unilinear universalism (*ML* 19).

Twentieth century Marxism was overlaid with and stifled by this alternative sense.

In order to understand the full implication of the idea of a "constitutive human process", it is necessary to examine the changing concepts of language. Historians and theorists of civilization/culture from Vico to Herder have considered this as the defining question. A definition of language could be seen as a definition of human beings in the world. The received major categories – 'world', 'reality,' 'nature', 'human' – may be counterposed or related to the category "language" which is historically and socially constituting. From this position, we can define a dialectical process: the *changing practical consciousness of human beings*. Literature can then be distinguished as a specific socio-historical development of writing, from the abstract concept of it in orthodox Marxism, reduced (like language itself) to a function and then a (superstructural) by-product of collective labour (*ML* 44).

Literature, generally, is the process and the result of formal composition within the social and formal properties of a language. But Marx himself had not made any attempt to categorize literature either by taking the act of 'reading' or production of books into consideration. So the radical emphasis on "practical consciousness" was never carried through to the

categories of "literature" and "the aesthetic." When later, Marxist propositions were taken to literature, there were three kinds of applications: (1) assimilation of literature to ideology, (2) inclusion of popular literature as part of the literary tradition and (3) relating of 'literature' to the social and economic history. These applications, especially the last two, inspired 'Marxist criticism', for they allowed new kinds of reading and new kinds of question about 'the works themselves' (*ML* 52-53).

The crucial theoretical break came with the recognition of literature as a specializing social and historical category, especially as changes in the basic means of production began to take place, through advancement in technology (53-54). In their complex interrelations with political and economic transformations they compose a new substantial practice in social language, which was defining a changing practical consciousness. Values of literature, then, have to be seen as corresponding to this historical transition and so urged a theoretical redefinition of literature and the aesthetic (*ML* 54).

In almost all Marxist thinking about culture, and especially about literature and ideas, ideology figures as an important concept. Three versions of the concept are common in Marxist writing: (1) a system of belief characteristic of a particular class or group; (2) a system of illusory beliefs – false ideas or false consciousness – which can be contrasted with true or scientific knowledge and (3) the general process of the production of

meanings and ideas. It was the French philosopher Destutt de Tracy who coined the term "Ideology" for the "science of ideas" in the eighteenth century. In *German Ideology*, Marx and Engels specifically identified "ideology" as a consequence of the division of labour. As an improvement upon the abstracted notion of ideology, Lenin speaks much more specifically of a 'Socialist ideology':

Socialism, in so far as it is the ideology of struggle of the proletarian class, undergoes the general condition of birth, development and consolidation of any ideology, that is to say it is founded on all the material of human knowledge, it presupposes, a high level of science, scientific work, etc. . . . In the class struggle of the proletariat which develops spontaneously, as an elemental force, on the basis of capitalist relations, socialism is *introduced* by the ideologists (Lenin II).

The point clarified here is that ideology is theory, which is at once secondary and necessary, the 'practical consciousness' of the proletariat will not itself produce it. This is a position, radically different from Marx's thinking, where all 'separate' theory is ideology, and where genuine theory – "real, positive knowledge – is, by contrast, the articulation of "practical consciousness." But Lenin's model corresponds to the orthodox sociological formulation, in which there is a "social situation" and an "ideology." Since their relation is variable without being dependent and "determined," separate and comparative history and analysis is possible (*ML* 69-70).

Williams maintains that there is an obvious need for a general term to describe not only the products but also the process of all significations, including the signification of values. Volosinov, for example, uses "ideological" to describe the process of the production of meaning through signs, and "ideology" is taken as the dimension of social experience in which meanings and values are produced. Williams insists that wherever be the term used, emphasis on signification, as a central social process is necessary. Lack of such an argument about practical consciousness is a limitation of the Marxist tradition: "For the practical links between 'ideas' and 'theories' and 'production of real life' are all in this material social process of signification itself" (*ML* 70).

Accordingly products such as 'art' and 'literature', which are not ideas and theories but elements of the general process called 'culture' and 'language' could be approached in ways other than reduction, abstraction or assimilation. This is the position that Williams wants to be extended to the Marxist cultural and literary studies.

Most of the topics discussed in part II of the book ("Cultural Theory") are topics which he had already examined in specific contexts elsewhere. Here he presents an abstract version of them. These are presented here as key concepts of Marxist cultural theory on which Marxist literary theory depends. But his position differs remarkably from the received Marxist theory.

Williams calls the position "cultural materialism," a theory of the specificities of material, cultural and literary production within historical materialism. It is, in fact, an argument within Marxist theory. As he claims, "This book is not intended as a 'separated' work of theory; it is an argument based on what I have learned from all that previous work, set into a new and conscious relation with Marxism" (*ML* 6).

Theoretically, cultural materialism is concerned with the analysis of all forms of signification within the actual means and conditions of their production. The various essays in *Problems of Materialism and Culture* and the focus on cultural/literary theory in *Marxism and Literature* illustrate and elaborate this approach. Much of Williams's analysis pivots on his treatment of the "base and superstructure" problem in Marxist theory. He argues that contrary to a development in Marxism, it is not "the base" and "the superstructure" that need to be studied, but specific and indissoluble processes, which was expressed by a complex idea of "determination" (*ML* 82). Determination is a matter of setting limits and exerting pressures. So, social reality and the relationship between the individual and society, is to be understood problematically. 'Society' is, then, never only the 'dead husk' which limits social and individual fulfilment:

It is always also a constitutive process with very powerful pressures which are both expressed in political, economic, and cultural formations and, to take the full weight of 'constitutive',

are internalized and become 'individual wills.' Determination of this whole kind – a complex and interrelated process of limits and pressures – is in the whole social process itself and nowhere else: not in an abstracted 'mode of production' nor in an abstracted 'psychology' (*ML* 87).

Abstraction in these respects amounts to mystification of the real determinants of the social process and so should be done away with. Williams considers the different aspects of social process in an attempt to define "culture" and to formulate a theory of it.

Andrew Ross has argued that in the twentieth century the radical intelligentsia has weakened itself by its refusal to take popular culture seriously (1989). In Leavis, of course, the attempt was to pre-empt the term "culture" for literature by equating popular culture with, "civilization", but the manoeuvre is weak because its barely disguised class-bias makes it too easy to contest. T.S. Eliot provided a much better position, when he defined "culture", not in terms of an individual or a class, but more plausibly, as "the development . . . of a whole society" (21) which, considering the England after the second world war, he substantiates with a well-known but bizarrely populist listing:

Culture . . . includes all the characteristic activities and interests of a people : Derby Day, Henley Regatta, Cowes, the twelfth of August, a cup final, the dog races, the pin table, the dart board,

Wensleydale cheese, boiled cabbage cut into sections, beetroot in vinegar, nineteenth century Gothic churches, and the music of Elgar (120).

It is the innovation of Raymond Williams in *Culture and Society* (1958) to reject the pastoral and consumerist definition of culture by invoking against it exactly the criterion that the concept of culture supposes the development of a *whole society*. According to him, to represent the whole of English national culture, Eliot's list would need to encompass "steel making, touring in motor cars, mixed farming, the stock exchange, coal mining and London transport" (CS 230), that is, forms of production along with consumption, and the activities of the working class along with those of the gentry, namely "sport, food and a little art" (CS 230).

In *Problems in Materialism and Culture* ([1980] 1982) Williams examines a much wider terrain of cultural criticism. The book deals with a variety of topics, each of which indicate the range and scope of the discipline of Cultural Studies. The opening essay of the book, "A Hundred Years of Culture and Anarchy" attempts to illuminate a decisive and profoundly ambivalent moment in the emergence of English cultural criticism: Arnold's response to the popular agitation of the late 1860s. Arnold argued that the Hyde Park riot was a symptom of the general anarchy of the period. The rioter was seen as opposed to the idea of social order, of the state as the collective

and corporate character of the nation, and so should be unflinchingly forbidden and repressed in the name of reason and culture and education. Though this was the kind of liberalism advocated by Arnold, other liberal intellectuals like J.S. Mill were opposed to the way the Hyde Park riot was dealt with by the authorities. As Williams argues, the issue continues, even after a hundred years, rendering the "culture and anarchy" argument contestable. He, therefore, warns that it is important to identify and prevent that short circuit in thought which Arnold represents, "where truth and reason and argument were systematically blocked, and where 'authorized' force was involved not to clear the barriers but to erect and defend them" (*PMC* 8). The point, then, is of making the necessary distinctions between positions, which would warrant repetition of similar protests: "For the culture which is then being defended is not excellence but familiarity, not the knowable but only the known values. And while people like that dominates and multiply, it will always be necessary to go again to Hyde Park" (*PMC* 8). Such a position inevitably calls for a new sociological understanding of men and matters.

Williams observes that sociology, which was quite an undeveloped branch of study in Britain in the early sixties had much to learn from Lucien Goldmann by way of theory and methodology. (In fact it was Goldmann's visit to Cambridge in 1970 during which he gave two lectures, which was instrumental in creating a serious interest in the sociology of literature and culture in England) Williams was perhaps the first in the English speaking

world to embark on a project on the sociology of literature and culture. Goldmann shows that an idea of theory suggests a methodology, which derives from the physical sciences, where objective, value-free and disinterested research is possible. Goldmann calls his approach "scientism" which in England was opposed by literary critics, mainly by Leavis. As a result, the record in sociology has been "less clear" and "less honourable". It was therefore necessary to develop social studies, in the light of social relationships and history. It insists upon a rigorous internal textual methodology, in which the central inquiry has to become problematic or ultimate. Such a methodology is especially necessary to counter the several false totalities perpetuated as for example, through education, economics, political theory, anthropology and even contemporary sociology (*PMC* 16). The most obvious example from literary studies is the methodology of the study of 'kinds' or 'genres'. There is, in these cases, the prior assumption of the existence, within the 'body' of literature, of 'permanent forms' as epic, tragedy or romance. They were considered as static, passive and therefore empirically available totalities. Such an approach prevents one from seeing those radical and qualitative changes within the nominal continuity of forms, which demand a quite new method of study. Though much of the English work in literary sociology had come from "Practical Criticism", it was vulnerable at several points: in its hardening into an apparently objective method which was based on subjective principles; in its isolation of texts from contexts, in

its contemplative aspects, which made it hostile to new literary work (*PMC* 17-18). Attempts to overcome these limitations of practical criticism were made by a critical minority, which came up in the 1930s. Through a precise and principled approach they addressed the crucial questions of literary value in appropriate social relationships. Williams recognizes this radical group as the pioneers of English literary sociology.

However, central to their interpretation was a cultural decline in the destruction of an organic society brought about by industrialism and by mass civilization, which overlapped with the Marxist interpretation of the effects of capitalism. The critical engagement between *Scrutiny* and the English Marxists precipitated a fundamental hostility between them – while practical criticism was strong in its capacity to give accounts of actual consciousness, Marxist position was weakened in the received formula of "base and superstructure", encapsulated in the distinction that "the economic base determines the social relations which determines the consciousness which determines actual ideas and works" (*PMC* 19). Williams was opposed to this formula because it was methodologically weak, rigid, abstract and static in character – a bourgeois formula akin to utilitarian thought. Thus, first in *Culture and Society* and then, in a more developed form in *The Long Revolution*, Williams pursued an alternative project.

Lukacs's and Goldmann's views on reification seemed to Williams to be the real advance in an active interpretation. For, they gave a precise historical explanation to the dominance of economic activity over all other forms of human activity, the dominance of its values over all other values. In modern organized capitalism, the reification or false objectivity is more thoroughly penetrating every other kind of life and consciousness (*PMC* 21). Thus Goldmann's concept of "structure" and the distinctions he makes between "actual consciousness" and "possible consciousness" within a "totality" (developed from Lukacs), are very important for the relation between literary and social studies. That way, the idea of the totality of consciousness was to become central to English critical practice.

Williams acknowledges that his own concept of "structure of feeling" which he formulated as a critical tool is an improvement on Goldmann's sociological concept of "genetic structuralism". It emphasizes a relation between social and literary facts, not as a matter of content, but of mental structures: "the categories which simultaneously organize the empirical consciousness of a particular social group and the imaginative world created by the writer" (qtd 23). It is an organizing view of the social fact, which is realized in literature in terms of 'possible consciousness'. Williams, however, was opposed to Goldmann's view of identifying literature as worldview or world picture (like the Elizabethan, Greek or Victorian) for, such views do not take the idea of consciousness into consideration (*PMC* 24).

They are often more of a hindrance than a help in seeing the full substance of the particular literatures. He finds that both the idea of world pictures and Goldmann's idea of possible consciousness are often some distance away from the real structures and processes of literature. Williams developed the idea of "structure of feeling" in response to just this sense of distance. As he puts it,

But what seemed to me to happen, in some of the greatest literature, was a simultaneous realization of and response to these underlying and formative structures. Indeed, that constituted, for me, the specific literary phenomenon: the dramatization of a process, the making of a fiction, in which the constituting elements, of real social life and beliefs, were simultaneously actualized and in an important way differently experienced, the difference residing in the imaginative act, the imaginative method, the specific and genuinely unprecedented imaginative organization (*PMC* 24-25).

The "structure of feeling" was to indicate certain common characteristics in a group of writers in a particular historical situation. The most penetrating analysis would always be of forms (as Goldmann and Lukacs have shown), where changes of viewpoints, relationships and resolutions could be demonstrated as forms of literary organization. Williams has demonstrated this in actual cases as in the late nineteenth and twentieth century European drama (*Modern Tragedy* and *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht*), and in the development and crisis of the nineteenth and twentieth century English novel

(English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence). The changing structures of feeling reveal the corresponding changes of formal idea and belief which make up the ordinary history of consciousness, which in turn correspond to a very real social history. A radical view of art itself validates the point:

art is one of the primary human activities, and that it can succeed in articulating not just the imposed or constitutive social or intellectual system, but at once this and an experience of it, its lived consequence, in ways very close to many other kinds of active response, in new social activity and in what we know as personal life, but of course often more accessibly, just because it is specifically formed and because when it is made it is in its own way complete, even autonomous, and being the kind of work it is, can be transmitted and communicated beyond its original situation and circumstances (*PMC* 25).

Williams argues that it is necessary to go beyond the social theory developed in English in the 1930s, which was built on the crude base-superstructure model. Accordingly, the task of criticism is to formulate a real sociology concerned with the reality of the interpenetration, the unity of the individual and social forms. Thus an attempt to go beyond the 'text' to its real process would reveal connection that would answer the closest sense of the living process. Of course, it is necessary then to question some of the key assumptions of Marxist critical theory. Williams's interrogation of the "base-superstructure" model is significant in that respect.

"Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory" is a very important essay in the collection as it defines and represents Williams's polemical and critical engagement with Marxism. Williams argues that it would be preferable to begin a theory of culture considering the proposition that social being determines consciousness rather than by considering the proposition of a determining base and a determined superstructure. Though the two propositions do not contradict each other, the proposition of base and superstructure, with its figurative element, and suggestions of fixed and definite spatial relationship constitutes a very specialized and at times unacceptable version of the other proposition.

In Marxist cultural analysis it implies prefiguration, prediction or control. Williams in his critique offers certain qualifications and amendments to the notions of base and superstructure. Accordingly the "base" is revalued so as to include the specific activities of men in real social and economic relationships containing fundamental contradictions and variations and therefore always in a state of dynamic process, and away from the notion of a fixed, economic or technological abstraction; the "superstructure" is revalued so as to incorporate a related range of cultural practices and away from the common notion of a reflected, reproduced or specifically dependent content; and, "determination" is revalued to mean the setting of limits and the exertion of pressures and away from the common notion of a predicted, prefigured and controlled content.

Of course, what is examined in the "base" is the primary productive forces. But Marx's idea of "base" is incompatible with the economics of modern cultural activity. In his analysis of capitalist production Marx considered 'productive work' in a very particular and specialized sense corresponding to the mode of capitalist commodity production. Thus in the famous *Grundrisse* passage Marx illustrates the point with reference to the piano. While the piano maker and the piano distributor are the 'base' (because they contribute to surplus value), the pianist is the superstructure. Critiquing the point Williams states that as a way of considering cultural activity, this is very clearly a dead-end. It has a damaging effect in the cultural context. For according to the central notion of productive forces, the most important thing a worker ever produces is himself, himself in the fact of that kind of labour or the broader historical emphasis of men producing themselves, and their history (*PMC* 35).

As an alternative to the proposition of base and superstructure, Lukacs proposed the idea of the totality of social practices. This concept of totality, cannot adequately account for the process of determination, which is very significant in cultural theory. Since the facts of social intention and the class character of society are very important in cultural theory, there is no point in abandoning the superstructural emphasis altogether. However Williams finds it difficult to see processes of art and thought as superstructural, in the commonly accepted formula. The laws, constitutions, theories and ideologies

which were very much part of the superstructure in Marx's original formulations are in fact class-related aspects of reality. So, in revising the formula of base and superstructure, Williams is keen to emphasize the class character of the society. He does this by combining the notion of totality with Gramsci's concept of 'hegemony':

For hegemony 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 at 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 sway, that it corresponds to the reality of social experience very much more clearly than any notions derived from the formula of base and superstructure (*PMC* 37).

Williams, however, rejects the usual Marxist analysis of hegemony in terms of 'epochal' questions rather than historical ones in a social formation.

Williams argues that there is in any society, in any particular period, a central system of practices, meanings and values, which are dominant and effective. These are not merely abstract, but are organized and lived ones. It thus constitutes, a set of reality as 'absolutes' beyond which it is difficult for the members of society to move. But an effective and dominant culture could be understood from the real social processes, namely, the process of incorporation, for which educational institutions and family serve as agencies.

Moreover, within this cultural model what is passed for as "the tradition", "the significant past" is in fact a "selective tradition", "a continual making and remaking of an effective dominant culture" (*PMC* 38).

Again, in a complex society, there are recognizable cultural realities, which are underemphasized in our notion both of superstructure and hegemony. Williams classifies them as "residual" and "emergent". A residual form refers to experiences, meanings, and values, which are lived and practised on the basis of cultural as well as social residue of some previous formation. These include certain religious values and certain notions derived from a rural past. There could also be the 'residues' of the struggles of the past, which significantly affect the consciousness of men, and so are of lasting importance in cultural history. An "emergent" form refers to the new meanings and values, new practices, new significances and experiences, which are continually being created. These could be seen as the forebodings of future events and developments. Both the residual and emergent culture are usually at some distance from the dominant culture, but in actual practice may get incorporated into it, and so maintain a temporal relationship between them. Unlike in the earlier phases of bourgeois society, where these were dispensed with as belonging solely to the domain of private or artistic life, in the post-War capitalist society, the process of incorporation was much more active owing to the "social character of labour, of communication and of decision" (*PMC* 41). The dialectical relationships between the 'residual' and

'emergent' forms of culture have to be considered as a basic point in our conception of culture in future.

Williams thinks that it is very important to maintain a "non-metaphysical and non-subjectivist" explanation of emergent cultural practices, for which it is necessary to consider the concept of "class" and its human practice. The formation of a new class is a process, which complicates any simple model of base and superstructure as well as the ordinary versions of hegemony. Of course, Gramsci was instrumental in formulating the idea of hegemony of a proletarian kind, which would be capable of challenging the bourgeois hegemony (Bocock 1986). With the emergence of a new class, new practices also come into being. Their cultural significance lies in the fact that no mode of production, no order of society and so no culture in reality exhausts the full range of its human practice, energy and intervention. Alternative perceptions in personal relationships, of material and media, in art and science would always come to be practised and they are very important culturally. Williams's proposition could then be seen as a central source of the very discourse of criticism itself (*PMC* 43-44).

Williams underscores the inseparability of literature and art from the general social (material) processes. The arts of writing, and the arts of creation and performance, like music, film and broadcasting embody, enact and perform meanings and values and so are parts of the cultural process.

They contribute to the effective dominant culture and are a cultural articulation of it. At the same time, they also embody residual and emergent practices and meanings and often get incorporated to and would effect changes in the dominant culture itself. His own study of the "British Culture of the Nineteen Sixties" (*LR* 293-355) illustrates the approach.

For Williams, such a perspective has implications for discovering a method or methodology for the analysis of particular works of art. This is in opposition to nearly all forms of contemporary critical theory which are theories of consumption and which treat the work of art as an object/text and in the process overlook the real social conditions of their production (*PMC* 46). The traditional Marxist notion of base and superstructure was satisfied with the relationship between the objects and the components of its production.

However, the notion of the work of art as object "as in itself it really is" had a theoretical effect since it could raise questions about the components of production, which form the base. In any case it is the relationship between the object and its components that was looked for, as for instance, in psycho analytic, myth and structuralist criticism. But Williams contends that it is further necessary to analyse the process of transformation or mediation these components have gone through before they arrived in this accessible state. Because, in literature and arts, what we permanently have are not objects but

notations (PMC 47). Therefore, in the act of criticizing, "we should look not for the components of a product but for the conditions of a practice" (48). According to him, the true crisis in cultural theory is between the view of the work of art as an "object" and the alternative view of art as a "practice". Williams's proposition is thus the point of break as well as the point of departure in practical and theoretical work within Marxist cultural tradition.

The argument is further extended to the area of communications in his essay "Means of Communication as Means of Production". Within the received formulation of the base and the superstructure, the productive role of communication was ignored. Williams argues that as physical forms of language and as technology, means of communication are always socially and materially produced and reproduced (PMC 50). They have, on the other hand, a historically variable relation to the general complex of productive forces and to the general social relationships. Williams's own book, *Communications* is a pioneering work in the area.

The role of communications and the historically changing means of production and reproduction and their complex social relationships call for a redefinition of 'base and superstructure'. That way communicative production could be properly situated within the totality of modern economic and industrial production. As he argues, the mechanical formulation of a 'base' and a 'superstructure' would prevent or displace analysis of the significant

relations of communicational means and processes to be crises and problems of advanced capitalist/industrial societies (*PMC* 53).

In a class-divided society certain social conditions determine technical forms and the nature of communication. Thus, advanced technology is used to convert means of communication as channels of capitalist consumption. The central communicative act is manipulated both by the ruling class and the production forces through specific processes of technical labour. Therefore Williams envisages an alternative communication system, which is a "democratic, autonomous and self-managing system" (*PMC* 261). The transforming potential inherent in film and television are of critical importance owing to their profound impact in contemporary life and culture. Through powerful modes of "naturalization" new generation get habituated to means of communicative production in the modern socio-economic processes where the real activities and relations of men are hidden behind a reified form of a "modern medium" (62).

The method of analysis, which Williams proposes in the area of communication, is what he calls "critical demystification", i.e., practice in the production of alternative images of the 'same event' in direct, autonomous composition. Reification has to be countered from falling back on "ideas of universal (inherent and unsurpassable) alienation, within the terms of a pessimistic and universalist psychology" (*PMC* 62). That way, Williams

hopes that the systems of communication under general control would be "transformed from their normal temporary functions as commodities or as elements of a power structure" (*PMC* 62). Here again "Socialism" is for Williams the key reference point, for it is not only the theoretical and practical "recovery" of the means of communicative production that matters, but also the institution of directness and community, over a wide social and intellectual range.

The radical posture with which he examines the nature of communication in the modern socio-economic processes could be seen in full application in his reexamination of the idea of nature vis-à-vis the social man. From Greek philosophy through Seneca, Hobbes, Rousseau, down to Marx, the distinction between man and nature have been relied on as a programme or as a critique. In "Ideas of Nature", Williams presents a view in opposition to the idealist philosophy where "nature" embodies an essential, principle (*natura rerum*), as for example, Burke's notion of "the state of nature." It is a fact that the idea of nature contains an extraordinary amount of human history. So what is often presented in the idea of nature is the idea of man in society. The physical sciences in their earlier phases looked at nature as an object, a fixed state, or fixed laws of motion with no history for them. Such interpretations continued till the nineteenth century when the question of human intervention in or command on nature and its processes were considered (*PMC* 75). Williams insists that nature has to be thought of as

separate from man, in order to conceptualize a more secular and a more rational idea of nature. The abstraction of man is not for a change from a metaphysical to a naturalist view but for a precise understanding of the social man. When nature is separated from the activities of men, it even ceases to be nature, in any full and effective sense. As men come to project onto nature their own unacknowledged activities and consequences, there occurs a split in men themselves – men as consumers and producers. The consumer wants only the intended product – scenery, landscape, image, fresh air (*PMC* 81).

Since ideas of nature are the projected ideas of men, Williams argues, that there is no point in counterposing or restating the great abstractions of Man and Nature. Men have mixed their labour with the earth, their forces with its forces too deeply to be able to draw back and separate either out. Therefore man – nature relationship has social implications—be it in capitalism, imperialism or socialism and the very process is problematic. More clearly than any one, Marx indicated this in terms of singular forces. It is necessary to develop that kind of indication. As Williams contends:

In industry, for example, we cannot afford to go on saying that a car is a product but a scrap yard a by-product, any more than we can take the paint-fumes and petrol-fumes, the jams, the mobility, the motorway, the torn city centre, the assembly line, the time-and-motion-study, the unions, the strikes, as by-products rather than the real products they are. But then of course to express this we should need not only a more

sophisticated but a more radically honest accounting than any we now have. It will be ironic if one of the last forms of the separation between abstracted Man and abstracted Nature is an intellectual separation between economics and ecology. It will be a sign that we are beginning to think in some necessary ways when we can conceive these becoming, as they ought to become, a single discipline (*PMC 84*).

Here we have glimpses of what John Bellamy Foster calls an ecological materialism or a dialectical conception of natural history (2).

Corresponding to the idealist, philosophical notions of nature as an essential principle with little social/historical implications, there was an attempt in scientific social theory as well as in imaginative literature, to validate evolutionary theory as an essential paradigm. The essay "Social Darwinism" is Williams's critique of the applications of evolutionary theory to social theory. Social scientists like Malthuse, Herbert Spenser, Bagehot, Sumner and even Rockefeller applied the theory of "the survival of the fittest" and perpetuated the belief that in human societies there were intrinsic competitions for the best shape of the society. Accordingly Europe, the central arena of conflict between states, ideas and religions, was projected as the centre of progress. Through such a paradigm, conflict and programme were directly correlated. Thus theory came to be used to rationalize the rich men – to describe the internal logic and necessity of social process (*PMC 90*).

The pervasive influence of Social Darwinism in areas of creative literature, scientific fiction, modern advertising as well as in contemporary social theories has all been counterproductive. Such works convey the idea that man cannot derive lessons and laws from the processes of what he sees as separated nature and from his social conditions. They hold that natural law is a process of unrestrained struggle and that social ethics is a qualifying mechanism for a cosmic law. Williams fears that the biological component of these works would become first a theory of elitism and then a theory of fascism. Modern advertising, through its strategies of animalization and territoriality builds upon the image of nation state and its means of armed defence in order to convey the ideology of dominance and power, and to ratify contemporary class and status relationships. Williams's critique is quite emphatic:

Of course, this was an ideology: it was consciously in opposition to liberal egalitarian tendencies, to measures of social welfare and reform, and classically to ideas of socialism. Because it was an ideology, not all the implications of this rather stark and powerful theory were always welcome even to some of its exponents (*PMC* 90-91).

Williams rejects such discouraging rationalizers and natural rhetoricians on the ground that Social Darwinism is *contra cultural* materialism (*PMC* 101-2).

Williams further argues that social Darwinism, by its crude logic of strength through competition implies, a case for racism and imperialism as in Gobinau's argument about the inequality of races and Von Molke's rationalization of war as the supreme example in human history of the Darwinian struggle for existence. It is interesting that even Marx looked at *The Origin of Species* as "a basis in natural science for a theory of class struggle in history" (qtd *PMC* 93). Of course, human history is a struggle – now between classes rather than races or individuals. But then, Engels was to point out the faults of the analogy. He argued that,

the whole Darwinian theory of the struggle for existence is simply the transference from society to organic nature of Hobbes' theory of *bellum omnium contra omnes*, and of the bourgeois theory of competition, as well as the Malthusian theory of population. (qtd *PMC* 93).

And he further argued in *The Dialectics of Nature* that such a transference of theory from natural history to the history of society is "too naïve" to be "proved as eternal natural laws of society" (qtd *PMC* 94). The distinguishing feature of human society was production, and when "the means of development are socially produced the categories taken from the animal kingdom are already totally inapplicable" (qtd *PMC* 94). However, the concept of the struggle for existence is quite tenable, for it expresses the struggle of the producers against the capitalists who have appropriated their

means of production and reduced them to poverty. Therefore "the conception of history as a series of class struggles is already much richer in content and deeper than merely reducing it to weakly distinguished phases of the struggle for existence" (44). Thus in Engels's critique, the analogy is attacked and rejected but then, reinstated in a way radically different from other thinkers.

In an essay Ted Brenton (101-142) examines Engels's intellectual work in its political and cultural setting. He argues that though in biological doctrine Engels tended to follow Haeckel's neo-Lamarckianism, rather than Darwinism, his protests against the Social Darwinists and their conception of society, demonstrates its backwardness and the necessity for its transcendence. Engels states that,

Darwin did not know what a bitter satire he wrote on mankind, when he showed that free competition, the struggle for existence, which the economists celebrated as the highest historical achievement, is the normal state of the animal kingdom (*Dialectics of Nature*, 19).

Engels's theoretical interventions in his later works on philosophy and the natural sciences (*Anti-Dühring*, *Dialectics of Nature*, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*) deal with the interface between popular cultural struggles, historical materialism (as a theoretical discourse) and the natural sciences. It is instructive here to see Williams's theoretical

interventions in *Problems in Materialism and Culture* in the light of such a critique. For as Ted Brenton comments:

It is true that human transformative practices incorporate our natural environment into our internal condition of social existence, so that to a degree, and in certain respects, the human species and its natural environment are subject to a common history. But it must also be emphasized, as Engels knew, that the natural world – organic and inorganic – also has its own autonomous historicity, interconnected, though not fused, with that of human societies. If this is so, then questions must be posed, and answered, concerning the compatibility or otherwise of the different actual and potential forms of social existence and systems of production with their external conditions of existence in organic and inorganic nature. Both dualist and reductionist materialist philosophical premises are obstacles to the adequate posing of such questions. Socialist theory and practice is thus deprived of a major resource for reorienting its relationship in a constructive way to autonomous movements such as those against environmental destruction, women's oppression and racialism (137).

Williams's emphasis on historicity in his literary and cultural analysis and his concern for Socialism are all of a piece with the above critique.

Similarly, in tackling the question of materialism, Sebastiano Timpanaro summons to his aid the work of natural scientists. He regrets the unusual uneasiness between Marxism and the natural sciences and argues that

failure to overcome it would be detrimental to materialism. Timpanaro defines materialism, as the acknowledgement of the priority of nature over mind in a formulation of physical science *vis-a-vis* the humanist categories. In his essay "Problems of Materialism", Williams offers a critique of Timpanaro's work. As in "Ideas of Nature", here, he argues that the separation and contrast between "man" and "nature" which developed as part of the idealist and humanist thought makes it difficult to move beyond them to material conditions and, to generalize on the relationships between the two (PMC 106-107).

What is important for Williams is an analysis of how the really basic conditions of life – the conditions of physical existence and survival – are perceived, selected and interpreted. The crucial question here is the extent to which these fundamental physical conditions and processes affect or qualify the social and historical interpretations and projects, which are the central specifications of Marxism. In his critique, Williams problematizes these in three ways, namely, the conquest of nature, the revival of Social Darwinism and the relation between our physical conditions and social projects. All these aspects are tantamount to the development of problems like capitalism, imperialism, racism and pessimism, and, in consequence, amount to theoretical deformations. By a careful examination of these questions Williams creates a materialistic framework, which is eventually to develop into what he calls "cultural materialism". As he argues,

Neither materialist triumphalism nor materialist pessimism is of any material help in the necessary processes of an extended secular knowledge and of definitions and redefinitions of our social processes in its light In all relevant secular terms, what is needed at this level is not 'philosophy' at all, but associated science and labour, under conditions to be achieved only by socialist transformation of control of these means of production (*PMC* 112).

Timpanaro views Social Darwinism as a dangerous version of triumphalism, in which biological conditions, which are elements of human activity are bypassed in the emphasis on human history and culture. Timpanaro relates this problem to the formula of base and superstructure and in particular to works of art which again relate to elements of our biological condition rather than to socio-historical experiences. But as Williams argues, these elements of the biological condition are mediated by socio-historical experiences and by their cultural forms. The orthodox Marxist thinking about art could then be amended to the effect that the material process of the production of art includes certain biological processes especially those relating to body movements and to voice, which are at times most powerful elements of a work. Art, perceived in this way, is inseparable from any political and economic liberation (*PMC* 113).

Even as Timpanaro makes an earnest attempt at checking both collective and subjectivist forms of triumphalism, he also expresses a strain of

materialist pessimism. According to him the rich-poor chasm is a result of our continuing physical limits. Rejecting this notion, Williams argues that, the barriers to extending conditions of prosperity from the richer to the poorer countries are economic and political, and not of some basic physical character. Even the relation between population and resources is a political and economic issue (*PMC* 115). Therefore in Williams's terms, the social project *vis-à-vis* the individual could not be settled between the received alternatives of triumphalism or pessimism, but within the terms of practical consciousness:

A materialist ethics, like a materialist politics, has then to be grounded on these inherent relational conditions, only not as relativism, which is merely their registration, but as activity, which is the conscious effort towards their common realization as human history (*PMC* 116).

In any fully materialist perspective, it then, appears that no singular political or ethical dimension nor the received alternatives of triumphalism nor pessimism would clear away an objective process. Williams here seems to suggest that the Marxist idea of materialism, in the modern context, has to be improved by taking these perspectives into active consideration so much as to ward off materialist pessimism (*PMC* 115). An opposition to the deliberately perpetuated excitement in the name of an orchestrated globalism characterizes this ideal, which is especially important in the present cultural context.

At this point it appears instructive to consider the fairly recent notions of "cultural pessimism". As Oliver Bennett (2001) argues 'cultural pessimism' was characterized by generalized negative certainty; there were some clear parallels between the modes of reasoning displayed and sum of the cognitive tendencies associated with depression and anxiety disorders. These could all be said to exhibit negatively 'contaminated' cognitive processes. There was also evidence to suggest that there had been a significant increase in the incidence of depressive and anxiety disorders during the second half of the twentieth century (192). This was occasioned by environmental, moral, intellectual and political decline. Oliver James (1997) argues that the social impacts of the 'new capitalism' (cf. Frederic Jameson's notion of 'late capitalism') produce an epidemic of 'learned at helplessness', 'maladaptive social comparison' and 'anxious attachment'. Thus in the post modern world cultural pessimism is not only a judgement about our culture but also a 'structure of feeling' that is increasingly produced by our culture (Bennett 193). Lewis Wolpert describes this experience as 'malignant sadness' (1999). Williams's positions, however, are astutely opposed to such notions and make a strong argument for progressive cultural change, informed by an active politics.

Andrew Collier points out that there are three related but logically independent doctrines comprising Marxist materialism. The first of these "ontological materialism" is a doctrine about the relations between the real-

objects of the various sciences, especially those of the natural sciences on the one hand and the human science on the other. It asserts the unilateral dependence of the latter upon the former. The second "epistemological materialism" which states the relations of human knowledge in general to its object, is considered an area of scientific enquiry. This is the aspect of materialism to which Lenin's remarks (in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*) about the philosophical sense of matter point. The third doctrine, "explanatory materialism", seeks to answer questions, which arise specifically in the human sciences. It is this notion of materialist explanation, which led Marx to call his theory of history "the materialist conception of history" (historical materialism) (Collier 36-38). Williams's cultural materialism, while it shares aspects and insights of these doctrines, leans more towards explanatory materialism in as much as it operates essentially within historical materialism.

The Marxist attempts to approach the natural sciences—notably biology—using the base-superstructure model was quite incorrect, in that they do not realize the fact that the dependence of social reality on biological reality is absolute and unilateral (*PMC* 42-43). The importance of Timpanaro's position lies in the place he gives to biology, which, as Collier points out, tends to be treated by the Marxists as something of a Cinderella among the sciences in relation to the ideological use made of it by ethologists who try to explain events in human societies directly in terms of biological instincts. As Collier puts it:

It is worth noting that biological reality is an ontologically dependent mode in relation to physico-chemical reality, and that the objects of all social or human sciences are ontologically dependent on it. When we say 'man thinks with his brain', it should be remembered that the brain is situated in biological reality, not merely in physico-chemical (43).

Again, Timpanoro insists that biology is not a ladder which history climbs and then throws away, but something, which continues to produce effects in social, cultural and psychological reality (43).

A similar critique of Marxism's neglect of biology was made by Kate Soper in his essay "Marxism, Materialism and Biology" (61-99). Soper presents an approach to the nature-society relationship as integral to human culture. Marxism suspected biology as if it would be implicated in vulgar materialism and 'biologism' (63). Thus it evaded such issues as the feminist challenge or racial oppression or questions as a politics separate from or tangential to Marxism and was rebuked for its continued neglect of the fact that the history of society is not only a history of class division but also a history of sexual division. The patriarchal order, which embodies the latter is, no less oppressive in its effects than is economic exploitation. Again in terms of a "theory of needs" Marxism cannot bypass questions of world ecology and the way population appropriates it. Therefore if 'rational' alternatives to capitalist mode of production are the task of socialism, it must also be

concerned with the entire structure and goals of the material-technical appropriation of nature in the satisfaction of human needs (65).

In developing a materialist position in which the evidence of cultural history could be crosschecked, Williams has two considerations. First, there is the methodological problem of concepts, which have a unique double character – as "findings" from empirical evidence and as normal linguistic concepts. Williams's own *Keywords* is a pioneering attempt in this respect. Secondly classical Marxism neglected not only the basic human conditions, but also the emotional conditions and situations which make up a large part of human relationship and practice; problems of sexuality are among the most prominent omissions. It is within this area that attempts to go beyond historical materialism have occurred (*PMC* 118).

As Suchting points out the central theme of Marx's "*Theses*" on Feurbach is materialism. More specifically they outline a critique of "all materialism uptill now". The key to the critique is the idea of practice. In his critique, Marx emphasizes two points: first, the role of human practice in constituting the character of the objective world in a straight forward, material way, as exemplified by the way economic-productive activity changes the world. Secondly, a materialist conception of practice as something to be analysed in terms of actual effects in the objective world in contrast to all subjectivist conceptions (Suchting 6-10).

Historical materialism, certainly, has done quite a lot by way of theory and practice, of method and evidence. But the field of social and cultural practice cannot be limited to a historical materialist framework. This realization is a source of energy for Williams to propose his own materialist project with a view to ward off cultural defeat which would take the shape of spiritualism within a disintegrating social order, mythologizing of human conditions and practices, and the vaulting ambition of epistemology to become the universal science (*PMC* 121).

The alternative, of course, is materialism of a new cast, namely, cultural materialism, and what makes it significant is its "rigorous openness to physical evidence." Chomsky's insistence on the concept of "physical explanation" reinforces the idea (97). But it is, as Chomsky points out, not an "interesting terminological reason" but the necessary social process through which the material enterprise defines and redefines its procedures, its findings and its concepts: the "physical" is nothing but "material." Williams's application of his own concepts and positions is well illustrated in his examination of such diverse topics as the English naturalist drama, the Bloomsbury group, advertising, science fiction and the Welsh industrial novels (*PMC* Section 4).

Though there was a much Marxist orientation and its ideological thrust in the cultural field in Britain from the 1930s, a decisive continuity of an

identifiable Labour Left was at work only since 1945. Williams considers the cultural ramifications of this phenomenon in "Notes on Marxism in Britain Since 1945". It was an amalgam of theory and practice within which elements of Marxism came in the form of social democracy – a parliamentary version of economism. Though it was generally called Marxist, its political vocabulary moved to the "right" as both the orthodox and social democrats opted for mixed economy, welfare programmes, and for military alliance against Socialist and national-liberation movements. At the same time, there were some extra pro-Left emphases. These distinctions clear the ground for a more accurate definition of Marxism and Marxists in Britain since 1945.

There are, according to Williams, three issues involved in this process: populism, culturalism and reformism. Populism is simple projections of the common interests of 'the people' or 'a people'; culturalism is the general feeling in the 1950s that Marxist cultural theory which derived from Engels, Plekhanov, Fox, Caudewell, West and Zhdanov needed radical revision. Williams has been instrumental in this process, which took him thirty years to come to a position, which he defines as "cultural materialism.":

The emphasis of the transition—on the production (rather than only the reproduction) of meanings and values by specific social formations, on the centrality of language and communication as formative social forces, and on the complex interaction both of institutions and forms and of social relationships and formal

conventions – may be defined, if anyone wishes, as 'culturalism', and even the crude old (positivist) idealism/materialism dichotomy may be applied if it helps anyone. What I would now claim to have reached, but necessarily by this route, 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 communication systems) (*PMC* 243).

This position has been spelt out more fully in *Marxism and Literature* and in *New Sociology: Culture* and could be seen as the most important stride that British Marxism has taken since 1945. Williams calls the process a "long revolution." It is thus a theory of the historical variations of cultural process, which has connections with general, social, historical, economic and political questions. It is not *sui generis* a general social theory or a general practical option, but a response to radical change in the social relations of cultural process in British and other comparable societies. The problem could be resolved by unifying these responses within a theory of ideology – in the form of a single discourse. These questions call for a new perspective, which he compares between Mc Luhan, Marxism, and Gramsci :

Much of the actual controversy was against the conservative criticism of 'mass civilizations', against the technological determinism (mechanical production = mass society = mass

communications) of Mc Luhan and of some Marxists, and later, against formalism. None of this, as controversy, is yet over, but as a note on the development of Marxism in Britain, which in this field has not been an offshore island, but a major contributor, it can be suggested that the practical connections between this kind of cultural theory and the Gramscian account of hegemony and the hegemonic are significant, not only as a theoretical phase, but because they developed, in struggle, from such different preoccupations and sources. What 'Marxism' is at any time seems dependent, finally less on the history of ideas, which is still among most Marxists the usual way of defining it, than on the complex developments of actual social being and consciousness (*PMC* 246).

Western Marxism since 1945 has two versions of reformism, one speaking for capitalist transformation and the other for a radical transformation of social order. The British Labour Left and Communist Party promoted capitalist transformation ('modernization') but did not adequately respond to the working class and thereby rendered themselves impotent. The dire consequence of this was their inability to check the enemy, which came up in the shape of constitutional (populist) authoritarianism, which in comparable conditions had resulted in Fascism (before the war) or in Thatcherism (in the post-war period). And Williams himself had to break from the British Labour movement in 1966 when it took a detour from social democracy and reformism into "an actual and necessary agency of the mutation of capitalism by the representative incorporation of the working

class" (*PMC* 249). However, since the early 1960s there has been a concentration on Marxist theory. There were, thus, three distinct strands within British Marxism. Williams categorizes them as 'legitimizing' (inspired by the Soviet Union and by a concern for world Communist movement); 'academic' (a decisive Marxist orientation in academic work) and 'operative' (theoretical analysis of late capitalist society and of socialist practice). These theoretical positions are important because their varying proportions would determine the character of Marxism in Britain.

Williams maintains that "the genuinely unprecedented social and economic crises" necessitates "continual discussion and contestation", in Marxist terms, "on such central questions as class, culture, the democratic process, the capitalist state, productive forces, the division of labour, industrial growth and political organization" (*PMC* 238). The New Left of 1957-63 was characterized by "eclecticism" which was furthered by theories of "altered social relations" (239).

Williams finally makes a case for "an authentic, accessible and adequate Marxism" (*PMC* 250). The real problem is one of connection between analysis and effective political practice. It is, proposed as a radical move beyond the theoretical loud hailing of the 1960s and 1970s to a more open and more rigorous re-examination and practical construction. For Marxism, is a history and analysis of ideas and of social forces and

movements through ideas; therefore it stands to be tested in quite new ways, as immediate and possible and sustainable organization (*PMC* 250).

"Socialism," Williams contends "is not what with luck might happen. It is what we can believe in enough to want, and then, by active wanting, make possible" (*PMC* 252). In the essay "Beyond Actually Existing Socialism" Williams presents a critique of Rudolph Bahro's book *The Alternatives in Eastern Europe* (1978), a very important work in Socialist thought, for it provides a relatively detailed outline of a practical and possible Communist society. It is opposed to the complacent economic order of Western Socialism and favours substantial civil and political liberties. As Bahro states:

Humanity must not only transform its relations of production, but must also fundamentally transform the overall character of its mode of production, i.e. *the productive forces as well . . .* it should consider its perspective as not bound to any one historically inherited *form* of development and satisfaction of needs, or to the world of products that is designed to serve these (qtd *PMC* 254, italics original).

Besides such basic transformation processes, Bahro insists that "Not a growth in production, but cultural revolution – as the present form of *economic* emancipation—is the means finally to dissolve the capitalist structure" (255).

Cultural revolution as conceived by the British New Left used "culture" to designate a process and area of social and political struggle at the superstructural level, virtually ignoring the material struggles of the working class at the base. As Bahro views it, consciousness is no longer the mere product of social being but is at once a condition of its practical existence, and further, one of its central productive forces. Thus a cultural revolution is directed towards the general appropriation and expropriation of all the real forces of production including the intellectual forces of knowledge, skills and conscious decision, as means of revolutionizing social relations. Subordination or avoidance of the mode of production is a subaltern condition, against which the 'cultural revolution' has to act. Williams views it as a "possibility" of 'cultural revolution'. As he puts it "Possibility is the future – the Sunday after next" (*PMC* 258).

The most important point in Bahro's analysis is that for any general emancipation both capitalism and industrialism has to be overcome. The source of energy for 'cultural revolution' is what Bahro conceives of as "surplus consciousness" which he defines as "an energetic mental capacity that is no longer absorbed by the *immediate* necessities and dangers of human existence and can thus orient itself to more distant problems" (*PMC* 260). Historically "surplus consciousness" is at once a cultural and a material variable. Bahro distinguishes between "compensatory" and "emancipatory" uses of this surplus. The 'cultural revolution' is for *the conditions of the*

emancipatory and against *the need for* compensatory activities. Williams finds that Bahro's perspectives for "general emancipation" is identical with his own concepts of "long revolution", which calls for

A redivision of labour; unrestricted access to general education; a childhood centered on the capacity for development rather than geared to economic performance; a new communal life based on autonomous group activities; socialization (democratization) of the general process of knowledge and decision (*PMC* 262).

And further, Williams is one with Bahro in the terms of achieving these goals: "A society cannot be taken by surprise or with a coup d'etat The question is rather to create first of all the political and mental conditions . . ." (Bahro 275). Bahro, following Marx, recognizes that "Collectives of associated individuals or Unions" would function as agency for general emancipation. What is visualized here is an integrated process in which mechanism such as the party and the modern communication technology could be directed towards political and educational practices. There is the stress on "democratic procedures" rather than the explicit substitutionalism of the party monopoly, which "represents" the working class in a nominal way.

Williams underscores the urgency of 'cultural revolution' in every area of social existence. He proposes this as an antidote to the pervasive "lethal combination of abstract desire and practical cynicism" which was the result of

repeated disappointments and failures. The decisive engagement, however, will be with problems of "the economy" which has to challenge the alienated logic of a capitalist order and its non-capitalist derivatives. All this depends upon conscious individuals who are capable of necessary association.

One of the advantages of 'cultural revolution' is that it identifies wide groups who are subject to the appropriation of knowledge and effective decision, but who are structurally different from the old or the new working class. The outstanding case is that of women who share subjection both as workers and as women. Similarly the local communities are also subject to appropriation both in their role as local powers and as mere infrastructures (PMC 272). Integration of the new proletariat and the marginalized groups like women in the process of cultural revolution will be long, hard, contentious and untidy, many of its forms will be extensive and pervasive, there will be certain decisive confrontations, with very powerful opposing forces. They are certainly inevitable because what is in question is a cultural *revolution* and not some unimpeded process of social growth.

It may be noticed that a very important task undertaken by Williams in his theoretical *oeuvre*, as exemplified by the above works, is the reformulation of the orthodox Marxist notions of "the base" and "the superstructure". The proposition of the determining base and the determined superstructure which has its source in Marx's 1859 "Preface" to *A Contribution*

to the Critique of Political Economy has been commonly held to be the key to Marxist cultural analysis. Williams maintains that this is hardly an obvious starting-point for any cultural theory. It is part of an exposition of historical materialist method in the understanding of legal relations and forms of state. Cultural activity is much broader than what is traditionally understood (religious, aesthetic or philosophic) forms in which 'men became conscious of this conflict', without necessarily supposing that these specific forms constitute the whole of cultural activity (*PMC* 76).

In the transition from Marx to Marxism, Marx's original formulations and their terms were either temporally or spatially correlated in the metaphor "base" and "superstructure". The orthodox analysts think of these categories as if they were separable concrete entities without recognizing the constitutive process which historical materialism should emphasize (80-81). Engels in his essay "Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy" argued that there was "interconnection between conceptions and their material conditions of existence" (qtd. *PMC* 79). But what is fundamentally lacking in the Marxist theoretical formulation is any adequate recognition of the indissoluble connections between material production, political and cultural institutions and activity and consciousness. Plekhanov, for example summarized the relationship between base and superstructure as a sequential relationship between elements, which in practice are indissoluble.

Williams holds that, since they are both dynamic and internally contradictory processes, the principle of physical fixity cannot be ascribed to them. What need to be studied are, then, the specific and indissoluble processes within which the decisive relationship is determined. Determination in the sense of exerting of pressures rather than of setting limits is significant in all social formations (*PMC* 87). Freud, for example, uses the term "over determination" to indicate the structured, multiple causation of a symptom: a crystallization very similar to the Frankfurt School's concept of a "dialectical image". Adorno held that "Dialectical images are models not of social products, but rather objective constellation in which the social condition represents itself" (qtd 103). Here again there is the repetition of the basic error of economism, which subsumes all formative experiences. Williams has reservations against Marx's own distinction between "production in general" and "Capitalist production" (*Grundrisse*: 85) for having universalized these concepts as conflating them in history:

But the history had happened, in the language as in so much else. What is then profoundly difficult is that Marx analysed 'capitalist production' in and through its own terms, and at the same time, whether looking to the past or the future, was in effect compelled to use many of the same terms for more general or historically different processes (*ML* 90).

Marxism thus often took the colouring of a specifically bourgeois and capitalist kind of materialism (92). Williams argues that the capitalist idea of

a "self-subsistent world" (bourgeois materialism) suppresses the true material character of the productive forces:

The social and political order which maintains a capitalist market, like the social and political struggles which created it, is necessarily a material production. From castles and palaces and churches to prisons and workhouses and schools; from weapons of war to a controlled press; any ruling class, in variable ways though always materially, produces a social and political order. These are never superstructural activities. They are the necessary material production within which an apparently self-subsistent mode of production can alone be carried on (*ML* 93).

Failure to grasp the material character of the production of a social and political order was tantamount to a corresponding failure to understand the material character of the production of a cultural order. The concept of the "superstructure" was then not a reduction but an evasion (*ML* 93).

It is therefore, necessary first to specify the negative effects, in cultural analysis, of the specialised versions of 'productive forces' and 'production'. Williams does so, by offering a critique of the idea of production as contained in the famous *Grundrisse* note on the piano maker, and argues that

a piano-maker is a productive worker, engaged in productive labour, but that a pianist is not, since his labour is not labour which reproduces capital. The extraordinary inadequacy of this distinction to advanced capitalism, in which the production of music (and not just its instruments) is an important branch of

capitalist production, may be only an occasion for updating (*ML* 93).

The real, danger, involved in the orthodox Marxist definition of productive forces is more fundamental, for it would amount to exclusion of a whole body of activities, "the realm of art and ideas, aesthetics, ideology or the superstructure". They have to be seen as variable productive practices.

Williams had already rejected the explanatory power of Marxist concepts of base and superstructure in *Culture and Society*. The idea that complex poetic consciousness was wholly determined by the material conditions established by the particular economic mode of production appeared too mechanical to account for literary culture. Thus he could not accept that the valuable, high culture created by the romantic poets, for example, could be explained away or dismissed as merely ideological by Marxist historical materialism (*CS* 266). By the 1970s, and more specifically in *Marxism and Literature* (1977) in collaboration with the New Left and with greater access to the continental Marxists like Louis Althusser and Antonio Gramsci, Williams embraced a more sophisticated Marxism that could theorize in more detail, the way individual consciousness was materially shaped. A new explanatory model replaced the erstwhile opposition between culture and society. Stressing the limitations of an instrumentalist, idealist and vulgar materialist Marxism he gives the outlines of a cultural materialist model, improving upon his own position in *Culture and Society*:

Thus the full possibilities of the concept of culture as a constitutive social process, creating specific and different 'ways of life', which could have been remarkably deepened by the emphasis on a material social process, were . . . superseded by an abstracting unilinear universalism. At the same time the significance of the alternative concept of culture, defining 'intellectual life' and 'the arts', was compromised by its apparent reduction to 'superstructural' status, and was left to be developed by those who, in the very process of idealising it, broke its necessary connections with society and history and, in the areas of psychology, art, and belief, developed a powerful alternative sense of the constitutive human process itself (*ML* 19-20).

As Scott Wilson suggests, Williams here makes a double move, by which culture is to be seen, retrospectively, as part of a whole material history and thus, by rewriting the past, a properly materialist, culture can be envisaged for the future (34). There is also here a silent transition, from Williams's previous notion of culture as 'a whole way of life' to 'specific' different 'ways' of life. Just as art is not merely a superstructural effect of the base, so its relation to the base is not that of a passive reflector. The great nineteenth century realist novels illustrate the point, for in them literature does not "reflect" reality but "produces" a set of cultural meanings that function as a powerful framework for experiencing social life in a specific way. This is consistent with the Althusserian argument that different signifying and institutional practices have a certain relative autonomy from the base. Every cultural practice is involved in a process of production whereby certain raw

materials are transformed into a product—textiles, books, an economic or political theory, an idea of Shakespeare as a universal genius and the like; every specific mode of production has its own changing relations of production, its own independent speed of development of productive forces, in short, its own peculiar time and history (Althusser and Balibar 99).

In a primarily Althusserian sense Dollimore and Sinfield also define materialism in their "Forword" to *Political Shakespeare*. Materialism is opposed to idealism, but in the sense that the latter is incorporated into the former. "Cultural materialism insists that culture does not (cannot) transcend the material forces and relations of production. Culture is not simply a reflection of the economic and political system, but nor can it be independent of it" (VIII). Elsewhere Alan Sinfield has argued that Althusser's key importance, in the late sixties and the seventies lay in explaining why people did not more readily revolt in a capitalist system that was clearly exploitative. "It seems a failure at the level of culture" (Sinfield 4) that Althusser's general theory of ideology and ideological state apparatuses could not account for. It was precisely through cultural institutions like the church, schools, universities, the media and so on, that capitalism reproduced the conditions, and individual subjects, required for its continuing vigour.

Towards the last phase of his career, Williams was preoccupied with the cultural significance of Modernism. A set of five speculative 'hypotheses'

about the nature of *avant-gard* formations appeared in *Culture* (83-4). A trenchant brief analysis of Modernisation and its paradoxical fate in the epoch of 'paranational' capitalism features in "Beyond Cambridge English" in *Writing and Society* (212-26) and in *Towards 2000. The Politics of Modernism* ([1989] 1999) however, was his last project and was posthumously published. For Williams, the question of Modernism as a social position came through as a proposition about language. 'Ordinary' language was clichéd, one-dimensional and abstract, and 'poetic'—language will accordingly embrace difficult, experimental forms in an effort to revitalize perception. From Flaubert, through Henry James, the Russian Formalists, Faulkner, Eliot and James Joyce, there has been a binary opposition of ordinary and poetic language, within which various kinds of cultural politics are possible (Pinkney 4-5). These and a few other important related topics – theater, film, technology, and socialism – are all examined within the broad ambit of cultural theory. As Tony Pinkney who edited this collection of essays and lectures states, Williams's project while being incomplete, owing to his premature death in 1988, must be grasped as a powerful, topical intervention as well as local, historical case-study in a general sociology of culture (2-3).

Williams challenges the conventional estimations of modernism as beginning with Proust, Kafka and Joyce. He argues that the beginning of modernism could be traced from the innovations in social realism, the

metaphoric control and economy of seeing discovered and refined by Gogol, Flaubert or Dickens from the 1840s on. The realist novelists, in fact, devised and organized a whole vocabulary and its structure of figures of speech with which to grasp the unprecedented social forms of the industrial city. In contrast, the Modernist writing was admired for their denaturalizing of language, their break with the reflective idea of language and for making in the very texture of their narratives the problematic status of the author and his authority. Thus in making the text the centre of the public and the aesthetic stage, they repudiate the fixed forms, the cultural authority of the academies and their bourgeois taste, and the very necessity of market popularity. Similarly, the symbolic poets of the 1880s, the dramatists Ibsen and Strindberg were all to be seen as Modernists. In painting, it was the Impressionists, who in the 1860s, defined a new vision and a technique to match their rendering of modern Parisian life, but it was the post impressionists and the cubists who were situated in the modernist tradition (*PM* 32-33).

Williams, thus, challenges the canonized version of modernism and its theoretic contours. Reviewing such a highly selected version of the 'modern' he identifies the late nineteenth century as the occasion for the greatest changes ever seen in the media of cultural production and reproduction – photography, cinema, radio and television. Besides, the 1890s were the earliest moment of the Modernist movements: Futurists, Imagists, Surrealists,

Cubists, Vorticists, Formalists and Constructivists. These movements arose in the new metropolitan cities, the centres of new imperialism, which offered themselves as transnational capitals of an art without frontiers. The marginal or rejected artists became classics of organized teaching, and of travelling exhibitions in the great galleries of the metropolitan cities. 'Modernism' was confined to this highly selective field and denied to everything else in an act of pure ideology whose unconscious irony was that it was stopping history dead. As Williams comments, "Modernism being the terminus, everything afterwards was counted out of development. It is *after*; stuck in the post" (*PM* 35).

In "Metropolitan Perceptions and the Emergence of Modernism", Williams argues that the retention of such categories as 'modern' and 'Modernism' to describe aspects of art and thought of an undifferentiated twentieth century world is now at best anachronistic, or archaic. For, there were in fact pre-modern forms of art, which in certain conditions led to actual and radical changes in form. Williams explores the hidden history of the conditions of these internal changes, taking examples from English literature, and sets them against the twentieth century clamour of modernist 'universals' (aesthetic, intellectual and psychological) or "modern absolute" (*PM* 38). According to him the crucial factor in the emergence of modernism was certain metropolitan perceptions, which he traces to Wordsworth (*The Prelude III*) and the theme persisted through Thomson, Fielding to Dickens.

Thus modernism in art and thought presents sequences of innovations and experiments more "by what they are breaking from than by what, in any simple way, they are breaking towards" (*PM* 43). However Williams contends that there is no point in treating these metropolitan perceptions as universals. This, it appears, is a point at which the theoretical discourse of the post-colonial condition can make a potential intervention. For Williams concludes that:

The formulation of the modernist universals is in every case a productive but imperfect and in the end fallacious response to particular conditions of closure, break-down, failure and frustration. From the necessary negations of these conditions, and from the stimulating strangeness of a new and (as it seemed) unbonded social form, the creative leap to the only available universality — of raw material, of medium, of process — was impressively and influentially made (*PM* 47).

This is because in spite of the perceived universal of the metropolis, there was no settled society to which the modernist work could be related. The only accessible form of its practice was the medium, which defined art. For Williams, the importance of such a process and definition lies in seeing the imperial and capitalist monopolies as a specific historical form. This calls for a critical practice which involved looking from outside the metropolis "from the hinterlands, where different forces are moving, and from the poor world which has always been peripheral to the metropolitan systems" (*PM* 47).

The most significant challenge posed to colonialism, the narrative of nationalism, while serving a crucial function for decolonization, nevertheless relied on the narrative of modernity as progress and accepted the universal value of Enlightenment notions of freedom and democracy (Mongia 5). Postcolonial theory, on the other hand, problematizes the nation-state and its ideologies and reveals the difficulty of conceiving the nation even as an 'imagined community'. It rejects both the Western *imperium* but also the nationalist project (Appiah 353). Its main task is the understanding and critique of the link between the structures of knowledge and the forms of oppression of the last two hundred years (Young 2).

The authors of *The Empire Writes Back* use the term post-colonial "to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day" (2). The conflation of the post-colonial and cosmopolitan subjects is fuelled to a large extent by the fractured subjectivities of post-structuralist theory. And further, notions such as hybridity, marginality, and the diasporic are used for describing contemporary constructions of conflict-ridden subjectivity of the colonized people. However, critics like Aijaz Ahmad took Bhabha's notion of 'hybridity' to task. He points out the dangers of Bhabha's exploration, which lends itself to the aspecificity and ahistoricity of hybrid subject free from gender, class or race constraints (Mongia 286-7).

While Said's *Orientalism* (1979) keeps the spheres of colonizer and colonized rather firmly apart, Bhabha, with his interest in their interaction sees important moments going both ways. Shifting his focus from "the noisy command of colonial authority" and "the silent repression of native tradition" to "the colonial hybrid", Bhabha argues that the cultural interaction of colonizer and colonized leads to a fusion of cultural forms that from one perspective, because it signals its productivity, confirms the power of the colonial presence, but that as form of mimicry simultaneously unsettles the mimetic or narcissitic demands of colonial power (Bhabha, *Location* 112). Williams's notions of the residual, dominant and emergent forms of culture would, it appears, come in handy to unsettle the colonized-colonizer tangle.

In contrast to Modernism, the Avant-garde evinces a much more pronounced political stance: an aggressive dynamism and a conscious affront to modernist claims to liberation and creativity (*PM* 57). However, within the avant-garde as in Modernism there are opposed formations and these have materialized in language. There is, therefore, room for both formal and formational analysis. It is necessary to move beyond such conventional definitions as "avant-grade practice" or "the modernist text" (*PM* 79). Thus, in a rigorous analysis, descriptions such as 'multivocal' or 'polyphonic' or 'dialogic' as features of texts, have to be understood in terms of social practice. In an analytical shorthand Williams identifies three groups of linguistic innovations: by those who had come to the metropolis from

colonized or capitalized regions; those who had come from linguistic border and where a dominant language coexisted with an older native language; and those who came as exiles from rejected or rejecting political regimes (*PM 78*).

Within the general processes of mobility, dislocation and paranational communication, which occurred over the decades, the linguistic variety could be offered as a definition of modernity itself (*PM 79*). There was also an ideological polarization between the old, settled language and its literary forms and the new, dynamic language and its new forms. However, the cultural forms of the new, dynamic language were not only experimental or liberating, but also manipulative and exploitative. The widespread adoption and dilution of avant-garde visual and linguistic modes by advertising and publicity agencies gave shape to an overtly commercial and paranational art. As Williams observes, "There is then a practical linkage of a selective definition of modernity with the asymmetries of political and economic domination and subordination" (*PM 79*).

In considering 'theatre as a political form', Williams observes that the diverse theatres of the avant-garde have been in its own ways a political practice, which has continued to shock and challenge. Though it has dramatized the dislocations, the disturbances and the forms of madness within the orthodox society, it has often been equivocal about violence and has attempted a programmatic reduction of human possibility and human action to

a repetitive, mutually misunderstanding condition. Such characteristics, however, does not constitute a politics of an avant-garde but of an *arriere-garde*: a condition of submission, which amounts to a defeat of theatre and politics (*PM* 93-94).

In "Afterward to Modern Tragedy" he presents a further development from the position, which he adopted in the sixties. It is a development from a condition of general disorder to a general sense of loss of the future. This, he perceives, is the consequence of a dying social order, a cultural shock. As he puts it, it is the shock of a disturbance brought about by the default of a capitalist economic order: "Millions will be thrown out of their expectations of work. Old and ravaged areas of heavy industrial exploitation, but more important the families and communities once decanted into them who have built and lived among their fallout, will be left exposed and hopeless as capital and calculation move away" (*PM* 97). The common response of such a shock and loss runs back to elements of the tragic form developed by Ibsen and from the form of 'private tragedy' developed by Strindberg (*PM* 98). Williams argues that the contemporary tragic form is born out of the basic connections between a form of history and a dramatic form. Such a connection involves a basic mutation of tragedy; the tragic event is no longer of any of the older kinds, and is not limited to a public world or a private feeling. The central fact and source of tragedy is now an inability to communicate (*PM* 101). The form and the ideas and feelings that it mediates

have long roots – in Wordsworth's 'crowd of strangers'. Its powerful dramatization is to be found in Chekhov and Pirandello. Sartre's concept of 'seriality' is an attempt to analyse such conditions. Of course in the modern period factors such as the failure of revolution, the experience of Stalinism, the pressures of imperialism and capitalism, have all been contributing to the perpetuation of tragedy, the very root of which is the end of hope (*PM* 102-3).

In "Cinema and Socialism" Williams argues that the question of reproduction is central to any socialist discussion of cinema. "Much more than ever in print, or within the evident and still visible mechanics of theatre, film can reproduce what can be widely taken as simple representation; indeed seeing as if with our own eyes" (*PM* 112). It is basically the externalization of images as an accepted form of direct reproduction. Here a specifically socialist emphasis enters the argument, that is, real but hidden or excluded relationships could be shown or demonstrated. In this process Williams makes a case for Naturalism, which he observes has close historical associations with socialism in showing that people are inseparable from their real social and physical environments. In contrast to the idealist versions of the human, naturalism insisted that actions are always specifically contextual and material (*PM* 113). And the hardest problem, Williams thinks, is to distinguish between the radically different cultural tendencies which overlap within the whole formation of capitalist cinema (114). It is not enough to show the idiocies and frustrations of bourgeois life as in the classical dissident

—bourgeois formula of twentieth century art. On the other hand, the central socialist case is that the lives of the great majority of people have been almost wholly disintegrated by most arts. Another potential area for the socialist film is the process of 'image-making'. It should be conceived as a revolt against the fixed images, the conventional flows and sequences, of orthodox bourgeois art (*PM* 117). To develop a truly socialist film from the material realities of the long capitalist appropriation of the popular is not an easy task.

In "Culture and Technology" Williams, not only protests against the cultural conservatives but also contrasts the unholy combination of technological determinism with cultural pessimism. While cultural conservatism amounts to a rejection or distrust of new technology, technological determinism registers the notion that the emergence of a new technology can change the society or the sector into which it has emerged (*PM* 119-20). The cultural conservatives looked at technology with doubts and apprehensions and they looked at cable television, satellite technology and the computers as a threat to language and culture. Of course these technologies have deep economic, political and cultural significances. They can initiate a new marketing phase, override existing national, cultural and commercial boundaries and penetrate into politically closed areas. In such a condition lies the root of cultural pessimism. The threat could be countered only by creating genuinely alternative social and cultural order (*PM* 124). Already in *The Long Revolution* Williams had considered this question in the

context of public service institutions, which interlock with a capitalist-sponsored mass culture (*PM* 125).

To understand any artistic or intellectual project, it is necessary to consider the relationship between the project and the formation. The importance of cultural studies is that it engages with both, rather than specializing itself to one or the other. The theoretical emphasis here is a refusal to give priority to either the project, or the formation traditionally understood as the art or society. However, in course of time, due to the institutionalization of Cultural Studies, the formative area of human development was isolated from the educators. Therefore the future of cultural studies invariably lies in charting the intellectual history of such formational developments, though it would be resisted by many vested and political interests because "this new work will become more than a resented interruption from what is otherwise taught" (*PM* 162).

The advantages of such a project are the subject of Williams's lecture "The Uses of Cultural Theory". According to him the usefulness of the theory lies in its emphasis on specific and changing relationships as distinct from a catch-all theory of diverse artistic practices or as a form of alternative social theory (*PM* 163-4). The important task of any theoretical analysis is identification of key linkages and significant gaps within a real social history. It has to take the place of academic criticism, which has the worst legacy of

picking over of texts and individuals from above. As Medvedev and Bakhtin put it: "Works can only enter into real contact as inseparable elements of social intercourse It is not works that come into contact, but people, who, however, come into contact through the medium of works" (qtd. *PM* 173). This provides a direction to the central theoretical question in cultural analysis: the specific relations through which works are made and move. Language is a key point in this process as recognized by Volosinov in his *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* in the late twenties.

The most significant task of cultural theory is the exploration and specification of distinguishable cultural formations. It is necessary within corporate-capitalist and bureaucratic societies, to analyze the more sociologically manageable institutions of culture. For unless more specific formations are identified, there is the danger of decline of cultural formations into such abstractions as the state ideological apparatus, or 'traditional' and 'organic' intellectuals. Thus we can learn from historical analysis the extending and interpenetrating activity of artistic forms and actual or desired social relations. Cultural analysis, says Williams, is much more than a specifying artistic analysis:

It is the steady discovery of genuine formations which are simultaneously artistic forms and social locations with all the properly cultural evidence of identification and presentation, local stance and organization, intention and interrelation with

others, moving as evidently in one direction—the actual works – as the other: the specific response to society (*PM* 175).

A series of questions can also be posed and answers sought concerning works and their formations; ideology, the question of exploitation, the ugliness and violence of radical art and the very fruitfulness of theory could also be interrogated. The problem of actual and possible class relationships through which new art and theory can be made in a shared search for emancipation is central here in our consideration of content, application, intention and work (*PM* 176). Stuart Hall's essay "The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power" (1992) can be seen as a fruitful instance of interrogation in the above lines. Challenging the much mythologised and much anthologized thesis concerning the centrality of Europe in the formation of modern societies, Hall argues that Europe's encounter with other peoples and cultures have been equally pivotal in the process. These "others" were incorporated into the West's image of itself, its language, systems of representation, forms of knowledge, visual imagery and even its conception of the accessibility of reason (276-330).

CONCLUSION : THE ALCHEMY OF AESTHETICS

A newly active social sense of writing and reading, through the social and material historical realities of language, in a world in which it is closely and precisely known, in every act of writing and reading, that these practices connect with, are inseparable from, the whole set of social practices and relationships which defines writers and readers as active human beings, as distinct from the idealized and projected 'authors' and 'trained readers' who are assumed to float, on a guarded privilege, above the rough, divisive and diverse world of which yet, by some alchemy, they possess the essential secret.

(Williams, *WS* 189)

It was the distinction of Williams to have recognised the significance of the word *culture*. He found that culture is an area where historical changes in the field of industry, democracy, class and art conflate as changes in social, economic and political life. His serious considerations in these areas eventually led to the formulation of a general theory of culture in *Culture and Society*, principally based on evidences from literature and literary studies. The theoretical *oeuvre* which was initiated in *Culture and Society* was pursued with much rigour in *The Long Revolution* (1961) and *Communications* (1962). These works offered a new mode of criticism in English, which came to be designated as the "culture and society" tradition – a radical, socialist perspective on culture and society. William's argument was

so vital to the understanding of modern society and art that it significantly replaced the previous Arnoldian, elitist notion of culture, which was subscribed to by both F.R. Leavis and T.S. Eliot.

It is to the credit of Williams to have attempted to situate culture within Marxism, despite all the theoretical outpourings of British Marxism in the 1930s. In his view a Marxist theory of culture should recognise diversity and complexity and should take account of continuity with change but the guiding string has to be the economic structure and consequent social relations. In this process, however, he found the typical Marxist concepts of structure and superstructure as inadequate, for in their very dogmatic paradigms, they are mechanical and reductionist. Williams's culture and society perspective thus runs counter to four dominant traditions: Arnoldian, Eliotian, Leavisian and the orthodox Marxist. Williams finds that the history of the idea of culture is a record of our reactions, in thought and feeling to the changed conditions of our common life. He was opposed to the idea of mass culture. Since culture is defined as a way of life of a community, namely, the sharing of a common culture especially in the modern period of industry, democracy and the enlarging field of communication.

For Williams, the idea of culture is a reaction to major changes in English common life. The word 'culture', however, cannot automatically be pressed into service as any kind of social or personal direction. It indicates a

total qualitative assessment, of a process, and not a conclusion. He makes a conscious attempt at disentangling the amalgam of "mass" which justifies the exclusivity of culture and systems of control over insipient mobs. Perceived that way, a real theory of communication is a theory of community. Since mass communication theory carries, with it the idea of the few controlling the many, it has to be countered by a democratic theory grounded in the value of the equality of being. It is from this perspective that Williams develops the idea of a common culture, the furtherance of which is possible only if there is an advance in consciousness. Therefore a culture is essentially unplannable.

Yet, industry and democracy, being the two forces, which change the modern world through a process of "long revolution", has quite a lot to do with the process of culture. The idea of a common culture, derived from such a process, brings together social relationship and the idea of natural growth and that of its tending. This can be achieved only through democracy, the struggle for which is based on the recognition of equality of being. Thus quite single handedly Williams was formulating a theory of culture, the cartography of an uncharted territory and the most suggestive and intricate body of socialist criticism in English history. His further theoretical explorations viz., *The Long Revolution* and *Communications* ensued from the conceptual foundation of *Culture and Society*. *Culture and Society* was to become a seminal text for the critical discourse known as cultural studies, a distinct feature of which was the recognition accorded to popular culture as integral to

the study of society. The book opened up a polemic on literary, political and social thinking. As a radical departure from the liberalism of the thirties' project it defined a distinct historiography on those lines. It is also to the credit of Williams to have disposed of the notion of "mass culture" and to have championed the idea of "working class culture" in the widest sense in his subsequent works.

Williams constructs a much more comprehensive theory of culture in *The Long Revolution*. He felt it necessary to do so after realizing a limitation of *Culture and Society*, in its exclusion of the working class, which seriously handicapped notions of culture. Here again he contests the Leavisian notion of culture. He defends popular culture as an expression of working class life in his conception of culture as "a whole way of life" of a society. The "Long Revolution" as he envisages it, is a process which transformed men and institutions consequent on the spread of industry, democracy and so impinges on culture, society and creativity. He observed that in the modern period there is an inextricable link between culture, communication and community. Therefore a theory of culture can be defined as the study of relationships between elements in a whole way of life. The particular living result of all the elements in the general organization, namely, culture is a "structure of feeling". This concept, he feels, is much more effective than the concept of "social character" in understanding society and culture, for the later, stressing a dominant abstraction does not adequately take the historical process of

change and conflict into account. However, in this process the cruces of the Empire, which are related to real factors in society, are not given due weight by Williams.

Two other concepts are important in the analysis of culture, namely, the relationship between organism and organization (i.e., between individual and society), and the "images of society". Since organisation is enacted in the organism, the only organization adequate to human nature is a participatory democracy, which can resolve the conflict between the two. The dominant social images which even socialism subscribed to – the absolute order, the organized market, the elite and the mass, and the images of human brotherhood – are reductionist in conceptualizing two separate versions of social relationship: politics (the system of decision) and economics (the system of maintenance). Williams points out that in the socialist proposal for a political and economic order, there is the subordination of human order with the result that in the context of conflicting power relationships in class societies, it legitimates the notion of "authoritarian populism". In such a condition, art is degraded as a mere reflection of the basic economic and political process and leads to another reductionist formula, namely, economic man = aesthetic man. On the other hand, Williams underscores that the creative element in man is inherent in his personality and his society, and so is integral to the systems of decision and maintenance.

Williams emphasizes that "making connections" between the systems (rather than endorsing separations) is a major task of criticism. This is necessary to achieve integration of the different phenomena, which constitute culture, and to gain control in analysis. From such a perspective a whole structure of social relations will emerge. Viewed in this sense, social change is a long process, a "Long Revolution", involving both emphasis and counteremphasis, and is realized through the industrial revolution, democratic revolution, and the history of cultural expansion. In these emphases Williams's thoughts yoke an astute Marxist stance, with several non-orthodox Marxist positions including certain strains of postmodernism. The growth of the reading public in England, of the popular press, the emphasis of standard English language and the social history of English writers and dramatic forms, and the study of realist fiction all illustrate his point.

As a Marxist, Williams is keen to emphasize that one of the dangers of capitalism is that it fosters a distorted sense of society. Though, both Socialism and the Labour movement have fallen on evil days, they are the only institutions from which effective alternative patterns could evolve. He visualizes a cultural organization free from the congeries of financial interests, but, for this, changes in economy, working relationships, democratic institutions and in education is necessary. A process of 'long revolution' is then to combat cultural poverty and inadequacies of democracy. The *Long Revolution* puts across an oppositional argument using elements of science,

social psychology and historical research and was shaping a discipline, namely, Cultural Studies, as a powerful response to the post 1945 hardening of attitudes in politics and education. Despite certain abstract generalizations in these matters, an exemplary pressure to formulate on culture, which is tantamount to theorizing a break with his earlier positions, characterizes the book.

An important aspect of Williams's theoretical explorations is the recognition of the centrality of communications in social life. The theme was already discussed *inter alia* in *Culture and Society* and in *The Long Revolution*, but a whole polemic on the subject was provided in *Communications*. The study of communication is in many ways a study of community. Understanding of society and culture cannot be wrested from the knowledge of the nature of communication. As human constructions, forms and patterns of communication are woven into the very fabric of society. The intertexture of communication and community has created new kinds of social problems and has affected a change in some of our basic ideas of society. One of the crises of twentieth century society and thereafter, as we can say now, is that new means of communication have been abused for political control as well as for commercial profit. It is, therefore, necessary to think of an alternative vision of human society.

As a way in which reality is continually being formed and changed, communication is as important as politics and education. In fact, the whole gamut of culture impinges on communication. Williams notices the incompatibility between the ideas of "masses" and "classes". As a consequence of the spread of new forms and means of communication, there arose a conflict between "high culture" and "mass culture". He argues that communication is to be seen as a common inheritance and should not be confined to a "great tradition", a "minority" or the "privileged". Questions of violence, sex and social values are all related to communication, either as a matter of Puritanism or as the artist's freedom of expression, and so are cultural questions. Of the various categories of communication, Williams supports the democratic category, which he believes would contribute to cultural democracy, in a way complementary to general democracy.

Williams's thoughts on communications were at once provocative as well as inspiring that they became the basis for a distinct branch of study within Cultural Studies, namely, Communication Studies, often used as a byword for cultural studies. As a Marxist critic Williams was strongly opposed to the derogative sense in which "mass" communication and "popular" literature were recognized. For him, communications encompass "the whole common area of discourse in speech and writing that always needs to be considered". Since communication through language and other symbolic forms comprises the ambience of human existence, it occupies a

central position in our critical discourse. His stress on the democratization of the means of communication takes him closer to the Frankfurt School theorists, notably Adorno and Habermas. Among English critics Williams is credited to have highlighted the primacy of communication in the critical discourse.

With the publication of *Culture and Society*, *The Long Revolution* and *Communications* and several essays and books on culture and literature, Williams was providing the necessary theoretical grounding for the field of Cultural Studies. Significantly, from this venture also emerged another branch of study which was quite alien to English literary studies, namely, a 'sociology of culture'. As in the earlier cases, Williams pioneered the field by writing a monograph, *Culture* (1981). Sociology of culture was an area for which there was no critical sanction till then. He considers both the idealist and the materialist positions on culture, but is convinced of the fact that any adequate sociology of culture must be a historical sociology. There is, in his perspective, a convergence between the anthropological and sociological source of culture as a distinct signifying system (whole way of life) and a signifying practice (artistic and intellectual activities) in which there is also the convergence of two authentic sociological perspectives: the production perspective and the social relations perspective.

The thrust of Williams's analysis is of course on the materiality of culture and his work in many respects form a companion volume to Hoggart's work *The Uses of Literacy*. The extension of reproduction technology has changed the ideas of art, and in consequence affected culture and social relations. For example, the relation between dominant and subordinated cultures appeared to be "asymmetrical". This also paved the way for new divisions of labour. Williams's sociological formulations thus incorporate insights from Marx, Gramsci, Goldmann, Althusser, Bourdieu and anticipate many later-day thinkers. The culture-ideology interface is a central point in Williams.

While analysing the relations between social and cultural change, Williams distinguishes three levels of cultural reproduction: the residual, the dominant and the emergent. It is then possible to define art as social process. Each art form has a complex sociology and forms part of the sociology of culture. However, the idea of a sociology of culture runs counter to the Structuralist approach (because, it holds that the basic cultural structures are independent or autonomous from social history and practice) as well as to Goldmann's "genetic structuralism" (in stressing that relations between form and historical transitions are ephemeral). Relying on Bakhtin's concept of "specificity", Williams proves that drama, especially, was a "sociologically precise" form. Thus in England, from Renaissance onwards, within different social orders, the socio-linguistic range was producing a community of forms.

The origin of modern drama, for instance, was from the bourgeois drama of the eighteenth century. Since the various signifying systems — economic, political and generational — are elements of a social system, culture can be defined as a *realized signifying system*, within which the study of works of art has to be undertaken.

Williams is at odds with Gramsci's idea of "hegemony" and "organic" intellectuals as social realities. For him these are the sociological terms of reference within which the problem of the intellectuals or cultural producers can be specifically analysed. He argues that in the modern context a cultural sociology has to take into account the facts of altered and alterable relations, viz., the bourgeois market, the popular culture, and the information process. In this position Williams anticipates the contemporary global/ globalization problematic where cultural production on a transnational and paranational scale has obliterated the idea of a single organic society. Here also, Williams assumes a political stance when he argues for a sociology of culture as both analytically constructive as well as constructively analytic.

Literary criticism, for Williams, is a venue for social critique. He examines social and material conditions in relation to literary works as important elements of culture. The main critical concept employed by him is "structure of feeling" which stands for "an experience communicated in a particular form through particular conventions". It is an existential concept,

which extends from the general to the particular. Williams's critical practice, in general, is an attempt to re-read and redefine works and ideas. Accordingly, *Modern Tragedy* is an attempt to rewrite the 'tragic tradition' and to apply the concept of tragedy to social revolution. He observes a fusion of tragedy and revolution — while revolution is a historical form, tragedy is a form of art. The idea is extended to both dramatic and fictional literature. There is in this position, a challenge posed against standard academic usage of the term and, in the attempt to redefine it, suggests connections, which have been lost or hidden.

In *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht* Williams analyses literary development in relation to patterns of social change where rigid determinism is being replaced by interrelationship. The concept of "structure of feeling" is applied both to literary analysis as well as to cultural theory, as "a way of defining forms and conventions in art and literature as inalienable elements of a social material process". Language is perceived both as *activity* and *history*. From this, two analytical methods are derived: analysis of phenomena in process and historical analysis, marking a break away from the tradition of Leavis and Richards.

Williams was also opposed to the Cambridge tradition, which insisted on a disciplinary separation of literature and language studies. He advocates an active social sense of writing and reading, through social, material and

historical realities of language. From this perspective Williams argued that discovery of actual contemporary structures of feeling is the most important task in the study of art and society. Accordingly, in literary analysis his method is to see the relationship between 'convention' and 'structures of feeling'. His view is that changes in convention only occur when there are radical changes in the general structure of feeling. Williams was then practising a non-biographical criticism, for he believed that biographical considerations would "reduce every work to the neurosis of the author".

The key factors to be considered in criticism are the material conditions and changes in the relationship between the individual and society. Again the power of a drama lies in its "dramatic negatives", a quality, which he finds in Brecht: "a powerful and unforgettable dramatic consciousness". While admiring theatrical innovations, Williams is also hopeful about film and television as cultural forms, for he believed that in the modern times these technical media could bring in 'a new realism' involving political (Socialist) and class (working class) struggles. When he insists that art is a material process, it also means that (politically) artistic freedom is closely related to the freedom of society.

Another critical concept introduced by Williams is the "knowable community". He does this in *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence* where he argues against the Leavisian literary topography of the "great

tradition". The term refers to perceptions of self and other, ways of comprehending one's place within a social context. In this sense, literary analysis is also a means of examining culture, manifested either as "radical culture" or as "anonymous culture", but an area largely ignored by academic work. "Structure of feeling" and "knowable community" are concepts used for examining phenomena in process as well as 'in totality'. They thus imply the relationship between literary analysis and politics.

An extension and application of his critical strategies have been undertaken in much more rigorous form in *The Country and the City* – to temporal and spatial levels, touching even the Third World. This book is explicitly more Marxist than his other critical works. Through historical and sociological reading, Williams demonstrates that English country house poems represent the decline of feudalism and the rise of capitalism in agriculture. The contrast between country and city as fundamental ways of life reaches back to classical times. But in fact, there is a close and continuous linkage between the two, rather than separation. Therefore the traditional 'town-country' contrast and comparison needs to be restructured. Such a methodology evinces the relationship between an idealized pastoral economy and the real material facts of dispossession. Discovery of this connection accounts for the movement from the literary to cultural studies. Williams shows that facts of rural-capitalism puts pressures on the community to turn political and, in the process, culture identified, as a way of life

becomes a way of struggle. The point is extended to the field of fiction and is encapsulated in the concept of "knowable communities". The city on the other hand, is an alternative site for democratic struggle to the more restricted local communities. Both the agrarian and industrial capitalism has to be contested if effective communities are to be realised. Since the struggle is one of values, it is both political and cultural. In the process, language is a means of socialisation into dominant values as well as a weapon for cultural struggle. William's analysis thus brings out both the capitalist interplay between town and country and, the imperialist as well as the socialist underplay of the realities of agricultural production. He further recognizes the need for alternative movements, such as feminism and ecology. That way, he was formulating the terms of an expanding Marxist critique of society and culture.

In the 1960s and early 1970s Williams entered into an active engagement with Marxism. *Marxism and Literature* (1977) which bears fruits of that period is perhaps the only full fledged Marxist literary theory in English. Its theoretical position, which he called "cultural materialism", takes into account the specificities of material, cultural and literary production within historical materialism. The basic concepts of such a theory are culture, language, literature and ecology, none of which is exclusively a Marxist category. There is a theoretical break in the recognition of literature as a specialising social and historical category which, in the context of technological advancement, political and economic transformation defined

practical consciousness and redefined literature and the aesthetic. Williams insists that art and literature being processes of signification are to be seen much more than as ideology because, signification is a central social process and so has to do with practical consciousness. In this way "cultural materialism" becomes a potential argument within Marxist theory, and so could be addressed as 'Cultural Marxism'.

It is again as part of his engagement with Marxism that he compiled an essential vocabulary for cultural analysis in *Keywords*. He shows that meaning are embedded in social relationships which are diverse and variable within historical changes. The mutability of the keywords are opposed to the Leavisian as well as to the structuralist notion of language. And through this work Williams was empowering the working class to use the terms by which they can comprehend their own complex social history.

Williams reminds us that cultural analysis is highly problematic. It has to take up a wide variety of topics within well-defined terms. In *Problems in Materialism and Culture* Williams considers such issues as cultural resistance, communication, nature and the base-superstructure distinction in Marxist critique, social Darwinism, Socialism, materialism, and technology and, through them suggest the range and scope of cultural materialism as a dynamic mode of criticism. In these essays he is exploring the possibilities of culture as a constitutive social process, which is essentially a material process.

Cultural materialism as a mode of criticism has come to stay in Shakespearean and Renaissance studies. Williams also makes a silent transition from his previous notion of culture as a "whole way of life" to specific different "ways of life". That way he was defining the contours of a historiography of material history.

Towards the last phase of his life Williams was interested in the cultural significance of Modernism. He makes here a pioneering effort to relocate and thereby re-define modernism and finds that the movement impinges more on the metropolitan perceptions than on the pastoral, colonial or Third World perceptions. Topics with modernist bearings such as theatre, film, technology and politics (Socialism) have been examined within the broad ambit of cultural theory. He observes that within modernism, the *Avant-garde* came as a political practice. A significant feature of Modernism was the emergence of cultural technologies. The cultural systems and institutions interlock with a developing capitalist society and accentuate polarisation by way of privileged institutions of minority culture and a capitalist sponsored mass culture. The contrast between the two is a source of cultural pessimism. The use of cultural theory is to identify such sources – the key linkages and gaps – within a real social history. The practice of academic criticism – picking up of texts and individuals from above – has to be substituted by such a task.

The history of modernism and the most extreme forms of the *avant-garde* shows the impermanence of forms and movements. However, the profound connection between formation and forms is a source of inspiration and strength. Williams viewed the avant-garde, which was remarkable for its attempted integration of art and social praxis, as an integration of theory and practice, revolutionary doctrine and actual working-class experience.

In a period of glib postmodernism, Williams is conspicuous in the intellectual firmament by exhibiting the ability to sustain a commitment to class struggle as well as a celebration of difference and plurality. Culture, then, is an area where diverse categories – a way of life, art and literature, politics, ideology – meet, undergo changes and assume new shapes. It shows and records the way social phenomena get transformed, its historical determinants and the way it impinges on society. Therefore a view of art and literature, which hinges on culture could be seen as the alchemy of aesthetics. Economic factors, such as production-relations, the mutation of division of labour under new modes of production and reproduction, and the impact of communication technology on human life and practices all need to be considered in understanding a work of art in the modern period. An active criticism of art and literature as Williams's work suggests, cannot bypass any of these facets. In effect, then, culture turns out to be a byword for art, literature, society, politics and contemporary history. That way, as a definitive term "culture" becomes a category in Marxist aesthetics.

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