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# Lived experience and creative praxis : a critical appraisal of Raymond William's fiction

Mingying ZHOU

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LIVED EXPERIENCE AND CREATIVE PRAXIS:  
A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF  
RAYMOND WILLIAMS'S FICTION

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PHD

LINGNAN UNIVERSITY

2018

LIVED EXPERIENCE AND CREATIVE PRAXIS:  
A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF RAYMOND WILLIAMS'S FICTION

by  
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submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirement for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in English

Lingnan University

2018

## ABSTRACT

### Lived Experience and Creative Praxis: A Critical Appraisal of Raymond Williams's Fiction

by

ZHOU Mingying

Doctor of Philosophy

Raymond Williams is known to the academic world as the pioneer and co-founder of the discipline of cultural studies, and his works on culture, society, democracy, hegemony, etc., have been widely read and cited. Yet, somewhat disappointingly, the fiction to which Williams devoted much of his life's endeavor has been largely neglected and dismissed. Whenever Williams is mentioned, the salient labels attached to him are invariably "cultural critic", "cultural materialist", "critical theorist" and so on. This dissertation is not only designed to redress the balance with regard to Williams's novels, read in parallel to his critical work, but also to interpret them from a new perspective. My aim is to shed fresh light on Williams's fiction as a nuanced reflection on his socio-cultural concerns.

Williams has published seven novels, through which we may discern a rather different and, I argue, more complex Williams from the typical profile of the combative cultural theorist. This thesis intends to analyze the fiction from three dimensions: firstly, the innate and strong Welshness of Williams that is reflected in his depictions of the landscape and the Welsh people; Secondly, the sexuality and gendering in Williams's fiction, which evidently tilts towards the female soft power, locating the power balance more specifically in the traditionally "weaker" gender; thirdly, tragedy haunts Williams's protagonists and minor characters, yet, as his theory of modern tragedy reveals, the tragedy of the ordinary person is as tragic and heroic as that of kings and queens. In Williams's novels a tragic mood and epic sweep often go hand-in-hand, and it is evident that his theory of modern tragedy informs his own novels as much as it does twentieth century drama.

Focusing as it does on Williams's fiction, the present thesis offers a new perspective on Williams studies. In the process it engages critically with Williams's idea on Welshness, sexuality, gendering, and tragedy, in particular, topics that have not been studied interdependently in commentaries on Williams's work to date. In this respect the study represents an original and productive contribution to the field of Raymond Williams study.

## DECLARATION

I declare that this is an original work based primarily on my own research, and I warrant that all citations of previous research, published or unpublished, have been duly acknowledged.

\_\_\_\_\_

(ZHOU Mingying)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL OF THESIS

LIVED EXPERIENCE AND CREATIVE PRAXIS:  
A CRITICAL APPRAIAL OF RAYMOND WILLIAMS'S FICTION

by  
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## List of Abbreviations

The following abbreviations for Raymond Williams's novels are used throughout.

Bibliographical details are given in the Bibliography.

<i>BC</i>	<i>Border Country (1960)</i>
<i>SG</i>	<i>Second Generation (1964)</i>
<i>FM</i>	<i>The Fight for Manod (1979)</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>The Volunteers (1978)</i>
<i>LY</i>	<i>Loyalties (1985)</i>
<i>PBM-1</i>	<i>People of the Black Mountains: The Beginning (1989)</i>
<i>PBM-2</i>	<i>People of the Black Mountains: The Eggs of the Eagle (1990)</i>

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## Introduction

Raymond Williams, a versatile thinker and writer, is renowned all over the world for his multiple roles of university professor, cultural studies pioneer, critical theorist, cultural critic, literary critic, political commentator, Marxist, Welsh nationalist, educator, playwright, novelist, short story writer, and so on. His prolific writings range from his broad concerns about international politics and the state of society and culture to the most intimate feelings about sexual relationships and family issues. Williams's profuse works occupy a unique position in the British history of both cultural studies and political thinking, as well as in the English literary tradition.

Born in a re-located Welsh working-class family in a small village named Pandy at the foot of the Black Mountain on the Wales-England border, Williams was raised in an intimate and—to use his own terminology—knowable community, and was exposed to left-wing politics in his early life with his parents both being active in the local Labour Party committee and his father involved in the 1926 General Strike. And later, following his outstanding performance at school at Abergavenny and with the enthusiastic recommendation of the school principal, Williams won a scholarship to the Trinity College Cambridge, where he studied English literature as his major. During his years of undergraduate study in Cambridge, Williams began to read Marxist books, and joined the Communist Party for a while. Before his studies were completed, he was recruited into the army, and fought in the Second World

War. When he came back, having witnessed the terrible carnage of war at first hand, the experience had given him a decidedly humanist turn of mind, wholeheartedly opposing the brutality of war. In his period of English literature study, Williams was studying in the prime time of the New Criticism movement, especially the Cambridge tradition of eminent scholars, including I.A. Richards and F.R. Leavis, who upheld fixed criteria for the analysis of literary texts, which focused on the study of literary works as isolated entities and textual phenomena, rather than as part of broader cultural and social traditions.

After graduation from Cambridge, Williams took a job as a night school teacher for ordinary people of working class background. During this time, Williams gradually began to discover the talents of the comparatively less-educated people and their sensitivity to the subtlety and nuances in the literary works he was teaching; this convinced Williams of the rich creativity and artistic talents of the ordinary people, and also of their potentially significant role in contributing to culture as a whole, a perception that he channeled into a key argument in many of his theoretical books.

The decades after the Second World War in Britain witnessed the rise of the Labour Party, which won the 1945 election, and governed from 1945 to 1951 and again from 1964 to 1970, and then from 1974 to 1979. During this period leftist politics and ideas were thriving and prominent, and provided fertile ground for the development of Williams's cultural theories. The majority of Williams's works were published during this period, and Williams himself was involved in active participation in the New Left movement especially, as, together with E.P. Thompson

and Stuart Hall, he compiled *1967 New Left May Day Manifesto*; moreover, Williams expanded his academic interests even more widely to adult education, the history of both culture and literature, communication and broadcasting, television and new technologies, drama criticism and playwriting, and established himself as an accomplished critic and professor in the academic world.

Later, thanks to the strong influence of his critical books, Williams was invited back to Cambridge, and elected as fellow of Jesus College; he subsequently became Reader and eventually Professor of Drama. By that time, Williams had already distanced himself from the ideas of Leavis, and his position remained antithetical to the elitist stance with his somewhat conflicted relations with Leavis and other colleagues. Hence, although Williams spent quite a proportion of his life in Cambridge, he asserts:

It was not my Cambridge. That was clear from the beginning. I have now spent eighteen years in the university, in three distinct periods. In each of them I have started by being surprised to be there, and then, in time, made some kind of settlement. But this has always, even in the longest period, felt temporary. (Williams, *What I Come Say* 3)

He was the only child in the family and a brilliant young scholar, who left his native village for Cambridge after his excellent performance at school, and later made great achievements, settling himself in the big city. Williams was greatly cherished and loved by his parents who maintained regular correspondence with him all their lives. From just a brief perusal of the letters<sup>1</sup> from his parents, it is evident how conscientiously his parents had kept Williams in touch with their local

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<sup>1</sup> The letters are stored in the Richard Burton Archive in Swansea University, under the category of Diaries.

community life in Pandy. The letters were frequently sent from his parents to Williams, often one or two letters per week: the letters from his father, Harry, are mainly about his field-work, maintenance of the beehives, and the general situation in the village; whereas, the letters from his mother Gwen reveal much more intimate feelings, as Gwen not only kept Williams informed of anecdotes about people in the community but also expressed her yearning to hear from her son to console her heart. Despite the fact that Williams worked all his life in English cities, and never went back to his Welsh home village for long stays, he did return once in a while to his family, climbed the Black Mountains and sat and talked with his father at night. Therefore, Williams's feelings for the Welsh land and the Welsh working class, of which his father was a prominent example, can in part be attributed to his parents' persistent emotional involvement of their son in their community life. After his retirement from Cambridge in 1983 he moved to Saffron Walden in Essex, and spent his last years there, where he wrote the novel *LY* and completed the two volumes of *PBM* that had been originally intended as a trilogy.

As an internationally renowned cultural critic, Williams is, above all, primarily a regional writer in the sense that his starting point and foothold were very much dependent on his Welsh origin and working-class background. This heritage is reflected in some of his book chapters and many of his published articles, but most explicitly expressed and communicated in his fictional writings, where he explores the meaning and the texture of his Welsh experiences through the consciousness and experience of a variety of protagonists. However, rather disappointingly, his novels,

published and unpublished, have tended to be neglected and not seen as important in the context of his whole body of work. Therefore, the present dissertation represents an earnest endeavor to study Williams's fiction as a central topic in its own right, and endow it with due critical attention for the following reasons. In the first place, as we have observed, his highly regarded work in cultural theory could not have been formed without his Welsh experiences growing up on the Wales-England border and in his working class background, which are densely coded and deeply explored throughout his fiction. As Smith argues, "the novel was his [Williams's] way of appropriating these general arguments in order to make them, as they were experienced, individual dilemmas and individual solutions within the given framework of a binding social and material history" (*A Warrior's Tale* 13); "his work, all of it, was written only because he had lived it, and ...it cannot be fully comprehended without the texture of that life being known" (13). Williams himself has always insisted on the integral unity of his oeuvre, both critical and creative. Secondly, it is clear that Williams devoted far more energy to his fictional writing than to most other works, as he himself admits in *Politics and Letters*: "it's certainly true that I have given relatively far more time, in comparison with what became visible and valued, to fiction than to any other form of writing" (271). Besides, many of his novels took many years of laborious efforts over a long time period; for example, *BC* underwent up to seven revisions both in form and in content before it was published. The same degree of effort also went into *FM*, which took five revisions over twelve years and *VT* taking six years to finally accomplish.

Williams clearly held the novels as by no means complementary to but certainly crucial to his cultural theories and intellectual practices. However, none of his novels—with *BC* perhaps the slight exception—were particularly well received or widely read, and some of them were harshly reviewed and poorly received. This does not mean they deserve to be ignored or forgotten either in their own right as novels or for academic study. Rather, as Williams was passionate, but also discreet, about his fiction writing, they were, consciously or unconsciously, infused with his key social and critical ideas, as my thesis will demonstrate. A thorough exploration of his fiction will not only reveal the more obvious threads that can be connected to Williams's other intellectual writings, but also bring to light certain discrepancies and paradoxes between the fiction and the theory.

In addition to the published novels, Williams had previously experimented in the form of a fiction with three novels prior to *BC*, though none of these were published. Evidently, Williams attached great significance to the novel form, and in his published and unpublished work, his attempt to make it a very distinct genre from the 19<sup>th</sup> century bourgeois fictional format is evident. At the same time, neither did he want to imitate the 20<sup>th</sup> century Welsh novelists who tended to be restricted to one particular region, and whose work reflected nostalgia for the past, as opposed to focusing on the changes over the period<sup>2</sup> leading up to the present. Subsequently, he divulged more information concerning his deployment of characters and narrative, and in the interview discussed in some detail, the psychology of the characters and

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<sup>2</sup> From *Politics and Letters: Interviews with New Left Review*. London: New Left Books, 1979. pp.271-272.



also the strategy of bringing an important event into the context of a small village, as exemplified in *BC* and *FM*. Revealing as his novels are in terms of the author's original intentions in producing the stories, there are still various meanings that remain outside the control of the author once the novels get published, and are thus open to a variety of interpretations. One crystal-clear message we receive from *Politics and Letters* is that the author's novels are impregnated with Williams's authentic and unreserved consciousness and are only delivered after considerable labor pains. His Welsh Trilogy, for example, has unfortunately tended to be overshadowed by his more widely read cultural discussions, and are thus often neglected by scholars and critics of his own and subsequent generations. What we find in his fiction is that the creative writing and imaginative composition invariably runs wild, sometimes beyond the critical writer's more sober and rational control. Meanings and implications overflow from his texts, often revealing things he never meant to disclose or ideas that the critical writer in Williams may well not have been even conscious of himself. Thus, although Williams expressed his ideas on culture, politics, society, education, etc., explicitly in his critical writings, it is possible to detect something else in his fiction, something unsaid, untouched or even perhaps unknown to himself.

## **I. Literature Review**

As mentioned above, relatively little attention has been paid to the study of Williams's novels, a task in which he himself exerted a great deal of his creative

energy. To add to the worthwhile challenge of analyzing his fictional output, there is a shortage of secondary literature necessary for researching such a topic. An investigation into the relatively small body of scholarly works that exists devoted to Williams's fiction reveals that the subject is mainly restricted to British, and especially Welsh, scholars within a fairly narrow field of British academia, and even then there are severe limitations in the range of subject-matter. There are almost no monographs devoted to a discussion of Williams's fiction in its own right, with the notable exception of Tony Pinkney's study *Raymond Williams*; however, some other monographs on Williams include special chapters on his novels, or include articles especially discussing the fiction; besides, since as early as 1987, even before the publication of Williams's last two novels *PBM Beginnings* and *The Eggs of the Eagle*, quite a few theses and dissertations have been dedicated to the study of Williams's fiction; there have also been published journal articles exploring Williams's fiction. This available secondary literature focusing on Williams's fiction will be reviewed from these four categories—monographs, journal articles, book chapters and theses.

Tony Pinkney, who worked with Raymond Williams in their coauthored book *Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists*, produced the first book-length study of Williams's fiction, simply entitled *Raymond Williams* in 1991, a few years after the latter's death. Fully familiar with Williams as both a formidable international figure and at the same time stubbornly regional and local, Pinkney affirms the integrity of Williams's cultural writings and his novels as a whole. His

in-depth analysis goes a long way to compensate for the general neglect of Williams's fictional creation, and at one point goes so far as to value the creative over the critical in asserting, "never trust *Marxism and Literature*, trust *The Volunteers*" (Pinkney 15). In his analytical study, Pinkney reads all the six novels as vivid literary texts, without necessary consideration of the author as the commanding literary and socio-cultural critic that he undoubtedly was. He explores the textual subtleties and discusses the intricate meanings that emerge from reading between the lines of the novels on their own merit. Pinkney not only views Williams as a novelist in this study, but also as a postmodern novelist: for one thing, Williams's fiction is distinct from earlier fictions of twentieth-century modernism, with the key features of his work emphasizing, "the surface intricacy and strangeness of texts as opposed to a brisk, old-style extracting of major themes" (16); for another, the most prominent accomplishment of postmodernism was the collapse of the barriers between "fiction" and "theory", "creative" and "critical", "regional" and "international", "local" and "global", which is emblematic of Williams's fictional writings.

In his monograph, Pinkney divides all of Williams's six novels into three major categories, with each chapter devoted to the analysis of two novels as sharing similar themes in addition to forming certain correspondences and contrasts. In the chapter entitled "Taking the feel of the room: *Border Country* and *Second Generation*", Pinkney respectively explores the spatial dynamics evident in Williams's two earliest novels. He detects multiple layers of space in *BC*: the room in the house where Harry

often sits in his armchair, the kitchen where Ellen spends most of her time, the sickroom of the dying father, the signal-box where the father works, the physical presence of Glynmawr, the vision of the valleys from above the Kestrel, the General Strike of 1926, extending from place to place, the spatial disjunction of Matthew's research on Wales and his actual study in London, and finally, the border country as both spatial and historical. In his close examination of these spatial factors in each of the novels Pinkney discusses the dynamics between spatial and social relationships, especially the relations of space and power. Although, the title of *SG* instantly strikes the reader as both temporal and historical, Pinkney insists on "generation" as a spatially complex and multi-layered phenomenon. Indeed, the novel opens with an explicit division of space between a university city and a car factory plant, between intellectual knowledge and manual labor, between middle-class English intellectuals and working-class Welsh laborers, living in a single street named Towns Road. Pinkney explores the secret space and "unsettling non-room" (57) of each of the characters in the novel: Kate's dark empty room/womb, Myra's drawer where she keeps her first husband's wedding ring; the bonnet of Gwyn's car; the inner space of Harold's car which he maintains as precious private space; the nest of Arthur Dean's uncle; and also the presence of the University (a fictional doppelganger of Oxford University) itself. Moreover, various other images of hands and doors are also brought into close focus in a searching study that vividly reveals the minutely intricate texture and rich personal and sociopolitical substance of Williams's creative writing.

In the next chapter, “From realism to postmodernism: *The Fight for Manod* and *The Volunteers*”, Pinkney views this second pair of novels as an exploration into the complexities of para-national space, as both novels mobilize the protagonist, as he shuttles back and forth between the metropolitan home and the Welsh village. His study delves into the uncanny ethos of sickness that surrounds the characters of Gethin Jenkins, Juliet Dance, Modlen, Gwen Vaughan; furthermore, Pinkney treats Manod as a contest between Matthew Price and John Dance as very different builders of the community: the former is envisioning Manod as an ecological and harmonious development based on decisions made by its own people, while the latter being the actual professional builder in Manod, is engaged in the capitalist asset-stripping scam far from the interests of the local people. In *VT* what Pinkney has identified is close to the virtual space or in the theories of Baudrillard and Eco “hyper reality” or for Bourdieu, “society of the spectacle”, which for Williams is, according to Pinkney, “the dramatized society”. In *Insatel*, where the protagonist Lewis Redfern works, is a “network already installed for spectacle”, which creates most of the claimed reality in its news; moreover, the novel starts with Redfern sitting “in a kitchen which had everything but food” (10) while hearing the news of the shooting of Minster Buxton in the museum castle, the room of which is rather empty and simulated; Pinkney further contrasts the sanitized and ‘spatialized’ world of the Folk Museum, where a virtual Welsh history is exhibited, which is also the place where Minster Buxton is shot. The spatial pattern is further explored with Redfern’s journey back into the Welsh context of events.

In his last chapter, “An ease of the place: *Loyalties* and *People of the Black Mountains*”, Pinkney inquires further into the images of nest and eggs, scattered and diffused across the texts, primarily with the female protagonist named Nesta echoing the nest image in *SG*; besides, the Gothic space of terror is also detected in the mutilated and deformed body of Monkey Pitter, and also in the ghastly crippled body and damaged face of Bert Lewis. In *PBM*, Pinkney reads the two volumes in the context of topo-analysis and social-spatial dialectics, aiming at making manifest the oblique layers and the hidden meaning of the texts. He traces the active experience of space and of the people transforming the space into place through their quotidian working lives. Equally, the womb-nest imagery, extends into the text, contrasted with the abundant images of crippledness of the male characters, representing the dichotomy between powerful women and crippled men in Williams’s fictional formulation.

Pinkney’s meticulous study of every single one of Williams’s novels in chronological order represents a valuable critical intervention, as he diverges from the usual treatment of Williams’s novels as complementary to or mirroring his critical theories, and instead discusses the fiction from the perspectives of postmodernism and spatial criticism. In this study, Pinkney undoubtedly points out many interesting implicit themes, and proposes a number of original ideas, which have helped to inspire the writing of the present thesis. However, since Pinkney discusses the novels one by one in linear fashion, there is a resultant loss of continuity in exploring the similar themes reflected in more than one novel: for

example, the nest imagery spans from *SG* to *LY* and finally to *PBM*, but the separate discussion of it in each of the sections causes unavoidable repetition and discontinuity in places. These are small deficiencies in his study, as I see it, that my own study hopes to address, by considering the texts themselves according to the themes rather than diachronically according to publication dates.

In the interlocutory book, *Politics and Letters: Interviews with New Left Review* (1979), a retrospective of his life's work in the form of interviews, Williams intriguingly reveals his intentions behind the characterization and plots in the Welsh trilogy and *VT*. He also talks about how he situates his own novels as being radically different both from the classic realist novels of, for example, George Eliot, and from the typical documentary novels of working-class life. The detailed reflections on his own experiences and his intentional transference of these into the novels give us unique insight into the motivating force of his fictions; thus, they help the reader understand more about the background of his creation of characters and his authorial editing process before the publication of the novels. However, since the text may take on a life of its own beyond the conscious manipulations of the author, there remains much to be explored besides the author's intentional input.

Another useful and insightful study is Jan Gorak's *The Alien Mind of Raymond Williams* (1988), which approaches Williams's works from the perspective of four categories—drama, culture, socialism and fiction—with fiction as a dedicated chapter. In this chapter, Gorak re-positions Williams's fiction as by no means a by-product or offshoot of his critical writings, and he quotes pertinently from

Williams that “the two kinds of writing have always been equally important to me, and in fact the novel-writing came first and will, I think, go on longer”(96). Gorak also discusses, but in more general terms, the themes of knowable community, settlement, working-class mores, the divided identity of the protagonist, and so on, without critically exploring the detailed substance and minute texture of specific novels.

In their illuminating monograph entitled *Raymond Williams: Making Connections* (1994), John and Lizzie Eldridge devote two chapters to analyzing the trilogy and the two middle-period novels—*VT* and *LY* respectively. In these two chapters, the Eldridges mainly illustrate how the structure of feeling is dissolved within Williams’s fiction and how the tensions between past, present and future, between memories and current feelings, between generations, between the individual and society, and finally between language and communication, are deployed and negotiated; they also explore how the connectivity and continuity of life are constantly aspired to and pursued in his novels, and how disconnection, discrepancy and contradiction impinge on the realities of his characters’ lives. That said, the Eldridges’ discussion of the texts treats Williams’s fiction in the light of his critical theory, rather than focusing more closely on the novels themselves to the degree of depth that they all merit.

Daniel Williams’s two articles— “‘Writing Against the Grain’: Raymond Williams’s *Border Country* (1960) and the Defence of Realism” in *Mapping the Territory: Critical Approaches to Welsh Fiction in English* and “To Know the



Divisions: The Identity of Raymond Williams” in *Wales Unchained*, and his edited book *Who Speaks for Wales?: Nation, Culture Identity*, reinstate Raymond Williams’s reputation as an essentially Welsh writer; the first essay in particular underlines the significance of Williams’s fiction. From the persuasive viewpoint of Daniel Williams, *BC* is Raymond Williams’s reconstructive narrative, informing much of his critical writings. The present thesis is very much indebted to the critical insights and original arguments of Daniel Williams, and particularly, it seeks to look at other novels by Raymond Williams in a similar light.

In *Raymond Williams: Politics, Education and Letters* (1993) edited by W. John Morgan and Peter Preston, James A. Davies contributes an article entitled “ ‘Not going back, but... exile ending’: Raymond Williams’s Fictional Wales”, which gives a general review of each of Williams’s first five novels and emphasizes the Welsh features of the novels. It concentrates primarily on his fictional treatment of rural Wales and the Welsh people in the novels, especially the scholarship protagonists who, despite settling in the metropolitan context, remain essentially Welsh, an affinity with their homeland that is simply in their blood.

Ana Clara Birrento’s article “Raymond Williams: reading novels as knowable communities” in the edited study *About Raymond Williams*, regards Williams’s novels as a reassessment and reconceptualization of cultural construction, bringing together the divided parts between the individual and the society, between historical formation and social construction. Birrento particularly highlights Williams’s structure of feeling and knowable community concepts that frame her criticism of the

novels in this essay. However, the article discusses how Williams's critical concepts inform his composition of novels, rather than exploring in detail the fictional works themselves.

Since 1978 even before the publication of Williams's last novel, there have been PhD dissertations working exclusively on his fiction in various departments of English, Sociology and Cultural Studies. Lawrence H. Kaye's dissertation, "A voice from the border: the fiction of Raymond Williams" (1978), in the department of sociology, treats the Welsh trilogy as a fictional expression of Williams's cultural and political criticism, which reveals the unsaid or what the critical writings are unable to express. Kaye discusses how Williams explores the key issues of the period by developing particular characters and plots, and most importantly, by developing a special form of realism. In the fiction, according to Kaye, Williams's own lived experiences are relived by the protagonists, through which he explores more deeply the meanings and values of the working-class life in which he was nurtured.

In 1991, after the death of Williams and the publication of his last novels, Gwyneth Newell Roberts submitted her PhD dissertation entitled "The Cost of Community: the Novels of Raymond Williams", a study which covers all the novels by Williams. In this dissertation, Roberts firstly treats Williams's novels as his efforts to solve the tension between educationally mobile working-class intellectuals and their native communities; secondly, Roberts discusses what she sees as the male view of reality that predominates in all of Williams's works. She goes on to argue that Williams compromises this gender perspective in his novels, and then exposes a

sense of ambivalence, if not contradiction, between the fiction and the theory; lastly, Roberts emphasizes Williams's strong sense of the land and the intense attachment to the rural Welsh villages that is discernible in his fictional representations of the border country and the Black Mountains. This dissertation opened up a new perspective on Williams's novels, as it was the first to raise the problem of Williams's ambivalent attitudes towards feminism; moreover, her detailed analysis of the novels also allows the reader to understand another aspect of Williams's psyche as represented in his fictions.

The dissertation "The Dislocated Mind: the Fiction of Raymond Williams" (2007) by Elizabeth Allen also discusses the divided identity of the protagonists as well as of Williams himself as author, between lived experiences in the intimate Welsh working-class community and the abstraction and impersonality of the metropolitan world. Allen reads Williams's fictional writing and literary production as a means of opposition or resistance to the dominant culture on the basis that the centrality of the novels is positioned within oppositional social-historical discourses. Finally, eco-criticism is employed to assert Williams's attachment to the land and the important place that Wales assumes in his fiction as a whole.

More recently in 2013, Noman Madden produced an MA thesis on Williams's Border Trilogy entitled "Knowing his Place: How Welsh are the 'Border' Trilogy of Novels by Raymond Williams?", which, through detailed textual analysis, discusses Williams's problematic Welshness and his sense of Welsh identity; moreover, it

elaborates on his fictional responses to the Wales-England border landscape and the significance of knowable community, as exemplified in the trilogy.

Besides the above, there have also been a few journal articles on Williams's fiction. For example, D.L. LeMahieu's article—"Lost Fathers: Raymond Williams and the Signal Box at Pandy" (2014) explores the complex role of father figures, especially the semi-autobiographical father figure of Harry Price in *BC*; moreover, the essay treats the Welsh community as Williams's social father and F.R. Leavis as his cultural father, and finally, Williams himself becomes, according to this figurative formulation, a father figure to the New Left as well as to cultural studies.

"Fathers and Phantoms: Revealing the Unconscious Residues in Raymond Williams's *Border Country*" (2017) by Clare Davies explores archive material by examining the earlier unpublished versions of *BC*, where she discovers the problematic fatherhood of Matthew Price and a possible case of incest between Matthew and Eira which haunts the novel. Stephen Knight in 1988 also reviewed Williams's fiction by publishing an article entitled "Personal Substance: The Novels of Raymond Williams" in a newspaper, which treats Williams's novels as the revelation of his thoughts and feelings in the process of working, both within and against British history, and also as an assertion of the holistic and eclectic intellect of Williams. Lastly, Steve Hardy's article—"The Significance of Place in the Fictions of Raymond Williams and Iain Sinclair" (1998), gives a concise review of all Williams's novels: he argues that it is a focused concern in Williams's fiction to trace the shaping and meanings of lives of individuals and communities through

reconnection and continuity between generations and also the dynamic interaction between natural and human forces.

The biographical monographs—*Raymond Williams* by Fred Inglis and *Raymond Williams: A Warrior's Tale* by Dai Smith both reveal a lot about the background and the process of creation and composition in respect of Williams's novels. Following publication of each of the novels, there were several significant reviews by contemporary critics and scholars, which are collected and stored in the Richard Burton Archive at Swansea University.

In China, from my personal perspective and context, most scholars only know Williams as a British socialist, Marxist, cultural critic and literary critic, yet few of them have come to know Williams as a novelist, or are even aware that he is Welsh. No books devoted to Williams's fictional writings have been published in China, and at best, his fiction is only alluded to in passing as the mere mirror of his great edifice of cultural theories. However, two journal articles have been published, one discussing *BC* exclusively and the other *SG*, by two respected Chinese Williams scholars, but no paper has ever discussed *FM* in depth so far. In the paper "On the Politics of Social Space in *Border Country*", Li Zhaoqian discerned in the novel three oppositions of social space: the gender opposition within the house, the political opposition between Capitalist and Socialist beliefs in the workplace and also the ethnic opposition within the community itself. The paper is insightful in terms that it exploits the key notion in Williams's novels: the conflicts of two worlds, whether they be capitalist or socialist, English or Welsh, manual or intellectual.

However, as I will argue, Williams does not ultimately represent these oppositions as mutually exclusive; rather, he takes great pains to reconcile them through a dialectical fictive process. The second paper “On the Space Theory in *Second Generation*” by Lin Bo also brings us to the attention of the concept of “space”. Lin discusses how Williams in this novel criticizes the industrialized British centers and inner cities and how the university and the factory are depicted in a similar way to Foucault’s Panopticon model. Indeed, Williams was instinctively against capitalist industrialization, and therefore considering the novel in the light of Foucault’s critical study is certainly original and worthwhile. However, to see the novel exclusively in terms of its condemnation of Capitalism is surely one-sided, since there is a plethora of deep cultural connotations yet to be discovered and interpreted in this analysis.

Another interesting paper, “Education and Class Identity in the Post-war British Working-Class Fiction: David Storey’s *Pasmore* and Raymond Williams’s *Border Country* and *Second Generation*” by a South Korean scholar Young-Phil Yoon provides a good examination into the spiritual crisis of the protagonists and their renegotiation with their roots in Welsh communities; but it leads on to conclude that in these novels Williams questions the ambivalent nature of education and the integrity of his being, arguments that the author fails to substantiate convincingly and which are in consequence a little far-fetched.

Therefore, though there has been a range of discussions about the fiction of Raymond Williams, especially the Welsh trilogy, from the 1980s onwards, the topic

of his fiction remains marginal to Williams studies as a whole. Further, it is evident that any discussion of his fiction is usually reserved for the last chapter in books that deal with Williams's prolific output. My dissertation, in contrast, will posit his fiction as a central and focused topic of its own based on rigorous and detailed textual analysis, and thereby seeks to generate more in-depth discussion on the subject of Williams's fiction in general.

## **II. The Structure of the Dissertation**

Drawing on the books and articles on Williams's fiction discussed above, my dissertation represents an earnest and focused attempt to explore all the published novels of Raymond Williams with a focus on his treatment of Welsh identity, constructs of gender, representations of disfigurement and disability, and modern interpretations of tragedy in his fiction. As we read through his novels, there are recurrent themes, including the Welsh village and the Welsh people, the problematic paternity issues of his protagonists, the crippled males and the disfigured females, and so on. In view of the above fourfold concept, the dissertation is divided into four chapters. Chapter one will give a general overview of Williams's key notions in his cultural studies, i.e. cultural materialism, structure of feeling, hegemony, emergent, residual and dominant cultures, communication and knowable communities, socialism and ecology. Having established the relevance of these concepts for his writing, specifically his fiction, the dissertation will turn to a detailed, in-depth discussion of his fictions.

Chapter two is specially devoted to an exploration of the Welshness of Raymond Williams. It discusses firstly, how the Welsh land and the contours are etched into the mind and body of its Welsh people and how this dynamic and harmonious interaction is formed through the necessities of earning their livelihood. Secondly, how the social relationships are actually sustained among the knowable communities of the Welsh rural villages. Thirdly, how some of the minor characters, like Harry Price in *BC*, Gwyn in *SG* and Bert Lewis in *LY*, represent the values of the Welsh working-class and absorb these into the very core of their lives; while the protagonists, who often tend to be upwardly mobile Welsh working-class intellectuals, are split in their identity, being at the same time both Welsh and English, both intellectual and working-class. Lastly, this chapter will discuss the tension between nationality and locality and between race and class in these particular fictions.

Chapter three concerns sexuality and gendering in these novels. In the first place, the theme of problematic parentage to be found in each of the novels is explored, and the likely reason for Williams's obsession with the topic is also analyzed from a range of perspectives. In novels such as *SG* and *LY*, Williams depicts several awkward sexual scenes, which are encoded with the sexual scripts and mores of the working-class Welsh men and women. It will be argued that in this process he miscodes his fictive representation of sexual interactions between his characters and portrays sexual relations as a weapon or a means to something other than itself. Likewise, cases of male crippledness, gender politics and the gendering of disability



will be explored using a methodology of disability criticism. Finally, given the strength and capacity for dominant roles and decision-making of female characters in the novels, I will argue how women redefine the marital power relations and also how they play an important role in the construction of Welsh national identity.

Chapter four discusses the sense of tragedy within the narratives created in Williams's novels. Since Williams redefines tragedy in his critical study *Modern Tragedy*, my chapter will explore how this redefinition of tragedy applies to his fiction. Accordingly, I will argue that his personal interpretation on the notion of tragedy can be applied to the plots and characters of his novels. Following Williams's own classification, chapter four will also discuss tragedy from five perspectives, each supported by pertinent examples from the texts: tragedy, accident and suffering; tragedy, design and order; tragedy and death; tragedy and evil; tragedy, disorder and revolution.

To sum up, the following are the central research questions related to Williams's fiction that my study will address and respond to: research question one: how can we better understand Williams's key theoretical concepts in the light of his fictional writings? Research question two: how profoundly is Williams's Welshness represented through the prism of his novels? Research question three: how do sexuality and gender—generally neglected in Williams's theoretical writing and book-length studies—feature as conspicuous and integral themes in his fictions? Research question four: how are the explicit notions of modern tragedy that Williams has explored at length in his homonymous book-length study treated both

explicitly and implicitly in the plots and characterization of his novels?

Ultimately, in its conclusions the dissertation will reassess Williams's fiction in a way that informs studies of feminism, eco-criticism and modern tragedy. My thesis will also argue that Williams has his own limits, resulting to some extent, from his working-class background and the socio-political milieu of the era in which he lived and was educated. My conclusion will therefore attempt a balanced and critical view of Williams's strengths and weaknesses as a writer from the perspective of the contemporary reader's viewpoint.

## **Chapter One**

### **A General Overview of Williams's Key Concepts**

Among the valuable theoretical concepts Williams posits at various points throughout his works in cultural theories, his concepts of cultural materialism and structure of feeling are probably the most central and influential. In establishing his particular brand of cultural theory, Williams reiterates the crucial significance of the dynamic role of culture, the actual lived experience and equal contribution of the ordinary individual, as well as the incorporation of these elements into the meanings of a culture as a whole way of life. In the following discussion I will engage with a number of key concepts propounded by Williams, and consider how these concepts are treated both in his theoretical and critical constructs and his creative fiction.

#### **I. Cultural Materialism**

Raymond Williams is celebrated as the pioneer of the British cultural studies movement, and culture is situated at the very core of Williams's theoretical thinking. In several of his theoretical studies, Williams traces the word "culture" back to its Latin derivation and then follows its route of changing meanings according to the vicissitudes of different eras and usages up to the present day and time of writing. After examining all the previous possible meanings and usages of the word, Williams formulates his own unique ideas about culture—that is to say, culture as "a whole way of life", the clarification of the meanings and values implicit and explicit

in a particular way of life and a particular culture (Williams, *The Long Revolution* 57). This redefinition of “culture” is the very base of his best-known theory of cultural materialism, which established his unique position in opposition not only to classical Marxism but also to traditional Cambridge English criticism, as exemplified by scholars like F.R. Leavis.

Cultural materialism is a term first proposed by an American anthropologist named Marvin Harris; however, it is Raymond Williams who brought the term into the discursive milieu of Marxism, as posing a complementary, if not oppositional, stance to historical materialism. Classic Marxism abides by the base-superstructure model in the analysis of our society, claiming that the economy as the base is essentially material and fundamentally determining, while the superstructure embodied in the ideology, culture, politics and so on, is immaterial, determined and thus derivative. Though the basic theory and methodology employed by Williams in understanding and analyzing culture and cultural activities is fundamentally Marxist, he is strongly opposed to the theory of base-superstructure determinism. Hence, in his most theoretical book *Marxism and Literature* Williams reexamines the deterministic model, and puts forward his own thinking on the basis of a more dynamically integrated formulation, elevating cultural activities to the formation of the material mode of production, rather than following the traditional view that it belongs to the conceptual superstructure or merely a kind of ideology.

Williams’s assertion of culture as constituting its own independent and material existence is influenced by Louis Althusser’s concept of “over-determination”, which

emphasizes relatively autonomous but still interactive practices, referring to the multiple determinant elements in the circle of the material practices. Williams considers “determination” in the context of the historical activities, stressing that humans make their own history, and that any social activity could not stand outside collective human will. For Williams, the ulterior determination functions only when human consciousness converts it; hence, individual creativity counts in the production and formation process of the whole culture as a material practice.

Williams was educated in the environment of orthodox Cambridge English, and was imbued with the tradition of practical criticism from I.A. Richards to F.R. Leavis. The Cambridge critics were dedicated to the study of English literature as an innate entity, viewing literary texts as individual works in isolation, regardless of historical, social and political contexts. Furthermore, Leavis in his study *The Great Tradition*, which was putatively a selection of the finest fiction writers in English literature, takes literary idealism to an extreme, asserting that each of these specimens of great literature contains its innate meanings and values without regard to individual difference of opinions. Williams, as a child of working-class parents rather than from the ruling-class, Welsh instead of Anglican or English, developed a strong oppositional voice to this kind of criticism; *Culture and Society* becomes a key turning point for Williams, where he manages to discuss literary forms in relation to the economic, social and political formations with which they interact. This first book-length study by the young critic was indicative of his goal of representing literature as interdisciplinary and an integral element in a broader material world of

human cultural activity.

Contrary to the institutional practice and tenets of Cambridge New Criticism, Williams approaches literature from a far broader perspective, adopting more complex formations and essentially a materialist stance. Williams views literature as being dissolved in culture, and distilled from the living experiences of human life, especially the working-life of ordinary people, in stark opposition to the elitist stance of Cambridge critics. Consequently, Williams esteems and valorizes the ordinary working person's culture, the first-hand experiences of ordinary life and the real living process of material culture as a whole way of life. It can be emphasized that Williams values "cultures" rather than "a culture" standardized according to elitist criteria. As his early cultural essay "Culture is Ordinary" (1958) makes clear, he attaches great importance to culture as a way of life instead of culture as purely intellectual and artistic activities. Williams thus highlights the essence of culture as intrinsically popular as well as materialist.

Williams ultimately views his theory of cultural materialism as Marxist cultural theory, since it attempts to situate cultural studies within the relationship of culture and historical materialism. In the first place, Williams's redefinition of culture strongly supports his development of cultural materialism, transforming culture as an abstracted realm of ideas and values to a view of culture as a set of material practices. He argues that, "the concept of culture as a constitutive social process, creating specific and different 'ways of life' ... could have been remarkably deepened by the emphasis on a material social process" (Williams, *Marxism and Literature* 19).

Equally important, Williams moves culture in his model from superstructure to base, asserting that culture, as basic cultural practices and material processes of production, is by no means a passive and reductive reflection of the economic base. In his analysis of the base, Williams views it not only as the economic base, but as the societal existence itself, or to use his expression, as a whole way of human life, including the material practices of production as well as cultural practices. The cultural practices, as human activities and human ways of life, contain their basic activities of material production, and thus should be incorporated into the base as an indispensable part of the social process of production. Finally, Williams's roots in working-class culture, as opposed to the refined world of cultural elitism, transforms the general concept and understanding of culture, reclaiming the word "culture" from its elitist appropriation and restoring it to popular, everyday usage. His early life experience of living among the working-class people and his strong feelings for his Welsh origins impelled Williams to contest the elitist orientation of "high culture" and its derogation of mass culture and ordinary lower-class people.

## **II. Structure of Feeling**

The concept of "structure of feeling" first appears in Williams's co-authored critical work *Preface to Film* (1954) in which he identifies "the element for which there is no external counterpart" with the structure of feeling of a particular period. He refers to it as "only realizable through experience of the work of art itself, as a whole" (21-2). This definition of structure of feeling as the element in an artistic

work without external counterpart, stresses the infiltration of the complexity of social life in the specific works of art. Yet, at this stage, the concept is still quite blurred, especially because there seems to be no clear demarcation between feeling and experience.

Later, in one of his best-known works, *Culture and Society*, structure of feeling is used to designate the meanings and feelings that could be immediately understood and identified with by the society. However, the term is also employed to refer to the idiosyncratic quality represented by the industrial novel during the 1940's, that is, the relationship between the social environment and the lived experiences, and their relation to the artist's creation. When the artist shares with the audience his/her own personal feelings and experiences, for Williams, the connecting tie between the personal and the audience as well as the society is the presentation of structure of feeling; it is not only the external manifestation of "the whole way of life", but also embodies the internal subjective consciousness, jointly constituting the common experiences in its complexity and also its contradiction.

In *The Long Revolution* the idea of structure of feeling is re-examined as the representation of "a particular sense of life, a particular community of experience hardly needing expression ... It is as firm as 'structure' suggests, yet it operates in the most delicate and least tangible parts of our activity" (48). Williams combines "structure" and "feeling" to exhibit the tension within the term itself: structure of feeling has its own internal logic and relations, and is "structured" in a particular way, thus can be grasped to some extent; yet, "feeling" exists not in fixed and explicit



forms, but rather operates in the most subtle and subliminal way in our consciousness.

Williams's intervention in the field of cultural studies not only set out to explore the great thoughts and ideas on literature and works of arts, but, more importantly, to interpret the significance and value of particular ways of life and experience. Structure of feeling is developed step by step in different stages of his critical career, and thus can be used to serve as a bridge between Williams's literary theory and his approach to cultural studies. "Feeling" is especially employed in contrasted to the traditional orthodox concepts like "world view" or "ideology". Williams never appears to give a unified definition of the term, yet in *Marxism and Literature*, he contends that what he is talking about is the

characteristic elements of impulse, restraint, and tone; specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships: not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought: practical consciousness of a present kind, in a living and interrelating continuity. We are then defining these elements as a "structure": as a set, with specific internal relations, at once interlocking and in tension. Yet we are also defining a social experience which is still in process, often indeed not yet recognized as social but taken to be private, idiosyncratic, and even isolating. (Williams, *Marxism and Literature* 132)

From the above discussion, we may understand the concept from the following perspectives. First of all, structure of feeling is generally shared among the members of a particular community, thus is the foundation of effective communication and articulation. Second, structure of feeling concerns itself with real lived experiences and felt life values and significance; thus, it is a practical consciousness of *presence*. Third, structure of feeling is subtly and delicately lived in the thoughts and feelings

of the present local people without their explicit perception, yet it determines how they think and behave. Fourth, structure of feeling is not simply inherited from the last generation, but is always in the process of natural formation according to social change and the local people. Fifth, within one particular historical time, there could exist several structures of feeling; also, structure of feeling does not necessarily vary with class differentiation. Finally, the structures of feeling present at the same time are interrelated and in tension in an integral and dynamic process of formation.

As noted above, the concept of structure of feeling recurs quite frequently in the major critical and theoretical books by Williams, and becomes a key methodological principle in his formation of the sociology of culture. Structure of feeling is at first represented as some personal and isolated experiences, but this kind of personal experience clearly reflects the historicity of the society, and subsequently acquires the general recognition of the community, so that it gradually becomes accepted as customary. In short, structure of feeling is a particular way of life, a whole particular community of experiences lived through by its people during a particular time.

Williams's cultural theory always emphasizes that culture is forever changing through a process of material practices. The analysis of culture is meant to reconstruct this particular way of life, and reconstruct the structure of feeling, so as to retrieve the real living experiences of the ordinary people as the subjects of cultural practices and activities. As culture is forever undergoing this process of change, the structure of feeling is also always transient in a formative process of becoming something else. This process of becoming reflects the meanings and values

that a generation of people has felt and experienced in their collective lived life.

For Terry Eagleton, in contradistinction to Williams, “meanings are not culture, but ideology; and structure of feeling only an essentially inadequate conceptualization of ideology, which actually misreads structure as mere pattern” (*Criticism Ideology* 33-4). As one of the key words, ideology is mainly described by Williams, as meanings and values “imposed on experience... to mask the more difficult recognitions of actual living” (Williams, *Modern Tragedy* 31-2). Whereas, structure of feeling is a concept that Williams propounded to retrieve the dynamic and complex elements in *solution* as distinct from the fixed explicit forms that have been precipitated. For Williams, structure of feeling exists before the established ideology that is too abstract to enable us to grasp the complicated and vivid life experiences and the common but subtle feelings towards these experiences. Ideology is represented by Williams a rather politicized term, systematized beliefs, or even illusory ones and false ideas, imposed upon the ordinary people by the ruling class, which are gradually naturalized and normalized by the system. Hence, the term “structure of feeling” is particularly raised to counterbalance the passivity of ideology, which Williams coins to stress the active participation and the lived experience of the lives of ordinary people. As Williams firmly believes in the rich creativity of the ordinary people, the structure of feeling of any particular community is always in the process of being and forming, rather than reified and normalized.

In conclusion, in Williams’s model, structure of feeling is based on lived experiences, which refers not to the accumulation of individual psychological

experiences in ordinary life, but to the common psychological experiences of the community living in their common culture. Thus the term denotes a kind of social historical structure in tension: for one thing, the concept highlights the lived experiences and feelings of the people and its connectivity also provides the foundation for effective articulation and communication; for another, it refers to a shared and organic way of thinking and feeling, a whole way of lived culture of a time, a class or a community. Although Williams fails to assign a concrete and narrow definition to the term, it has certainly been invested with a variety of qualities and functions in his writings, since, for him, structure of feeling serves as a vital bridge between the individual and society, the culture and the social life.

### **III. Hegemony; Dominant, Residual and Emergent Cultures**

Williams's analysis of culture as a set of real dynamic cultural practices falls into three categories: dominant culture, residual culture and emergent culture. This classification of culture is discussed within Williams's well-known theory of hegemony, which is much indebted to Italian thinker Antonio Gramsci. What Williams sees as ideology is something common to all human activities and actually identical to the lived experience of human existence itself. Likewise, for him, consciousness is part of the human material social process, and its products in "ideas" are then parts of this process as much as material products themselves. Hence, to adequately express his idea of how individuals' consciousness is produced and processed, Williams employs hegemony in a sense that transcends ideology itself.

For Williams, it is not the economic base that determines the cultural superstructure, but rather, a set of lived practices, the setting of limits and the exerting of pressures in everyday life, which he refers to as “hegemony” and which has the power of seeping into the life of each individual. Furthermore, Williams eschews Marx’s idea of the ruling class exerting ruling consciousness, and explains “hegemony” as not only the articulate upper level of ideology, but

a whole body of practices and expectations, over the whole of living: our senses and assignments of energy, our shaping perceptions of ourselves and our world. It is a lived system of meanings and values—constitutive and constituting—which as they are experienced as practices appear as reciprocally confirming. (Williams, *Marxism and Literature* 110)

Therefore, hegemony is the lived reality within our social fabrics and our bodies. It is a realized complex of experiences, relationships, and activities, with specific and changing pressures and limits. Marxist ideology is often abstracted as a set of articulate and formal meanings, values and beliefs that the dominant class develops and propagates. By contrast, Williams employs the concept of “hegemony” which bears a much more profound and active sense than “ideology”. All the active experiences and practices, such as personal relationships, relations to nature, leisure, art and literature, can be seen as elements of hegemony. For him, hegemony is “an inclusive social and cultural formation which indeed to be effective has to extend to and include, indeed to form and be formed from, the whole area of lived experience” (Williams, *Marxism and Literature* 111).

The individual’s social being, interwoven in social relationships, determines his consciousness because the social being is only the general form of consciousness.

Hegemony projects a saturating power into the consciousness of the society, into the consciousness of the individual, and even constitutes the individual's way of thinking and means of living. Williams's point is that this dominant system of meanings and values is experienced as practice: hegemony is the central, effective and dominant system of meanings and values, which are more than abstract, but are organized and lived. Hegemony, for Williams, then, is not the name of abstraction, but the name of an active social process, the practices of human sociality.

According to this relationship between the dominant and the dominated, Williams classifies the process of cultural practices into the residual, the dominant and the emergent, a taxonomy that is both synchronic and diachronic. The residual and the emergent cultures exist as alternative and oppositional to the dominant culture, and the interrelationship between all three is forever changing and transforming in a dynamic dialectical relationship. The dominant acquires its hegemonic status for the time, and it can incorporate the residual and the emergent when it needs to do so; however, the dominant culture may be gradually marginalized to the domain of the residual over time, while the emergent and the residual may defeat the dominant culture and replace it as the new dominant culture. At the same time, the three co-exist as separate entities and independent cultures with each of them developing in their own way in a dynamic process.

Williams's residual culture is especially distinct from archaic culture that belongs to the past and has already been incorporated into the dominant culture; what Williams means by the residual culture is the cultural element "effectively formed in

the past, but...still active in the cultural process... of the present” (Williams, *Marxism and Literature* 122). The surviving traditional cultures are re-interpreted, downplayed, projected, selected, re-selected and incorporated by the dominant culture, and become new components in the long cultural tradition; the ruling class purposefully revivifies, elevates and modifies certain traditional cultural elements as instrument of their domination, and hence, thanks to the cultural efficacy of these practices, it manages to justify the legitimacy of its reign. However, the cultural elements that fail to be incorporated into the dominant culture become the residual culture, existing as alternative or oppositional to the dominant and sometimes threatens to replace it. Williams views the rural community as “predominantly residual” (Williams, *Marxism and Literature* 122) which counter-poses an oppositional or alternative culture and set of values to those of urban industrial capitalism. However, as Williams concedes, it is also largely incorporated into the dominant culture, as the rural community is oftentimes idealized or even fantasized as leisured and exotic arcadia. Hence, what Williams endeavors to portray in his novels seems to be an inverted image of this type of nostalgic idealization. Rather he conveys a vivid portrait of the quotidian lived experience of realistic characters in these communities in their natural surroundings.

Another segment of the cultural process is the emergent culture that Williams defines as “the new meanings and values, new practices, new relationships and kinds of relationship... continually being created” (Williams, *Marxism and Literature* 123). This definition suggests two connotations: on the one hand, the brand new emergent

culture being in the forming process should be seen as substantially oppositional to the dominant; on the other hand, the dominant culture itself is always in the process of self-modification and self-improvement. As Williams asserts, “*no mode of production and therefore no dominant social order and therefore no dominant culture ever in reality includes or exhausts all human practice, human energy, and human intention*” (Williams, *Marxism and Literature* 125), which is why the emergent is bound to manifest itself in multiple forms and a variety of patterns. The emergent culture generated among the new emergent class is of the salient and detectable kind, which the dominant culture spares no effort to control, reject or even recuperate and incorporate. There are more indiscernible types of emergent social consciousness and examples of cultural practices, which accumulate increasing force until the emergent culture, together with the residual, becomes powerful enough to resist, or even revolt against the incorporation and hegemonic ruling of the dominant. With constant social and historic development, the social order and the political-economic status quo will change accordingly, so the dominant culture will also regenerate and update itself, while their social experiences, practices and meanings and values will also change, and this will, in its turn, generate a new kind of emergent culture. Thus, the society is always in a spiral of development with various complex elements in dynamic participatory flux.

All in all, Williams treats this classification of culture as a whole from the perspectives of cultural ontology, sociology, history and politics, with the three categories intimately interrelated. His cultural classification emphasizes the



complexity and diversity of culture: culture is not only textual, but also socio-historical and political, and thus in a dynamic process of development.

#### **IV. Communication and Knowable Community**

Williams further rejects the Marxist system of class division, declaring that there is not a special class who are involved in the creation of meanings and values either in a general sense or in specific context of art and belief. Instead, he distills his idea of community from a set of related terms—common, communion, communication, communism, etc.—as a formation within which individuals live, experience, communicate, create, and interact.

Community is one of the central concepts in Williams's cultural and political theories, in which "communication" is the crux. A community is not defined by geographical division, nor by political terms, but by cultural feeling. For Williams, individuals in a community share a common culture, a common set of values and meanings, and for that matter, think and feel according to common terms. A community comes into being with the discovery of common meanings and common means of communication, and Williams stresses that, "the process of communication is in fact the process of community" (Williams, *The Long Revolution* 38).

Communication means to Williams a process of transforming unique personal experiences into common experiences that are to be shared by other individuals in the community through learning and interpreting. In Williams's concept of community, the individual and society are in a highly interactive relationship in an

ongoing process of achievement that affects both.

On the one hand, when the individual is born into a certain community, s/he is surrounded with a set of rules about how to behave, think and talk, and to a great extent s/he is under these pressures to think and behave in certain ways. At the same time, the individual is learning and shaping her/his own set of meanings. In the meantime s/he is actually selecting from the great complex store of meanings of human heritage, which contributes to her/his unique being and inherited individuality. Furthermore, s/he is in a continuous process of receiving, learning and interpreting the new experiences shared by other individuals by means of art, music, television, etc., and assimilating them as part of his own, so her/his organization of meanings is ever changing and progressing. On the other hand, each individual's unique way of learning and interpreting is a kind of creation which brings into the society something new; yet more importantly, each learned individual may find an adequate means to describe her/his own experience or embody a common experience and succeed in communicating it to the others, which also contributes to the general process of the community. Williams deems that, 'the individual creative description is part of the general process which creates conventions and institutions, through which the meanings that are valued by the community are shared and made active' (Williams, *The Long Revolution* 38).

Hence, we must not only think of the community acting on each unique individual, but also take into consideration how many unique individuals, through the process of communication, create and extend the set meanings—i.e. the

culture—of the community, while they are themselves in a process of being shaped.

Moreover, Williams discusses the class-system within the domain of the community, asserting effective communication within a class, while rejecting the idea that the minds of the governed are framed and controlled by the ruling class. He sees it rather as a failure of communication resulting from the ineffectiveness of reception and response from the governed. Instead, as is stressed by Williams, “the minds of men are shaped by their whole experience” (Williams, *Culture and Society* 313).

To claim a human activity as creative, one has to make sure that this creative activity is not only actively offered but can also be actively transmitted and received. For Williams, the process of creation is no more than finding new ways of description for the valued experience of each individual who deems it important. Williams defines the nature of an artist’s work as “his command of a learned skill in a particular kind of transmission of experience” (Williams, *The Long Revolution* 26). However, the crux of art lies in communication, including both transmissions in a particular communicating system, and reception and absorption by its audience—i.e., individuals in a learning process. In the first place, the artist has an impulse to share with others her/his valued experience, which is in Williams’s words “a matter of urgent personal importance to describe his experience” as a way to remake her/himself—“a creative change in his personal organization” (Williams, *The Long Revolution* 26). This impulse to communicate is a learned human response to any kind of disturbance, which results in not simply the remaking of the artist her/himself,

but a change to the environment as well. Williams asserts that man's process of working and acting is a process of experiencing and learning, and does not simply involve a subject working on an object or an object remaking a subject, but rather, it is "a dynamic interaction", "a whole and continuous process" (Williams, *The Long Revolution* 27). Secondly, to make a complete conception of art also requires reception and response in order to verify the effectiveness of communication. The experience of the artist is to be transmitted through a given medium, then received and interpreted by its audience or spectators on their own terms so as to make it as a part of their own experience. This is again a process of learning and interpreting, which is also a kind of creation. Each individual's observing, learning, interpreting, experiencing, describing and sharing jointly make a contribution to the changing of the whole society.

Williams further contends that art neither depends on whether the artist is especially inspired, nor whether the artist makes some new discovery about the physical or spiritual world. Rather, art is "a part of our ordinary process of perception and communication" (Williams, *The Long Revolution* 29). Art is a process of making a meaning active, communicating the artist's valued personal experience to others and finally transmuting it into a common experience. Art, together with religion, politics, science, etc. comprises a whole world of active and interactive relationships, which constitutes our common associative life. Williams thinks of art as never confined to an area of special experience; rather, art ranges "from the most ordinary daily activities to exceptional crises and intensities, and using a range of means from

the words of the street and common popular stories to strange systems and images which it has yet been able to make common property” (Williams, *The Long Revolution* 39). Hence, as Eagleton points out, Williams places a deep trust in each individual’s capability of creating new meanings and values simply by living and communicating.

Williams regards communication and community as ultimately synonymous, as a knowable community can only be formed through an effective process of communication. And in the discovery of dynamic interaction between the individual and society, Williams’s concept of knowable community substantially questions the traditional notions of community, and challenges in particular F.R. Leavis’s concept of organic community, which he sees as the result of the dominant ideological construction.

Leavis’s coauthored book *Culture and Environment* deplores the disappearance of the organic community of “Old England”, and for that matter, Leavis approves strongly of L.C. Knight’s argument<sup>3</sup> about the loss of meaning of the word “neighbor” in the twentieth-century industrial world. However, Williams asserts in his native Welsh countryside there still exists

a level of social obligation which was conferred by the fact of seeming to live in the same place and in that sense to have a common identity. And from this sense there were acts of kindness beyond calculation, forms of mutual recognition even when they were wild misinterpretations of the world outside (Williams, *Who Wales* 180)

Based on his own childhood experiences in the Welsh valley, Williams feel

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<sup>3</sup> Williams recalls attending a lecture by Professor L.C. Knights on the meaning of “neighbor” in Shakespeare at Cambridge in his article “The Importance of Community”. When Knights said that no twentieth-century person can understand the real meaning of the word “neighbor”, F.R. Leavis “was leaning against the wall and nodding vigorously” (Williams, *Who Wales* 179).

pressured to write against a whole selective tradition of pastoral poetry in one of his major critical works *The Country and the City*. Furthermore, he treats Leavis's *The Great Tradition* as the continuation of this tradition, and thus, in essence, he argues for the knowable community against the organic community.

In the first place, the organic community is rather imagined than corresponding to any known reality, rather written than actually existing, rather highly selective than inclusive, and focused on idealized pastoral phenomena, rather than paying attention to the real working people on the lands. Thus, for Leavis, such an idealized pastoral community of the past disappeared with the deformation brought by industrial capitalism. In *The Country and the City*, Williams points out the mystification of the rural pastoral literature, and trenchantly pinpoints the hidden and covert power relations and patronage interests behind much of the pastoral "country house" poetry. Rejecting this construct, he proposes an alternative history of the rural lands being exploited and the people being reduced to laborers; as he argues, "the idea of an ordered and happier past set against the disturbance and disorder of the present [is an] idealisation . . . [that] served to cover and evade the actual and bitter contradictions of the time" (Williams, *The Country and the City* 45). What is usually depicted in the pastoral poetry or idealized in an organic community is related more to the pleasures of rural settlement, of the beauty of natural landscape, and of the natural feelings of the shepherd's life as the life of nature. The countryside stands for the quiet, simple life and the innocence of its people, while the city is depicted as a place of excessive sophistication, profit-making and capital; thus in its representation

in pastoral poetry the countryside is an ideal place of escape for the rich living in the city. However, what Williams sees in the rural setting is a working country, and the ordinary people experiencing a working, laboring life and leading a tough existence in agricultural employment; nevertheless, for Williams these ordinary people actually “feel human connection in what is essentially a knowable community”; moreover, they share “a particular social value: a necessary interdependence” (Williams, *English Novel* 88). Therefore, what Leavis’s concept of “organic community” denotes is a nostalgic idealization and an illusory abstraction of rural life, seen at a distance from the perspectives of the traveller, the landlord, or the observer, which is essentially an exclusive point of view; while, a knowable community is based on the immediate experiences of the rural people who have been living and working on the lands for generations, a relationship in which everyday realities and transactions are natural and communal obligations unbreakable.

Hence, Williams’s knowable community is substantially an active and dynamic community that is identified not only as a real way of life but also as a way of struggle. For one thing, the concept of knowable community disabuses the reader of the superficial illusion of the organic community. In his construct of the knowable community, Williams manages to retrieve the actuality and immediate experiences and feelings of the people living in the rural regions. Further, a knowable community, grounded in resistance and “based on alternative values of mutuality, co-operation and equality of condition”, forms “collective responses to pressure from the dominant class” (Eldridge & Eldridge 185); such communities share the meanings

and values of mutual responsibility and neighborliness, which poses an alternative and oppositional stance to the capitalist values of untrammelled profit and exploitation.

## **V. Red and Green Politics: Socialism and Ecology**

There seems to be a sense of continuity from the pastoral literature and nature writing to the ecological movement, as both somehow tend to divorce nature from human activities. The ecologists mainly focus their indictment on the damage wrought by industrial capitalism and the modern industries, polluting the natural landscape and exhausting the natural resources; the “green” movement endeavors to restore areas of industrial development to a pristine state of pre-industrial natural landscapes. However, for Williams, there has been human intervention in rural areas since pre-historical times, and the landscape has always been shaped and reshaped by human activities; as he writes, “I had come from a country with twenty centuries of history written visibly into the earth” (Williams, *Resources Hope* 5). The rural region is primarily a working country, which is “hardly ever a landscape”, for “the very idea of landscape implies separation and observation” (Williams, *The Country and the City* 120). Moreover, what has been seen as natural landscape has actually been the product of human design and human labor; for example, the landscape of the Black Mountains had actually been produced by the felling of the erstwhile forests. Nevertheless, it has to be acknowledged that, with the advent of the industrial revolution, the land and the natural world have been substantially altered, resulting in



qualitative changes and even permanent environmental damage. In Williams's view, it is inappropriate for the ecological movement simply to urge the people in local communities to move out of the industrialized areas, however serious the environmental degradation of the region, because the people have been living their life in these places for generations and the working environment has become part of them and their being. Therefore, for Williams, ecological renewal has to be carried out through an equitable process of negotiation.

In a talk entitled "Ecology & the Labour Movement"<sup>4</sup>, Williams incisively pointed out the problems and wrong premises of the labor movement. The central concern of the labor movement is to solve the problem of poverty; that is, the labor movement emerges out of the chaos and sufferings experienced under industrial and agrarian capitalism; however, the socialists have been misled to believe that more production will make the "national cake" bigger, and accordingly will allow more slices for everybody, thus ultimately canceling the problem of poverty. As Williams argues, this premise is misleading and wrong, since what matters is not to produce more, but rather the questions of what to produce, and who decides what to produce, what the relationship of production is, and finally how the products are to be distributed; as he observes, it is precisely the capitalist social order that produces the poverty as a result of its continuous need for growth and expansion. This social order also views everything as raw materials, including regarding people as industrial resources; hence, when the surplus requirement brings about redundancy, which the

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<sup>4</sup> A talk Raymond Williams gave at the Plinston Hall, Letchworth on 2nd June, 1984. The talk is videoed and uploaded to the Youtube website: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EiFWHtKOcj0>

capitalist system is bound to cause, ordinary workers can be left on the ground just as if they were unused raw materials. Williams criticizes the Labour Party for not attempting to change this capitalist social order and for competing instead with the other capitalist parties, by claiming that it can run the same system better and produce more profits and benefits, once again leaving the ordinary people out of its essential concerns. Furthermore, the emphasis on the growth of production by the socialists in attempting to cure poverty and social inequality, largely leads them to overlook the costs on the environment and the natural world. Williams reiterates the point that there is no necessary connection between increased production and the reduction of poverty, but rather that higher level of production merely brings more poverty in the end. Therefore, for Williams, the notion of production has to be rejected; and instead, he proposes a deeper and more human concept, the notion of livelihood, which involves itself with more human social issues, starting from things that are more practical, from the community itself and from the interests of the local people.

He points out that the ecology movement calls attention mostly to the natural environment, while largely neglecting the people who have been living there for generations, whereas the labor movement has been subverted by the capitalist system to accept a different and de-humanizing direction from that for which it was originally founded. Williams puts forward the notion of livelihood, a convergence of the ecology movement and the labor movement. By working together, the socialist and the environmentalist will be endowed with a much greater social force, rooted in

the majority interests and indispensable livelihood of all the people, and carrying out ecological projects for rural conservation. His proposed line of action points not only to a significant transformation for the landscape but also to a qualitative change and sense of purpose for the labor movement. Hence, the collaborative effort of red and green politics can produce an ecologically friendly form of socialism. In the process, the valuable insight will be gained that “man and nature are one, and that in damaging one, you eventually damage the other” (Klaus 145). Just as the rural people have absorbed the nature into their daily lives in their bodies and their minds, in the Welsh coal-mining areas, the people have also absorbed it into their lungs. Thus, according to Williams’s argument in this talk, it is the livelihood of the people that should become the central issue of both the ecological movement and the labor movement. Livelihood implies the physical environment where people work and also the actual practices of people’s life and activities; it deconstructs the binary division between nature and culture that for Williams are coextensive; as he observes, “livelihood is both cultural and natural” (Giblett 929).

Cultural materialism, structure of feeling, emergent culture, knowable community, socialism and ecology are essentially and intimately interrelated, and for that matter, mutually reinforcing and fulfilling. By arguing for culture as a set of material practices, Williams is defending the values and meanings of ordinary people, which are created and effectively communicated by every individual in a knowable community with a particular structure of feeling; all these values and meanings are firmly grounded in the actually lived experiences and real feelings of the people

through their cultural practices and activities and in the process of the agency of the subject in the transformation of culture practices, that is, structure of feeling, an emergent culture is being constantly formed and transformed as an oppositional force to the overruling dominant culture. All of these notions are formed and fundamentally grounded in Williams's own childhood and adolescent experiences in the working-class milieu of the Welsh border-country environment. Thus, the Welsh identity of Raymond Williams is a significant element in our understanding of his cultural theory: these concepts and theories enable us to understand more about the working class milieu and the history of the Welsh border country, which in turn helps us to comprehend the very sources of Williams's theory.

Although Williams has expanded on his critical and analytic theories and concepts in many of his theoretical works, it is rather in his fiction that the Welsh identity of Williams and his more subtle concerns and intimations are to be detected. The Welsh trilogy—*BC*, *SG* and *FM*—delineates a spectrum of life and experience of Welsh people either in a placed community or a relocated one or in both. As a result of this experienced and felt life of his fictional characters and communities a new structure of feeling and an emergent culture is established, thereby posing a threat to the conditions of industrial and agricultural capitalism. The next two novels, *VT* and *LY*, tend to be more broadly political, yet still, the force rooted in the Welsh community is by no means lesser, for the known communities in both novels carry fundamental meanings and values for the protagonists. The two volumes of *PBM* further trace the history of human activities in ways that intervene in and reshape the

natural world in the Black Mountains communities over millennia all the way back to the Neolithic age. In the following chapter, the theme of the Welsh identity of Williams, as expressed through his fictional output, is to be explored.

These fictions represent a mode of praxis that enables Williams to work out the implications of his theoretical concepts; even the ideas themselves are absorbed and dissolved within the flux of his fictional writing. Culture, is depicted as a particular way of life and as material practice throughout his stories, whether it be the cultural ethos of Gwenton in *BC* or the tribal customs and environment depicted in *PBM*. Besides, the representation of structure of feeling in these novels is evident—both in the communal way of thinking and acting and in the more sensitive and intimate depiction of the values and feelings of individual characters. Moreover, the concept of knowable communities is particularly relevant in the context of Chapter Two. In this the idea of placed communities and relocated communities, both knowable to ordinary working-class people, will be discussed. In Chapter Three the dominating culture and power imposed by the ruling-class in England will be explored, with Williams's native Wales represented as crippled and emasculated by the hegemony of its neighbor. Also in this chapter the emergent culture of the working-class is explored. Williams's valorization of the working-class in his novels, particularly the females of this class, will be seen as making a significant contribution to the affirmation of a distinctive Welsh national identity. Finally in the fourth chapter my thesis demonstrates how Williams's theory of modern tragedy can be usefully

extended from the dramatic genre and applied to his own fictional character and contexts.

## Chapter Two

### The Welshness of Raymond Williams's Fiction

In his edited book *Who Speaks for Wales? Nation, Culture, Identity*, Daniel Williams traces Raymond Williams's affectionate engagement in and intense connection with Wales all the way through his cultural and critical theorization to his fictional writings. As has been discussed in the introduction, this Welsh dimension of Williams, though touched upon or noted by the some scholars, is largely ignored and dismissed as insignificant, or belittled and downplayed as simply a supplement to Williams's core productions. Brought up in a small village on the Welsh borderland and later selected to be educated at Cambridge, Williams's academic achievements are thought by most to be attributed to his university education and professional edification, and to have not so much to do with his Welsh background. Nevertheless, this misunderstanding should be cleared up from both aspects: in the first place, Williams himself notes in *Politics and Letters* that his knowledge and expertise have been gradually accumulated through his wide and painstaking readings and his ruminations after Cambridge when he worked as a night-school teacher, rather than having been inculcated purely in the university context; in the second place, in developing his cultural theories and forming the concepts of "ordinary culture", "community", "structures of feelings" and so on, Williams always seems to have his childhood experiences in the border country in mind and spares no endeavor to justify the capability of the ordinary people as creative artists in contributing to the common culture as a whole. For that matter, the double identities, of being Welsh but unable to speak Welsh, and becoming English/British (even if no more English/British than studying English literature at Cambridge) yet repelled by the

establishment elitism, prompts Williams to preserve sufficient distance to look at the problems facing Wales. At the same time it endows him with the vision to see through the flaws in English society and British imperialism likewise. Hence, it becomes a necessary and meaningful project to trace the line of Williams's Welshness throughout the contours of his writings.

To complete such a project, Williams's fiction cannot possibly be ignored, since every single one of his fictional productions refers heavily to the Welsh landscape, Welsh people, Welsh community, and to Welsh cultural life. All the protagonists of Williams's novels are of Welsh origin; despite the fact that they leave (and later come out of) home for study and work outside their native community. As in Williams's own case, the Welshness bred in their blood becomes a strong foundation for them when they encounter the capitalist system imposed from the top and also the force driving them to revolt and protect the distinctiveness of their own unique culture and history. Williams's novels form a major part of his efforts to construct the Welsh identity by writing about its people and more importantly through positing the geographically and economically marginalized areas of Wales (like Black Mountains) at the center of his creative writing. Wales can be claimed as the first colony of England and has been subjugated to English imperialist power for a long time; the Welsh were dominated by England after the Norman Conquest of 1066 and, following the brief period of independence inspired by Owain Glendower, the Act of Union of 1536 cemented England's colonization, and Wales became a principality. In a certain sense, Williams conforms to the characteristics typical of diasporic writers, at least in two respects. In the first place, he is wholly engaged in exploring the lived experiences of a locality.

Where is home? On the one hand, 'home is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense it is a place of no return, even if it is



possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of 'origin'. On the other hand, home is also the lived experience of a locality. Its sounds and smells, its heat and dust, balmy summer evenings, or the excitement of the first snowfall, shivering winter evenings, somber grey skies in the middle of the day...all this, as mediated by the historically specific everyday of social relations. (Brah 192 )

Leaving his Welsh community and settling himself in the British academic world means elevation in social position for Williams, yet he has "a very strong sense... of having my [his] own people behind me [him]" and the childhood experiences in the Welsh border shape his ideas and writings, since he candidly declares that "I can only say for myself that I have never felt my own mobility in terms of a 'rise in the social scale', and certainly I have never felt that I wanted to go on climbing, resentful of old barriers in my way: where else is there to go, but into my own life" (Williams, *The Long Revolution* 321). In the second place, Williams coheres with diaspora which is "concerned with the way in which nations, real yet imagined communities, are fabricated, brought into being, made and unmade, in culture and politics, both on the land people call their own and in exile" (Tololyan 3). His aversion to the concept of nation-state, British identity or "Yookays" quite salient in his critical articles, and this stances extends further to all his novels, just as he admits "no cleft or conflicts between the different parts of himself—between body and mind, between early personality and late, between his literary and his political interests" (Prendergast 153). Williams declares himself a "Welsh European" and means Wales to defeat or bypass the overriding British/English system.

In this chapter, four themes will be devoted to explore the Welshness in Williams's fiction. Firstly, how is the native land, primarily the Black Mountains and nearby villages, lived and represented in the local people's minds and bodies? Secondly, how are the actual social relationships sustained and negotiated in mutually bonded community? Thirdly, how do the people acquire their real and lived

identities? And ultimately, how does Williams treat the topic of nationality and locality and of race and class in these novels?

### I. The Native Land and Nature

In one of the stories in *PBM-1*—"The Coming of the Measurer", the measurer Dal Mered, who was originally named Ranan and lived in a sheep village by the shore of western sea, follows a group of measurers to the White Land which is far more developed and progressive than other parts of the area, and ultimately becomes a measurer himself. Yet, after decades of work as a measurer and witnessing the measurers' abuse of knowledge, Dal Mered decides to go back to his birthplace in his old age:

He belonged to its [Menvadir's] modernity, and his mind could never slip back into these old settled ways. Yet, quite apart from more particular reasons, he had become old and tired in his body, and it was as if his very breathing seemed to crave the softer and sweeter air of that west in which he had been born. (Williams, *PBM-1* 158)

It is not necessarily the case that the air of the west where Dal Mered was born is softer and sweeter than the White Land, but rather, it is the prototypical image of homeland for a person who left home in his/her early years and always cherishes the sweet memory of home. Then immediately, this notion of the beautification and mystification of the native land easily tempts us to align Williams with the tradition of imagined nature and rural myth, since Menvadir was then situated in the White Land, the most developed and modern region known to the people, while Mered's birthplace was a sheep village in the hills by the western sea.

To make this scenario more plausible, one more example from Williams's first novel *BC* is also pertinent. Matthew, the protagonist, who has established himself as a university lecturer in economic history, comes back to his native village on the Welsh-English border on hearing of his father Harry's heart attack. Afterwards,

when he is asked to buy a doorbell for Harry in the local town Gwenton, Matthew is very much frustrated and estranged, for he knows few people there, and even a simple shopping task becomes difficult. Yet what comforts him is the landscape of the Holy Mountains: “He had felt empty and tired, but the familiar shape of the valley and the mountains held and replaced him. It was one thing to carry its image in his mind, as he did, everywhere, never a day passing but he closed his eyes and saw it again, his only landscape” (Williams, *BC* 89). The image of the valley and the mountains retained in Matthew’s mind all these year away from home can be, in this passage, more like an imaginary place that he holds to as a repository to bear his childhood memories and experiences. The familiar and apparently still, timeless landscape of the Black Mountains is contrasted with the unfamiliar faces of the folks that have changed during these years in Gwenton, the discrepancy of which at once incorporates him as an insider while at the same time alienating him as an outsider. The seeming authenticity of his memory of this image of the topography of his homeland is instantly called into question by the words immediate following those above:

But it was different to stand and look at the reality. It was not less beautiful; every detail of the land came up with its old excitement. But it was not still, as the image had been. It was no longer a landscape or a view, but a valley that people were using, he realized, as he watched, what had happened in going away. The visitor sees beauty; the inhabitant a place where he works and has his friends. Far away, closing his eyes, he had been seeing this valley, but as a visitor sees it, as the guide-book sees it: this valley, in which he had lived more than half his life. (Williams, *BC* 89)

What is implied here is what Williams time and again emphasizes in many other books and essays, the concept of which is a working environment that is hardly a landscape. It is certainly not a simple nostalgic memory of an individual’s native land, more the invention of an observer than a real representation. The beautification and mystification of the countryside of rural Wales comes from those urban citizens

who are divorced from the land rather than the real people who have lived their actual life inside the village. Hence, landscape, for Williams, is a constructed and romanticized myth of a rural world created by outsiders at different stages of the literary history, and it is merely “delusion that before factory production, before industrial and mechanical production, there had been a natural, clean, simple order” (Williams, *Resources Hope* 216).

One of the most powerful concepts of nature is to see it as one without any human intervention and excluding everything that is human. Since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, “nature has meant the ‘countryside’, the ‘unspoiled places’, plants and creatures other than man. The use is especially current in contrast between town and country: nature is what man has not made, though if he made it long enough ago—a hedgerow or a desert—it will usually be included as natural” (Williams, *Keywords* 223). Hence, Williams is very much aware of the romantic mystification of nature or countryside, and in spite of his love for the rural scenery himself he takes great care not to follow the same fantasy to reduce the natural landscape of the countryside to a retreat, a refuge or imaginary arcadia against exploitation by agrarian and industrial capitalism. For Williams, it is natural for people to intervene in nature and reshape its form. The reality is that, man, being part of nature, has marked the environment and altered the natural landscape since the very beginning, as Williams argues that “the idea of nature contains, though often unnoticed, an extraordinary amount of human history” (Williams, *Cultural Materialism* 67). As regards man-made nature like the hedgerow referred to in the quotation above, we may speculate how old is old enough for Williams to include it as natural. The definition strikes us a little vague and ambiguous, as nature seems both to exclude and incorporate human interference. The antagonistic forces and relationship between nature and culture is thus established as

well as deconstructed. What dissolves this paradox is the concept that Williams recaptures in reinstating what was disrupted by industrial capitalism, that is, an ordinary and natural livelihood of people.

But it is life, Aron, to move with the seasons. It is life to move and to hunt, to go to the places that are best for us, and to walk and enjoy them. There is the warmth of the caves in winter, above the rush of the river. There is the glitter of the lake in the summer, and then the great green of the forests, the sweet air of the plateau and of the high ridges. Always, as we move, we have our mountains and our valleys, and as we move we belong to them and we feel our own life moving. It will not come for you as it came for me, when my hair was first tied and the old ones walked us to learn these shapes in our bodies. But you must hear me, Aron, for this is becoming a man. We learn these movings and these shapes to know our own lives through them. (Williams, *PBM-1* 78)

This is a father's teaching to his son about what he means by life in the ancient hunting period of the people. At the time, people lived to the rhythm of the nature, felt their own lived experiences through nature and carved into their mind and body the shapes of nature; the human body and the shapes of the mountains engraved themselves into each other, and that was the process of growing up and becoming a man. So here, nature is not just a geographical space where the people live, or a backdrop in front of which the people conduct their activities, rather, far more than that, nature is like a parent, guiding the people to move about its "body" in different seasons of the year, feeding them in his very best endeavor, feeling their lived life going with the intimate movement of his "pulse" and "heart-beat", and teaching them to learn and experience their own life by living through its body. Also we may find a similar idea of this in *BC*, when Matthew treks up to the top of the Kestrel and feels "the wind narrowing [his] eyes, and so much living in you [him], deciding what you [he] will see and how you [he] will see it" (365) It is a kind of symbiosis, with the people living through the experience of the mountains and the natural element living in the people. The images of identifying the shape of the mountains with the body is

most perspicuous and evocative in the opening remarks of *PBM-1*, where Williams likens the shape of the Black Mountains to a human hand:

See this layered sandstone in the short mountain grass. Place your right hand on it palm downward. See where the summer sun rises and where it stands at noon. Direct your index finger midway between them. Spread your finger, not widely. You now hold this place in your hand.

The six rivers rise in the plateau towards your wrist. The river...flows at the outside edge of your thumb. The second river...flows between your thumb and the first finger, to join...at the top of your thumb. .... The sixth river...flows at the edge of your outside finger.

This is the hand of the Black Mountains, the shape first learned. (1)

In these very first paragraphs we are given a powerful visual image likening the topography of the Black Mountain and the human body, each river and each ridge of the mountains amazingly corresponding to each and every part of a human hand. The metaphor effectively familiarizes the Mountains to us implying that they are as intimate as our own hand, the most familiar human body for oneself; at the same time it implicitly conveys to the reader how the Black Mountains, the natural landscape, the place where Williams was brought up and trekked both in his childhood and in his adult life, has gradually permeated Williams's lived life and become an inseparable part of his physical body. The way he depicts this relationship with the Black Mountains is very much like a father showing to his child on its little hand how their native land is imprinted on the body as well as forming his/her identity and etching itself into their life and experiences. This phenomenon has been passed down from the earliest people living on this very land and into these particular mountains, all the way down the generations of hunting and herding, of trading and warring, of conquering and defeating, up to the present day, just as Williams opens his unfinished trilogy *PBM* with the words that "its generations are distinct but all suddenly present" (Williams, *PBM-1* 2).

It is just as Aron's father tells him that the people learn the shapes of the

mountains through their own body. “Spread your fingers, not widely. You now hold this place in your hand” is a perfect example of this recurrent metaphor that informs other sequences in the narrative. In the story of “Marod, Gan and the Horse Hunt”, Marod stares “through the crippled legs at the distant mountains”(17); and again in “Varan at the Edge of the Great Ice”, Varan “lifted his arms, the wrists and hands curving inward but still apart, and looked back over his shoulder, in trial, straightening his elbows and curving his hand. And now Metan could see the shape. There were two great arms of ice, and within the arms, but the hands not joined, were ridges of Black Mountains” (29). The Black Mountains, the native landscape, the natural father, is thus impinging on the life of the people through their physical bodies. For Williams, “until the traces of human life are extended, the history is only a history of earth” (37), thus, the Black Mountains are only ridges and rivers, earth and water, trees and animals, until humans came and brought it to life and it reached the very center of the people’s livelihood. Unspoiled nature without any human intervention or any trace of human habitation seldom engages Williams’s creative attention for what he depicts as precious is how humans and nature merge, and how in the encounter this process generates the most vigorous and dynamic life.

As Rod Giblett observes in his article “Nature is ordinary too”, the concept of “livelihood” deconstructs the distinction between culture and nature. In Williams’s fiction, the Black Mountains lying still beyond, seemingly unspoiled and distant from industrial afflictions, are always integrated in the same picture frame with the land that has been reshaped and reclaimed by the people actually living there. As Williams writes, if “lives and places were being seriously sought, a powerful attachment to lives and to places was entirely demanded” (Williams, *PBM-1* 10), for only “the breath of the place, its wind and its mouths, stirred the models into life”

(10). This deep attachment to the place, for Williams, to the Black Mountains, is explicitly expressed and vividly felt.

In *BC*, before Matthew leaves Glymawr, he climbs up to the Kestrel looking down across the valley. The panorama from up there brings him a strange feeling, because things that were previously familiar look very different, and even the wind sounds strange coming from a different dimension. “It was like coming back, after a long journey, to familiar country, yet the valley was still strange: an enclosing feeling had taken and changed it” (362). This view from up the mountains at that particular moment before Matthew leaves his home for university foreshadows the perspective of later Matthew who comes back to Glymawr to his sick father at the beginning of the novel. Both perspectives contain the double mindsets of a traveler from the outside as well as a resident living inside, of both an educated observer and a customary participant. Yet, for Williams, however stunning and serene the countryside landscape may seem to an observing eye, it has always been the participant’s point of view that matters and it has always been the sight of working people and a trace of a living community that comforts him. A farmhouse, a barking dog, a half-eaten potato clamp and some littered straw, the view of which is Matthew’s, as well as Williams’s, actual country, seen close, from inside. Matthew realizes at the top of the Kestrel that “the mountain had this power, to abstract and to clarify, but in the end he could not stay here; he must go back down where he lived” (365). And it was only on the way down that “the shapes faded and the ordinary identities returned. The voice in his mind faded, and the ordinary voice came back” (365).

“In the general loveliness that was so clear across the valley, he found himself narrowing his eyes to blur out this disfiguring debris around the houses. Yet, as he



did so, some quality vanished: it was now neither the image nor the actual valley” (91). An absolutely unspoiled landscape seems never to attract Williams, for it is the actual working country that carries the true meaning of the people’s livelihood. Some quality is bound to vanish if you deliberately eliminate the “disfiguring debris” so as to construct a splendid landscape in imagination; it would neither be the image as remembered nor the actual valley as lived in.

Matthew in his senior years feels with greater intensity this grip of the home country land and its people, as he intimates to Peter that

What I really seem to feel is these things as my body. As my own physical existence, a material continuity in which there are no breaks. As if I was feeling through them, not feeling about them. (Williams, *FM* 98)

What he is feeling through is not only the natural elements like the line of a hedge or the shadow of a cloud, but also the natural elements living through human affected shapes such as the wind in wires or wind tearing at a chimney. The contiguity of nature and human life is greatly cherished by Williams, and forms the core of his idea of livelihood.

Apart from Williams’s attachment to the idea of livelihood that finds vivid expression in the people living through the place and the place gaining its unique distinguishing marks through the people, he is equally obsessed with the history of his native land, the Black Mountains. He narrates how marvelous events and quotidian life, since ancient times, had made their impression upon this very land, these very mountains. This had always been the strong motivation that prompted him to write the ambitious trilogy *PBM*, to narrate a story of the people, not one of the folk (the concept of ‘folk’ somehow connoting the past), but from the past to the present and into the future. The diachronic element is evident in both his critical writings and his fiction; one salient example is his critical reference work *Keywords*,

where he traces the history and background of each keyword's usage, revealing how a word's meaning develops over the centuries with the change of the social, political and cultural milieu. The same passion is reserved for the historicity of a place; the different stories of the people who had lived in this unusual land never failed to fascinate Williams.

I had a fancy once, looking across the oldest of the farmhouses... A nostalgic colliery cage would rise beyond the tannery. An out-of-date ironworks would share a stream with the weaving. A depressed and ravaged country, passing quickly through the status of a marginal region, would find its cultural reincarnation in the lovingly preserved material relics of an open-air museum. (Williams, *Who Wales* 6)

Williams had been very much obsessed with the history of his particular, magical native land, always speculating in his writing on what might have happened here across the centuries. In his essays and his fiction, he constantly reprises the theme of how the spirit of place brings forth all the people that once lived and those who are still living into one single framework. "As the eye follows them, in this unusually defining land, the generations are distinct but all suddenly present" (Williams, *Who Wales* 77). Therefore, the reader is struck again and again in *PBM* by the constant reference to the earlier generations in the later stories so as to keep the sense of continuity in the history of the land, and also to tell how the past is living into the present, stretching into the future. For instance, in the episode of "The Long House at Midsummer", we are told how the long house had come into being after generations of work, building mounds and setting stones in place, and gradually the site was consecrated as a place to celebrate midsummer and midwinter: "what then passed between feastyard and mound, when the fires were burning, was a long life through death: the strength of stone and earth as the enduring life of the gathered bones of the family" (Williams, *PMB-I* 123). Later in other episodes, the long house was referred to several times as a place of divine significance, where their ancestors had worked

and died and in a special sense lived eternally within the earth of this land. “A long life through death” incorporates the past into the present and continues into the unknown future.

The thread running through the unfinished trilogy of *PBM* is created by Glyn, who sets out late in the night and tramping across the mountains and valleys in the attempt to find his grandfather Elis. Between the historical narratives of the episodes all the way back 25, 000 years ago to the present, we are kept informed of the progress of Glyn’s search for Elis, as he tracks further and further into this land. As he climbs up the mountains calling out “Taid”, the old Welsh name for grandfather, voices of the dead ancestors who once lived on this land seem to be echoing his call. As he calls “Taid”, the name “Marod” seems to be a reply coming from nowhere: “where had that strange word come from, that distant word? ... A sound suddenly distinct but not his own word” (13), as Glyn is wondering, the episode of Marod’s story unveils itself before us; as he reaches the place where Karan saved the Measurer, the echo to “Taid!” becomes “Boy! Boy!” (The shout of the Measurer to Karan) at which Glyn “stopped and looked around... The harsh shout had been in his mind” (190), indicating that the history is living through Glyn’s body and mind as he ventures into this ancient land. Not only do the ancient voices suddenly bring themselves into the present, into Glyn’s mind, but also Glyn literally feels “as if somebody was close to him” (12) and later “the sense of a close presence had come again and alarmed him” (13); the layered historical awareness and buried ancient feelings all swarm into Glyn’s mind, and are experienced physically as well as mentally, for “if the traces were memories the differences of life and of feeling would be equally marked” (82). This sense of the historicity felt in the land can also be detected in other fictions. In *LY*, the church that Norman and Nesta come across

when they hike up the Black Mountains has witnessed several generations of Welsh families living there. And again in *BC*, the experience of living history also comes back to Matthew still up on the Kestrel, as he is looking far out:

All that had been learned of the old fighting along this border stood out, suddenly, in the disposition of the castles and the roads. There on the upland had been the power of the Lords of the Marches, Fitz Osbern, Bernard of Newmarch, de Braose. Their towers now were decayed hollow teeth, facing the peaceful valleys into which their power had bitten. All that stayed of that world was the memory, the decayed shape of violence, confused in legend with the rockfall of the Holy Mountain, where the devil's heel had slipped as he strode westward into our mountains. (Williams, *BC* 364-365)

With all these fights and wars, shaping and reshaping, decaying and reconstructing of the land, the country seems to assume a different meaning for Matthew. Watching the countryside from up there, interpreting the stories that once took place here, trying to make clear what all this might mean to him, Matthew ultimately realizes that what he is watching is himself. The heaped histories, not history as narratives but history as lives, gain an enduring life through death and thus living through generations of ordinary life, and finally living in the person, who is endowed with the capacity to feel other past lives through his own.

Thus the lands of the Black Mountains assume the quality of a palimpsest, upon which generations of lived experiences have been inscribed and re-inscribed.

At the division of a sheeptrack he [Glyn] came to a boundary stone: ... He knew it as the old boundary that divided the lordships of the eastern and southern foothills from those other lordships of the valley of Wye and Lynfi... The stones were almost overgrown with heather, but they were markers which Elis had often shown him and explained. (Williams, *PBM-I* 189)

The boundary stone is one specific example of a palimpsest: it has witnessed and marked the ancient borders of two lordships, harbored and recorded the moment of a grandfather showing and explaining to his grandson the history of the place, and also guided Glyn in his present search of Elis as well as in quest of his own identity. All of a sudden, a simple stone brings all of these local histories back to the present in its

function as palimpsest; for Williams, the entire Black Mountains of his native land represents one huge palimpsest, through which he attempts to read meanings into each of its layered and engraved strata. Just as Inglis notes in his biography of

Williams:

A landscape is the most solid appearance in which a history can declare itself. It is not background, nor is it stage ... There it is, the past in the present, constantly changing and renewing itself as the present rewrites the past. (97)

Williams treats his native land and its people as a whole, as indispensable completeness that is realized in the idea of livelihood, and in the histories of the place lived in and through its people. He argues that “any full history of the uses of nature would be a history of a large part of human thought”, from which a striking and rooted attachment to the Black Mountains can be easily identified. The Black Mountains, as an environment of human habitation, stands not only as a testimony of the bravery and resilience of its people, but more importantly as a nurturer, producing life and force, infusing people with strength and power, and healing people in body and mind.

In the episode “Cara Daughter of Cara” of *PBM-I*, Ral is terribly injured in his left leg during his game hunting of a boar in the attempt to win the competition so as to choose his admired maiden Cara. In the end of the episode, Ral is treated with fresh damp moss to staunch the bleeding, while “Cara took a handful of damp moss and wiped his face. He drew back slightly but kept looking into her eyes” (68). The damp moss is not simply some natural herb designed to heal the wound, but more importantly it becomes a token of flirtation and connection that brings two hearts together in their eventual union. Moss is also employed by Karan in “The Coming of the Measurer” to treat Dal Mered’s swollen foot, and again in the story of “The Gift of Acha” in the second volume, Acha “pulled a handful of grass to wipe his face”

(123) when she found the injured English man Hicel. Williams refers to the healing power of the herbs in the cases mentioned above, and expresses his respect for the profusion of healing herbs and plants:

Roughstalked bracken, on the banks, stood proud to the elbows of hazel.  
Tangled holly and hawthorn, field maple and blackthorn, spread under rising  
rowan and ash. Trailing greenberried brambles, fruiting honeysuckle, late  
briars and columns of seeding foxglove, stood out from the body of the  
hedges. There were hartstongue ferns and the glossy leaves of ramson, under  
webs of fruiting vetch. (Williams, *PBM-1* 3)

These plants and herbs almost have a life of their own in his description that uses active voice throughout the passage, ending with the simile that “it is almost like a chorus of plants”(Williams, *PBM-1* 3). The richness and exuberance in this diversity of herbs signifies the living force of the Black Mountains, invoking also the multiple generations of human beings living and herding in this land.

The vibrancy and completeness of the lived life within the this land, or rather, experienced through the wind, the river, the valleys, the ridges and the mountains, is epitomized by the situation of Elis in *PBM*, which the reader is told of in the following conversation:

‘Has he been well?’ Megan asked, forcing her voice.  
‘Yes, as usual. He’s got so much more energy than the rest of us.’  
‘Seems to have more energy.’  
‘Yes, because he lives in one piece.’  
‘He’s sixty-eight, Glyn.’  
‘In one piece, in one place. It makes all the difference.’ (5)

Glyn has been brought up with his grandparents in this place after his parents got divorced and Megan went off to London to work. Having grown up in Elis’s house and often going on long walks through the mountains with Elis, Glyn is actually more aware of Elis’s vigorous energy and the Mountains’ rejuvenating force than Megan. In responding to Megan’s curiosity about her father’s vitality at his age, Glyn immediately attributes the credit to the fact that Elis has lived his whole life in one place, this special environment of the Black Mountains. Elis’s life “in one piece,

in one place” is sharply distinguished from Megan and Glyn who went away to university, and the split in their identity has resulted from the move out of the native land and their ‘exile’ in the big city. Williams emphasizes the contrast in the way Glyn expresses admiration for the integrity of Elis’s loyalty to this one place. As James A. Davies has noted, the story of “the clever boy from a working-class home, either from Wales or of Welsh parentage, invariably Oxbridge-educated and struggling to come to terms with upward mobility” (192) is a recurrent theme throughout Williams’s fiction, from Matthew in *BC* and Peter in *SG* to Gwyn in *LY* and Lewis in *VT*, including, in the above extract, Glyn. In exploring this heavily autobiographical theme, each of the characters is faced with the anxiety of incorporating the two seemingly antagonistic identities. The return to their homeland, especially to the Black Mountains, is ultimately presented as an effective means of soothing this disquietude, if not entirely resolving the problem of fractured identity.

The healing power of the native land, the Black Mountains, has also been slightly touched upon in *SG*. The narrative is set in a city, a fictionalized Oxford where the dichotomy of colleges and motor works indicates the rift in the identity of protagonist Peter Owen. The only episode set away from the city in the Black Mountains is when Peter steals his father Harold’s car, and drives all the way to Trawsfynydd in the Welsh border countryside. The impulsive journey is a response to his parents’ quarrel over his mother Kate’s adultery. Driving up into the open mountains, he felt “the mountain wind search out every inch of his skin” (220), and then by the edge of the unfenced road to the dark gully he “felt, at once, both the impulse and the fear” (221). The impulse refers to his sudden desire to drive into the dark deep gully, and end all his misery. However, the fear of death holds him back: “each opposing force was intense and active, and seemed alive in his hands” (221).

The conflict between death and life forces experienced in this moment efface all the thoughts of his own familiar life in the city, but brings the “distant still photographs... overlapping but without connection” (221) into which figures enter after which the whole scene dissolves as a result of a loss of focus. This again is an image of a palimpsest, on which scenes of people living over a period of thousands of years at once present themselves before Peter; it is this vision that prevents him committing suicide. Later when he returns to his car, he feels “the rush of feeling, of shame, and of love, ...of no kind that he knew”, which was “harsh and tearing and inarticulate, as if some unknown, neglected region had broken suddenly into revolt” (222). The feelings that overwhelm Peter are the common feelings of the multitudes of people once living on this land brought to the present by the mountain wind and the “distant photographs”, and this “unknown, neglected region” connects with the primal true identity of himself that he has long tried to ignore and fears to confront and which is brought into sharp relief here in the Black Mountains. As Norman Madden observes in his thesis, “this mountain experience in the border country, brief as it is, has profound effects, and Peter is now able to resolve some of the tensions in his life” (31).

The same mountain wind searching out every inch of Peter’s skin also ripped at Matthew’s coat and “pressed unevenly in continual variations, as if moulding the flesh to the bone” (35) in *FM*. The wind not only brings the generations of life to the present in Peter’s case, but also pulls Matthew back into the past, as he admits that feels it so strongly. And it is the past, Matthew’s childhood experiences in a similar Welsh village, which enables him to feel great sympathy for the local people and protest against the Manod development project.

While the Black Mountains are portrayed as a source of soothing power and



vibrating energy, this native place also possesses a repository of life-giving forces, which are also evoked effectively in *LY*, in the part where the protagonist Gwyn was actually conceived in the Black Mountains, the only episode that actually takes place in this ancient natural country that has nurtured over multiple generations of lives. It is exactly in this place that the name “Birdie” comes to the mind of Gwyn’s biological father Norman, a nickname he gives to Gwyn’s mother Nesta. This image of a bird in the nest foreshadows the fact that a child is to be conceived in Nesta’s womb, which can also be interpreted as a life being engendered in the original shell of the Black Mountains.

The maternal personification of the Black Mountains is also noted in *PBM*, with a legend related to the Iron Age. It tells how in order “to get the metal the new men were ripping the skin of Mother Earth. They were breaking the bones of Danu and burning them”(Williams, *PBM-1* 213-4) which is what the older generation in this episode interpret as the cause of earthquakes. This perception corresponds to a considerable extent to what Williams’s attitudes towards nature, as he notes that,

We shall never understand this if we fail to remember that we are ourselves part of nature, and that what is involved in this mastery and conquest is going to have its effects on us; we can’t just arrive and depart as a foreign conqueror. (Williams, *Resources Hope* 214)

Therefore, what Williams sees in his projection is to produce ‘a new social and natural order’ via the concept and practice of ‘livelihood’. The way to achieve it is not through political and international efforts at the higher levels, but is rooted in the majority interests and in the indispensable livelihood of all the people in society.

## **II. Actual and Sustained Social Relationships**

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Williams recounts that he opposed Professor L.C. Knights’ judgment on the meaning of “neighbour” in the twentieth

century. The point made by Knights is that the word “neighbour”, symbolizing “a whole series of obligations and recognitions over and above the mere fact of physical proximity” (Williams, *Who Wales* 179) in Shakespeare’s time, totally lost its original sense to any person in modern society. However, Williams puts forward the view that “neighbour” retains its original meaning in its full sense in his hometown Pandy where mutual responsibility and social obligation are deeply ingrained in the minds of its people: when Williams was admitted into Cambridge, the people in Pandy gathered in the local pub and were planning to take up a collection for him to cover the expenses in Cambridge. And this “was entirely within that sense of neighbour, of community” (180), as Williams contends.

It comes down to the multiple connotations of the concept “community”, this neighborly, everybody knowing everybody, community. For Williams, an idealized community is in the first place a settled one, with people living and working together in some actual place and identifying with common interests. The local, the regional, as in a village or a town, some particular valley or mountain, is exactly where the strongest, most direct and placeable bonding can be formed. The shared reality of a place constitutes a crucial element in Williams’s idea of what a real community is. Hence, in the fiction, we could almost immediately feel the milieu of a community the moment the characters arrive in Welsh villages, whether it be Glynmawr in *BC*, Manod in *FM*, or Danycapel in *LY*.

When Matthew takes the train back to Glynmawr, “abruptly the rhythm changed, as the wheels crossed the bridge...with its familiar network of arteries, held in the shape of Wales” (Williams, *BC* 8). The sight of the village immediately takes Matthew into its familiar pattern; “It is like that, this country; it takes you over as soon as you set foot in it” (Williams, *BC* 11). The settlement in a small known actual

community and the digging-in life pattern is experienced through the lives of its inhabitants as literally a physical embedding, forming a continuity that joins the minds and bodies of the people. The charm of the place as a known community forms a contrast with the coldness and indifference felt and experienced in London. Matthew is the name he gets used to in London while Will is the name known to everyone in Glynmawr, the distinction of names immediately informs us of the contrast and the split of the possessor's feelings. Mrs. Hybert can only manage to call Matthew "Will" when he is standing face to face in this particular place, but she has to watch out and call "Mr. Price" when she phones to inform him of his father's heart attack. Furthermore, when Ellen and a neighbor Jane Davies casually talk about Matthew and Jane's sister Phyllis on the basis that he and Phyllis are classmates in school and both leave home and start a life elsewhere, Matthew cannot help thinking: "If we met in a London street should we even know each other? It was only here, in this network, that the memory held" (92). It is in Glynmawr that the network of relationships is woven into each other's life, with local family names and special persons mentioned and talked about; and really, "you can't go into one house without finding somebody has got a relation in all the others (Williams, *BC* 94)

When Matthew is picked up by Morgan, there is a certain strangeness between the feelings of the two with both having nothing to say after a few greeting words, and the ice is not broken,

until they were into Glynmawr, with its intermittent groups of houses and the fields between them. In the headlights, along the road, every feature came up in its remembered place. By the school the road had been widened, and the corner was less dangerous. The headlights beamed along the banked hedges, and cut quick swathes through the gateways to the fields. (Williams, *BC* 12)

The images of the houses, the fields, the road, the school, the banked hedges and the gateways seem to exert a charm on Matthew, infusing in him a sense of security and

a bracing feel in this “less dangerous” “remembered place”. Though these ordinary familiar items are only briefly and vaguely spotted by the beam of the headlights, each of them is drawing Matthew back into the network of place, into the apparatus that they constitute in his life experience. Later, he watches people busy around the houses and leaving marks of their work everywhere with an untidy shed, an unfinished ditch, a dirty lorry and so on, and then gradually “the balance of feeling was changing, and there was nothing in particular to look at. It was really as if he was living here again; the lane and the mountains seemed ordinary” (330). Matthew feels very reluctant to be drawn into this ordinary, everyday pattern of community life, yet he realizes afterwards how long he has been away from this lived life; in the end the place succeeds in growing back into his body just as he knows the way back home in the darkness by

taking the measure of the darkness, and then walked on. ...In the north sky the stars were clear. At the lane, with the sound of the river under the wall, he was in touch again, as if he had walked this road every night. He turned into the lane, into the deeper darkness under the trees, and walked up to the house. (Williams, *BC* 347)

The attachment to the place does not only confine itself to Williams’s fictional hometown Glynmawr but extends itself to each Welsh village in other novels. In *SG*, Trawsfynydd is the Welsh home that the two families travel to for the caravan tour every summer; when Kate puts forward a different plan for the coming summer, corresponding to a great extent to her betrayal of marriage as well as of the Welsh bonding, while Harold’s insistence on the original plan reflects his attachment to the Welsh landscape as well as to its people. Furthermore, Trawsfynydd is also the place Peter unconsciously yearns for and unwittingly drives to after he runs away from his parents’ quarrel over Kate’s adultery. Although few scene takes place in Trawsfynydd in *SG*, the place is undoubtedly the thread that binds the two families

into the physical continuity of their lives, where they feel no break of feelings. Likewise, Manod, a seemingly separate and secluded village as it appears, yet certainly a very settled grounded community, pulls Matthew back into the same material continuity and invites him to feel through its wind, hedges, chimney and watercourse.

The concept of a placeable community is undoubtedly important, for it is on this basis that Williams argued against L.C. Knights on “neighborhood”; in such communities, people live physically close to each other in the same place and thus in this sense consent to share a common identity. Consequently, the clinging to place and fascination with the land are at once binding people together as well as drawing the diaspora back into its embrace on the moment of their return. Besides this settled kind of lived and placeable community, there is “a possible kind” of conceptual community with new historical bearings; these are formed by the experience of industrialization and the division of labor, and constitute a dislocated and relocated community, “the kind of community that was the eventual positive creation of struggles within the industrialization of South Wales” (Williams, *Who Wales* 180). The railways, the mining valleys and the motor plants become the new grounds of “solid and mutually loyal communities”, where people work and live sharing common interests to identify with, and ground themselves in these formed real social identities, free from “external ideological definitions, whether diverse or universalist” (Williams, *Who Wales* 201). The exploration of this possible kind of community ranges from his very first novel *BC* to the much later ones of *VT* and *LY*.

The industrial areas in South Wales are depicted as the places where the new communities are formed with mining workers or workers in car industry originally from the countryside of Wales. When Lewis Redfern in *VT* came to Pontyrhiw to

conduct an investigation, he feels the connectedness of people living in the same working place and under the same living conditions, “for there was now suddenly a network again: to an indistinguishable house, in a terraced street, in a small town beyond Pontyrhiw” (219). Later, Lewis further realizes that the industrial area in South Wales is not simply an exploited region, but also an actual community inhabited by its real people experiencing real daily lives. :

An industrial area, but South Wales is more than that. What really got through to me was the stark barren hills—with this crowded, dirty, unfinished and abandoned development. The people had to live between two inadequate worlds, each harsh and unspectacular: simply a raw transition, within which, unbelievably, there was the talk, perhaps the practice, of community.” (107)

In *BC*, an originally sheltered and almost isolated valley under the lonely dark mountains where Glynmawr is situated, the town could have carried on with its own ordinary history if not for the May Day, since which “a different history exerted its pressures, and reached, with the railway line, even this far” (102). The railway links people of isolated communities together in the common interests, and people in Glynmawr begin to care more about people of similar living and working conditions, people in the pits and the colliers’ houses which stretch ten miles away beyond their own valley. “At dusk, above Darren, the glow of the steel furnace spread up each evening into the sky, and many turned now to watch it more seriously, and to think of the black valleys that lay hidden beyond” (102). The former kin-related and localized community extends itself along the railway and by telegram to other parts of the area stricken with the same crisis from the external pressures, and many people began to search possibilities of bonding by looking beyond the valleys and adopting the idea of a wider immediate community. “Because we’re the working class, Harry, united for common action” are the words Morgan reiterates. “We’re not miners see, Harry. We got no right to strike, only for the working class” (104)

Morgan again tries to make the point that what they do is for the common interests of the whole class and for building their own social system. For Williams, the inner urge “to help the miners”, “to stand by the miners” is there from the beginning as an affective impulse, just as he illustrates in relation to the railway workers during the Great Strike in *BC* that “They seemed to know instinctively that it was important to be with each other”(156).

The motor factories in *SG*, where people from the rural areas who migrate to the city working on the assembly line, become the new terrain and the new nexus that connect the working people’s lives: “Beyond the traffic was the works and its network, itself operating within the same kind of experience... This was the network by which the society lived, and through which it moved and communicated” (234). It is in a very real sense a relocated community, where people move in great numbers for the sake of waged jobs, each only responsible for a specific monotonous task along the assembly line, and where they settle down in the nearby residential area quite close to each other. This still enables a knowable relationship to be established, which is exemplified in the demonstration when the men “near the loudspeaker van were shouting continually at this stream of traffic, calling to most of the men by name” (199). Yet, an aspect of the real social bonding seems to have been lost, and can not be easily regained: people are in the first place alienated in the sense that they are only regarded as a labor force in collective anonymity allocated to diverse sections of the large stream-line motor plants, which again with other motor works comprises the whole motor industry; and for that matter, people, engaged with their own humdrum work in separate division for the wages to survive, find much difficulty in forming real connections, as they react rather indifferently to Kate’s appeal for the demonstration at the beginning. Despite all these drawbacks as Kate

observes, “here are people marching for a principle, that they’ll share the available work, that they’d rather go short themselves than see others with nothing” (197). The shared work, the interrelated life and the same crisis imposed upon them gradually drive them in the same direction for a common cause, thus constructing a new possible kind of community, which expands beyond the car industry to other assembly lines in other industrial areas. Since these motor works with each only producing separate components of a car are really reliant on each other, “one of the busy lines would be hardest hit, since it was especially dependent on the West Longton instruments, which were never stocked beyond three days’ normal production” (290) and a problem in one division will surely affects the other, as the dispute at West Longton causes the temporary shut-down of production in the Goldsmith division. Hence, it is no longer a fixed and known community that is concerned, but rather, the whole life of the working class people in totality that really becomes the issue. A community, not in the simple sense relocated but in a deeper sense dislocated, demands new understanding and further perception, as Dick Manning observes in the failure of their strike, “we’ve got to fight this now, in the worst conditions. If we’d supported the Longton men in the autumn, we’d have had a much better chance”(291). These are the real grounds of hope for socialism, and on such a footing, the socialist community not only transcends the particular fixed location, but very much extends out of Britain, as Williams perceives. He claims himself as a “Welsh European”:

I am now necessarily European; that the people to the left and on the left of the French and Italian communist parties, the German and Scandinavian comrades, the communist dissidents from the East like Bahro, are my kind of people; the people I come from and belong to, and my more conscious Welshness is, as I feel it, my way of learning those connections. (Williams, *Politics and Letters* 296)

The bonding with people of your origin, together with those of one’s own



people, could be really intense and necessary; there seems to be no other way that one could escape from that or simply ignore it, and the very intention of doing so would make a person more divided or even in turmoil. Once a person abandons his socio-economic class through education, he is always confronted with a split of identity and such an emotional crisis is manifestly present in Williams's fiction; what is frequently suggested is that, though there is no possibility of making a simple return, some degree of continuity and compatibility between the two worlds can be found, and established, in the process of which the strong interconnectedness of people in a Welsh community would certainly play a pivotal role.

Williams remembers himself being told at Cambridge not to speak to an acquaintance he bumped into in the street, and he contrasts this with his own country along the Welsh border where people "do not think of passing anyone, friend or stranger, without a salute or a greeting. If we are not busy we usually stop for a talk" (Williams, *What I Come Say* 15). William is certainly lamenting the neighborly interconnectedness between people in the Welsh border village, where the actual people with real feelings live for and through other people, just as the vicar in the parish tells Matthew that "the real life, for these people, is each other. Even their religion is for each other" (Williams, *BC* 277) and that "what matters, what holds them together, is what their members do, through them, for each other. God, you might say, is their formula for being neighbourly" (278). Although Matthew walks out of this border country, having learned to leave his connection to the people here unfinished and without any real intention at all to reestablish it, after he comes back home owing to his father's sickness, he comments admits to Eira that "I've learned now, anyway, most relationships have to be left unfinished, for it is really that they are finished. Then let's accept that. Don't try to make talking a substitute" (241).

However, despite what he claims to think, Matthew feels gradually drawn closer and closer back into the social relationships in this known community. It is not just that he feels himself as the continuity, literally, of his father's life settled deep into the life pattern in Glynmawr, when he "walked downstairs to the kitchen, he felt the past moving with him: this life, this house, the trains through the valley" (23), and when he sits in his father's chair reading the newspaper, he realizes that he is meant "to be in the house, and this meant to take up the life of the house, to settle to it as if he had really come home. ...He was here not only to be in the house, but as a kind of replacement, to carry life on" (87). The real power and influence of the valley lies not only in the close blood kinship, but also the community life that is sublimated in the public events; in such occasions, there rises an extraordinary power that carries men and women in their imagination back across the border to the common tune. Joining in the chorus, Will "felt himself caught up in that movement and pressure of the audience by which, in response, they became virtually part of the choir: the united voice quacking them to a common awareness which had little to do with their physical presence in the drab, watching rows" (249) and that "it was now no longer simply hearing, but a direct effect on the body: on the skin, on the hair, on the hands"(258-9).

Peter Owen in *SG* is successful in escaping his working class milieu by pursuing a higher degree in the university, which can guarantee him a totally different future with an offer of a scholarship to conduct further research work in the US together with an enticement of marrying Rose, the older daughter of his middle-class supervisor. Yet, all through the novel, the conflicted and muddled feelings of Peter are constantly disputed and negotiated; the hypocrisy of the socialist ideas of the middle-class people like Arthur and Robert, and the detached attitudes

towards and even disregard for actual working class people in the real world, but foremost of all the primal attachment to and the strong pull towards his own people, all contribute increasingly to confirm Peter's identity: "He could feel it now, every day, in the bodies of others. It came through as pain, and there was then no separation: the pain of others was quite literally his own" (Williams, *SG* 92).

Lewis in *VT*, despite his conscious attempt to deny his Welsh working class background by telling himself that "it wasn't my organization, they weren't my comrades, I didn't even agree with them, in theory or in practice" (191), cannot really help yearning for "the cement that keeps so many lives together: the experience of belonging to something, of confirming an identity in the identification with others" (192). And we gain a glimpse of this lived experience of belonging and identifying in the volunteers who are willingly enlisted to work for their own society and their own people. Though feeling himself maneuvered by David Evans and Rosa in half forcing him to join the volunteers, Lewis is unconsciously glad about it at first and ultimately sorts out the feelings in "the deep need to connect and the practical impossibility, for un-regrettable reasons, of making the connection, even the known connections" (239); what he sees the hope in this impossibility is "the inevitable commitment, the necessary commitments, the choosing of sides" (239) and finally he finds his way back into "this warm Welsh embrace" (240).

Williams is very much conscious in presenting "sufficiently manifest immediate relations" (Williams, *Politics Letters* 17) in known communities in his fiction, and he reiterates here and there how central and unbreakable the relationship is in the lived experience of the people. As he remarks in *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence*, "in many lives, again and again, it is the central reality of everything else that happens, and indeed quite often doesn't need to be emphasized: the reality of the

relationship is simply there and unbreakable” (66) and also asserts in *The Country and the City* that “it is not so much the old village or the old backstreet that is significant. It is the perception and affirmation of a world in which one is not necessarily a stranger and an agent, but can be a member, a discoverer, in a shared source of life” (297).

While the immediate interconnected relationship between the people on such real bases is constantly stressed as central to the notion of “community”, the habit of mutual obligation as the real ground of community is equally vital. Williams does not idealize the community as an arcadia where people do not have disputes and all share mutual liking for one other, but accentuates the “level of social obligation which was conferred by the fact of seeming to live in the same place and in that sense to have a common identity. And from this sense there were acts of kindness beyond calculation, forms of mutual recognition” (Williams, *Who Wales* 180).

This sense of mutual obligation between people and consciousness of duty towards others are themes that are thoroughly explored in *PBM*, in which the folk living in this particular land since ancient times feel “the law of the mountains” and consciously abide by it. “It was the law”(Williams, *PBM-I* 94) that the land people save Idrisil’s people and boats from drowning when they came to settle; “it is the law” (155) that Karan the boy rescues Dal Merel with his injured ankle; “it is the law” (199) that Anailos ask for the consent of Seril’s people in order to marry her; “it was the law” (243) that Calina, as a child be taken into the kin of her deceased parents, even though she refuses the offer, preferring to dwell alone. In later ages, with the external intrusions of the Romans into the mountains, the law gradually becomes a legal, forced term, from a law of paying absolute respect to a lord, to a law of military honor, Roman rule and the discipline of the empire; still, the law cherished

by the people in the Black Mountains has always been “the truths of their people” and “the sweetness of the place”, not externally imposed laws (300). The direct collision of these two sets of laws is argued, discussed and negotiated between the wise one Lugon and the old slave man Karan: while Lugon asserts that the law is the order of the world, and that “men recognize their kings, by the rites which the gods have prescribed”, Karan refuses to bow to the law of Lugon’s lord and alleges in affirmation that his people’s law is their tie with the place and with each other. This contentious debate between the so-styled ‘wise one’ and the slave is an courageous attempt of Karan to bring into question the law of the Roman lords in order to save his fellow man Derco who is sentenced to death for shouting in protection of his sister Gorda at the newly returned lord Mation. And the whole story witnesses how the people in these mountains, though forced to be slaves, still treasure their own long-kept law by risking their own lives for their folk: Derco rises bravely against the master for the sake of Gorda, and Karan in the end is hanged for his secret release of Derco when he fails to persuade the wise one with the law observed in his native land.

This law of kindness to others and caring for each other within a community extends all the way down to Matthew’s native village Glynmawr. This law as the way people have lived loses meaning for Matthew who is trained to be indifferent through his education in London, for his anger seems to increase step by step owing to the stifling law of lived relationships in the community; when asking Ellen about his father’s heart attack, he is unhappy “hearing in her voice that she had said this often already; that the account had already been given to several others” (Williams, *BC* 15); he is sullen on hearing that Ellen has been showing his family photos and even exchanging them with other people; he becomes clearly angry when seeing the

neighbors dropping by to ask about Matthew rather than to express their solicitude about Harry's sickness. At last, he bursts out to Ellen:

It's nice of them all. But what is this, an illness or a tea-party? You can't be kept running upstairs and at the same time have a whole stream of them in the kitchen. Not just asking how he is, mind, but settling down in the chair for every detail, then going on to whatever interests them, just a good general gossip. (97)

In response, Ellen admits the strain, but also reasserts that it is nice and natural for the neighbor to call and ask, upon which Matthew comes to realize that he has been away for too long and has forgotten it all. Though he feels unable to bring himself back, he still has his former need for reconnection within the social network, as he angrily complains to Ellen about the supposed concealment of the information that doctor Evans who treats Harry is actually Eira's husband and declares that "this is supposed to be a place where we know all about each other" (183). When Matthew fails to order flowers for Harry's funeral from Roberts, as Morgan manages to fix it, the social obligation for each other within that community is manifested by the embedded bonding between its people, for Roberts "knew about Harry and about the other funerals Monday. He made an estimate for those, and he's not selling beyond that to anybody who happens to walk in" (413-4).

The word "community", which conveys the concept of an immediate and responsible relationship between its people, extends from the rural, organic, localized and fixed kind in the old sense, to the collective form of mutuality and brotherhood with common interests in the new sense. What has been Williams's consistent concern is "a problem that isn't just community as an isolable word, but that involves, as I've argued, basic questions of relationship, of knowing ourselves and others, ourselves with others, under very specific and active and continuing pressures" (Williams, *BC* 187). Hence, while the kind of old organic communities in the

countryside become hard to sustain as the people are moving outside for work or for education and the external forces are brought to bear on them, the possibility of continuities ranging from the more traditional fixed kind to the new more open kind should be explored, identified and established.

Williams's Welsh communities in border villages as well as industrial areas are brought into constant conflict with "the cold east wind" in university cities like Oxford, Cambridge and London, for example, "crowded metropolitan streets—the people as isolated atoms, flowing this way and that; a common stream of separated identities and directions" (Williams, *BC* 296). By contrast the chapels in Glynmawr "are for people to meet, and to talk to each other or sing together. Around them, as you know, moves almost the whole life of the village. That, really, is their religion", for individuals who have moved out of the communities, it is really a question of coming back and of making the necessary connections through measuring and feeling so as to continue into the future.

### **III. Real and Lived Identity**

#### **1. The Welsh Core**

We have seen how Elis in *PBM* has lived his whole life "in one piece and in one place" in the Black Mountains; the intimacy with nature and the native land, the completeness in the body and the soul like that in the land itself, and the purity of a belief in a settled way of life, are all celebrated in Williams's idea of "lived experience", the true livelihood of a real people in an actual place. Williams focuses on the Welsh core in its people's way of life, which is represented in many characters in Williams's novels, particularly their protagonists, including Harry Price in *BC*, Gwyn in *SG*, Bert in *LY*, and of course the character of Elis.

In *BC*, Harry comes to work as a signalman on the railway, and settles down in

the nearby village Glynmawr; being a man of few words and concrete actions, he lives his life to the core, and settles into the community thoroughly. He chooses the long-established life pattern of his family and community, and his wife Ellen sees and accepts it, for she “knew it was no use trying to stop him working” (69). Harry refuses again and again to get involved in Morgan’s business, although it would have brought him a lot more income. He is influenced by the values his father Jack has taught him, and concentrates his efforts on living and feeling his life through the work on the allotment, growing vegetables and taking care of his bee-hives, and he firmly believes that “a man makes up his own mind in his living. He can’t make up another man’s, or try to force him” (316). So he never views Morgan’s business dealings as a capitalist activity in the way that Morgan himself worries that he would be regarded; it is simply that for him one chooses a life pattern one believes in and lives it to the full, for Harry perceives that “there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his own works, for that is his portion” (427). So here is the story of a real, ordinary man that remains faithful to the native land, to his fathers and to his work. Living and working by the foot of the Holy Mountain, Harry often stares up at the black ridges of the mountain, which seems to infuse into him life and energy, but he never goes up to the Holy Mountain, for he has got plenty of work to accomplish down in the valley. The Mountain has already permeated into himself; it is almost as if he himself is the mountain and the ridges, standing solid and firm on this land, and staying true to his own committed life in spite of the changing economic and social milieu. Moreover, he lives as his father and forefather have lived in the Welsh countryside, despite the inevitable changes that occur in a developing society; and for that matter, the arrival of his father Jack immediately enlivens him, for Harry “felt a straining of spirit in himself; a movement where for years there had been



deadlock. Since he had first left home he had never laughed so much as he now did, when his father took over an evening, talking extravagantly, bring the past back until it seemed that living had always been exciting and easy” (240). Harry means his life to be lived in the same way as his father has lived; yet the fast changing society certainly will not allow for that. Nevertheless, he lives through it himself: he is aware of how difficult life is for the working-class people in the Welsh industrial regions and those working on the railway and also how politicized the socialist ideas of the working class have been during the Great Strike; he joins the strike because he is loyal to his people, but he never wants to engage in political matters. This is why he is indifferent when Morgan tries to indoctrinate him with socialist ideas, or when Morgan goes into business dealings, because for him, all that matters is the real lived-through experiences, as he “couldn’t see life as chances. Everything with him was to settle. He took his own feelings and he built things from them. He lived direct, never by any other standard at all” (358). And that is also why Harry wants a different life for Matthew, not that he does not cherish the real lived life he lives in Glynmawr, but rather that he sees how the society has changed and still is changing; for that matter, wanting Matthew to pursue a further education is also part of his experienced life, as “experience isn’t only what’s happened to us. It’s also what we wanted to happen” (281).

A university city, the setting of *SG*, with the cathedral and the colleges to the west and the yards and sheds of the motor works to the east, seems to have lost the sense of human scale and reality in a world of abstract language on the one hand and alienating work on the assembly line on the other. It is Gwyn, who indicts the bloody politics that “kills” people, that leaves the reader with a beam of lively actuality of life, just as Gwyn Thomas observed in his article “Too Little Loving” that

“Gwyn...retreating each evening to a kind of monastic conservatory where he indulges a peasant preoccupation with roots and mulch, still more fascinated by the changing color of leaves than by the changing shades of car-bodies”<sup>5</sup>. It is only in Gwyn that the Welsh core is retained and lived through, and his work in the greenhouse does not only serve as a way of keeping up his Welsh pastoral roots, but is also perceived by those around him with a burst of natural refreshment and liveliness, as Peter senses: “a sudden change in the air, ...a quite different quality in it, both of humidity and of the smell of growth. Closing his eyes, Peter felt this air as a kind greenness, and then came the slow, elusive scent—yet hardly a scent, a curious brown tinge in the air—of the opening chrysanthemums” (22-3). Later, Peter feels even more reassured and rejoices in the warmth of the experience of hiking with Gwyn to get leaf-mold in High Wood, where they use their bare hands instead of a trowel to scoop the loose black leaf soil under the layer of withered brown leaves into the two sacks, and the immediate touch of the leaves, husks, roots, fragments of twig and the damp soil prompt a sense of satisfaction all through Peter’s body so that he “felt disappointed when the second sack was full” (142). Carrying the filled sack back, Peter “felt that he was being touched, and was moving, in forgotten parts of his body, as if the weight was pressing right through” (143). Some commentators see no life at all in the protagonist Peter<sup>6</sup>, but it is on these rare occasions when Peter is with Gwyn that he feels the real touch of humanity and the actual feeling of a lived experience, and a manifestation of the weightiness of “touch and breath” over “records and analysis”.

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<sup>5</sup> Thomas, Gwyn. “Too Little Loving”. *Western Mail* Friday, Nov. 13, 1964.

<sup>6</sup> In the collected reviews on Williams’s novels stored in Richard Burton Archive, in his the article “A dream of a country: the Raymond Williams Trilogy” published in *Planet*, Jeremy Hooker notes that “Matthew is capable of live and Peter Owen is not”; in another article titled “Versions of Britian in the Sixties”, the author also points out that “There is a bit of life in Harold Owen’s confrontation with the management, but no life at all in Peter”.

If Harry is the Welsh landscape he has worked on his whole life, complete in both, and Gwyn is the plants and the flowers he carefully tends in the greenhouse grafted onto a city life, then Bert Lewis in *LY* is the belief in socialism that dissolves into real actions and lived pains and frustrations in later years. Bert firmly believes in the rhetoric of these socialist ideas, and translates them into actions, fighting in both the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War; he heard

the same words in his own mind, as familiar inhabitants, still deeply and closely connected. The words were at a great distance from the stumpy bayonets trying to cut a trench in the white earth, and from the fatigue and muddle of all their movements so far. But that was the distance they had set out to close: from the rhetoric to the practice; from the party to the army. It was the language he had used himself. (55)

What Bert tries to do is to bridge the distance and to establish the continuity between the words and the actions, the theory and the practice, the communist party back in Wales and the army in the Spanish battlefield; and he commits himself to both, and through his actions he represents the bridge that creates the continuities between the two worlds. When he fights in the war, he finds “what *comrade* means” and admits that he “would never have believed it. It’s here on the ground, a real movement, not of strangers but of comrades” (56); as the words first lead Bert into these actions, the actions he engages in confirm the meaning of these words.

## **2. The Conflicted Double Identity**

In discussing the novels of George Eliot, Hardy and Lawrence, Williams concludes that “belonging and not belonging: that is the crisis through all these writers” (Williams, *English Novel* 171) and this view has been meticulously argued and evidenced in detail. Hence, fully aware of this crisis, having likewise been born in the country and later having received university education, Williams insists that, as for the above-mentioned authors, it is his own readings and experiences that inculcate in him a real sense of the value of education. These, he argues, endow him

with the capacity and inspiration to write prolifically. Moreover, Williams also tries to avoid using a highly formal register; rather, he adopts the customary language of the working people in the particular community. Following this special tradition, the theme of “belonging and not belonging” and the tension between the respective claims of education and everyday custom, Williams depicts the inevitable conflicts between separated individuals and the social alienation that they face. These motifs and tensions are deployed, deliberated on and debated through every detail of the characters’ feelings and experiences in all of Williams’s novels. The conflicted feelings of “the return of the native” as a recurrent theme caused by the two contrasting worlds—one being the enlightened, abstracted, academic environment of conceptual learning, and the other being real and immediate actuality of people’s lived life— achieve eloquent expression in characters such as Matthew Price—an economic historian in London, Dal Mered—the Measurer in Menvadir, Glyn Parry—a professional historian, Peter Owen—a college graduate student in Sociology in an Oxford-like university city, Gwyn Lewis—a reporter at Stockwell and Lewis Redferen—the TV agency reporter, all of whom are of Welsh rural origin.

We’ve seen in the beginning of the chapter how Dal Mered the measurer craves for “the softer and sweeter air of that west in which he had been born” (Williams, *PBM-1* 158) and is returning to where he is known as Ranan. On his way he gets injured in the right foot and is rescued by Karan, a boy from the settlement, Lanoluc, in the west. As the narrative proceeds, Dal Mered stays with Karan’s people for the winter and meanwhile teaches Karan how to measure natural phenomena. In the process he feels more and more reassured and committed to what he has always believed to be the principle of a true Measurer, that is, the measuring work is not for the sun or the moon in itself, but for the community, for the people. Menvadir, the

Measurers' sanctuary in the White Land where Ranan becomes Dal Mered, "is not the place, it is the Company. It is not even the Company, it is the idea. The idea of true measuring: not an order but a measuring" (Williams, *PBM-1* 163). Menvadir stands out in the ancient times as an institution that privileges knowledge and for mental activity, a community in which measuring the natural phenomena is given priority over involving oneself directly in hunting, herding and growing, the actually lived experiences of the people, that provide the basic necessities for living. The measurers are provided with meat and ground flour, but in the years of bad harvest the people have to stop giving these provisions to the Measurers when they themselves go short of food and labor. Dal Mered and a few others propose to hunt like other members of the community as well as measuring. However, the Company deliberately mystifies the natural phenomenon of the eclipse of the sun, prophesying that the sun will go dark unless the people obey them, as Mered "recalls that the other Measurers spoke as if they were "priests of the Great Order" (Williams, *PBM-1* 179). By now skeptical of the corruption of Menvadir, Dal Mered chooses to

get back to where I was born I shall go on measuring. It is a good place, from the mountains, with the long levels of the sea. But I shall measure as I have always measured, for the measuring itself and because it delights me. I will not give signs, for I am not a priest but a Measurer. (178)

Not only does he recognize the rich land of his native country for measuring but also he observes that "the best of us measure because we love measuring. The worst of us give signs because it is a way of getting food"(178). Williams makes a clear and critical distinction here between the power of learning and the learning of power. Dal Mered, having expressed his disagreement with those Dalen in Menvadir and leaving the community to be free of dependence on others, somewhat ironically ends up dependent on others once again for food, not only because of his injured foot and weak physical condition, but more importantly owing to the fact that, as he concedes,

“his mind could never slip back into these old settled ways” (Williams, *PMB-1* 158). These are paradoxical feelings on the part of Dal Mered: on the one hand he has been endowed with enlightened training and education, but on the other he finds innate inability to identify with both the educated and the ordinary members of the community. He experiences a natural sense of attraction to the lived actuality of the people in his native country but is thwarted by the difficulty of establishing continuity between these two worlds. Such dilemmas confront many of the protagonists in Williams’s fiction.

Menvandir, to a great extent, corresponds to the university education and academic research that are called into question by Peter in *SG*, as well as by Glyn in *PBM* and Matthew in *BC*. When Matthew goes to see Eira and John in Gwenton, an interesting conversation between the three of them:

‘This is a nice place, Gwenton,’ John said. ‘The sort of place I could grow old in. Not that I’m not old, already. Anyhow a bit sweeter than Llanelly.’  
‘Yes,’ Matthew said. ‘I feel it, being away.’  
‘It’s your own choice,’ Eira said.  
‘It’s my work.’  
‘I saw Morgan at lunchtime,’ John said. ‘He was telling me about your work.’  
‘He’s studying Wales,’ Eira said, ‘and he goes to London to do it.’  
‘It’s not just Wales, girl, like looking at mountains. It’s where the records are, is it? London?’  
‘Yes, most of them.’  
‘Anyhow, keep on with it, Will. From what I heard, it needs doing.’  
‘Yes, it needs doing. Only it’s getting too big.’  
‘Don’t worry about that, mun.’  
‘If I can,’ Matthew said and let the silence edge back. He disliked talking about his work. When a discussion started he always wanted to get out. He saw John, now, observing him carefully. The pale, narrow face was deeply questioning and intent. (Williams, *BC* 337-8)

Eira’s sullenness and remonstrance concerning Matthew’s studying Wales in London is obvious; Matthew admits his nostalgia for the sweetness of this home country, and his emotions are ruffled not simply by Eira’s ironic remarks, but also by the usual discomfort he experiences when talking about his work. On the one hand, he

concedes to John that the records of his research on Wales are kept in London, yet the response—“most of them”—implies the incompleteness of the records; on the other hand, when reaffirming the necessity of his study, he points out the imposing amount of work involved in this enterprise. The apparent paradox suggested by the twin ideas of incompleteness and excess causes Matthew to feel a sense of bewilderment, which is why he dislikes and avoids discussion about his work, and what prompts John into putting the question to him. What frustrates Matthew in his work and what he sees as “getting too big” is the endless stacks of files and records, all of the objective data and facts, which “one had to read because others had written them” (151). However, what really strikes him as absent from his study are the real emotions and the strong feelings, the subjective impressions, to be elicited from the actual lived experiences of the (e)migrant people in Wales.

Williams expressed serious misgivings about the kind of education received in the university that reduces people and natural lives to objects of record and concern. Instead, what he esteems and values is “the substance of a developed intelligence” dissolving in “the actual lives of a continuing majority of our people” (Williams, *English Novel* 96). The professional research initiatives of different disciplines have been far removed from the subjects of their primary inquiries. As a result social science academics risk becoming little more than clerks, mechanically keeping files and printing data, of no substantial value to the actual people who are supposedly the focus of their concern in the first place. Peter has long felt this sense of detachment of his work and the overwhelming nature of the data he has been working on for both his doctoral education, and comes to realize that:

mostly, one had to read because others had written: a long compulsive activity which in the end was a deformation, though sometimes valuable. ... academic man...was mostly clerical work, in the strictest sense: shifting words from manuscript to print, from print to manuscript, from manuscript

back to print again, almost regardless of their value. And there were endless keepers of the files and records: a priestly caste with its own decisive rules, and with jobs to offer. Intelligence, here, was neither being nor doing. It was mostly a long, careful keeping of records, in the quiet rooms with the chaos of the city around them. (Williams, *SG* 151)

Here, the academic men, “the keepers of the files and records”, no longer care for the real value of their study, but become “a priestly caste” “with jobs to offer”, who correspond strikingly to the measurers in Menvandir that set out to measure for men, but end up deceiving men as a way to provide for themselves. “The quiet rooms” are contrasted with “the chaos of the city around them”, just like in Menvandir the Dalen still commands “a new house, a new bank, to be built” (Williams, *PBM-1* 179) and pork and flour to be brought in spite of the grain blight in the bad years. Thus in *BC*, Matthew also admits to Morgan, “I’m quite protected from ambition. Protected, really, by a different pride. I sit absorbed in these patterns, that are a substitute for my world and I know it. But at least they stop me crawling about in the world, looking for dead men’s shoes” (Williams, *BC* 354). The well-provided academic life in “the quiet rooms” and “the protected patterns”, as Peter comes to realize, relies on the “lie” of the university education—“the center of intelligence and of free inquiry” (Williams, *SG* 214)—the very idea of which “had broken down at the only point where it mattered” (214), and “the deliberate unreality, worked at so hard, so desperately, to cover our actual condition...in the artificial light” (214). The “deformation”, “patterns”, “unreality” and “the artificial light” all point to the divorce from lived reality and to the abstracted and detached university education. This professional training is ironically predicated upon the non-academic but passionate work of knowledgeable local “amateurs” and the lives of the people who actually live through the place and its history.

In *PBM-1*, Glyn’s grandfather Elis has built a large relief model by “contours



in sliced layers of polystyrene” and “a tall glass cabinet, filled with specimens of the different-coloured sandstones and with his various finds: rows of flint arrowheads, a roughly finished stone axe, an incised bone, a blackened coin, broken shards of pots” (7). This openly embarrasses Glyn’s stepfather Edwin Sayce, a politician, who takes Elis’s “enthusiasms as obsessions, his excited talk for garrulity, his intense local interests for simple nostalgia, another name for backwardness” (9). However, the scale of balance is immediately reversed when the professional work is called into question, not merely because of its inclination for unreliable and erroneous information but also owing to its aloofness and detachment from the actual living realities:

Amateur and professional! But it could never be reduced to that. In that many details professional scrutiny mattered: textual, comparative, theoretical. Certain books which Elis had valued turned out to be unreliable; others were wholly misleading....Pushing away, often coldly the enthusiasm of the amateur, they [professional disciplines] would reduce what they were studying to an internal procedure; in the worst cases to material for an enclosed career. If lives and places were being seriously sought, a powerful attachment to lives and to places was entirely demanded. The polystyrene model and its textual and theoretical equivalents remained different from the substance which they reconstructed and simulated. Only the breath of the place, its wind and its mouths, stirred the models into life. (10)

It is “a living memory” that matters, where “touch and breath replaced record and analysis: not history as narrative but stories as lives” (12). Williams is bemoaning, as Peter does, “the idea of learning” that shuts itself “off from the any actual human need” and “has dwindled to an end in itself” (Williams, *SG* 137), and is lamenting the fact that scholarship boys like himself and Matthew are “trained to detachment” by the “consistently abstracting and generalizing” (Williams, *BC* 99) language. What he tries to promote is to go back to and get genuine access to the people not as strangers, figures, types or objects, but as the real subjects, as families, neighbors and comrades, living through actual difficulties in the changing society, which Matthew

gradually begins to appreciate as “finding the continuity in the stress of learned feelings” (Williams, *English Novel* 83).

In *BC*, Matthew, trained to detachment in London, comes back to Glynmawr to find he has lost connection with the local social relationships that seem to him more like a web in the frustration of human relationships than a network involving a necessary interdependence within an essentially knowable community. He refuses to “be dragged back into all that” (340), yet secretly all the familiar feelings keep coming back to him, feelings that he was not even conscious of. When Harry’s mother is hospitalized, Harry makes the decision to operate, then he remembers that “we [Harry, his brothers and his Dad] went and walked in the market” (237). And these words come back to Matthew with “a sudden extraordinary force” (391) when he leaves his parents for the work in London after three days’ stay for Harry’s heart attack; and then on the train to Newport he comes across an elderly woman who immediately starts talking about her daily ordinary life and gets off the train with “little ceremony as she had begun talking” (392). There is a marked contrast here with the partitioned cupboards between people which are meant “to be opened, with proper ceremony, with a proper attendant” (331-2) in England. Matthew feels that “not only the barriers, but the categories, were down” (392) and for that matter “it was no longer a crowd that he saw, but the hurrying, actual people. ...It was as if, for the first time, he was able to know them as himself... He was feeling the recovery of a childhood which at the moment of recovery was a child’s experience no more, a living connection between memory and substance” (394). At this moment the words—“we went and walked in the market”—come back to him as the life pattern as a whole. With Harry’s mother almost dying, he and his father and his brothers still get to maintain the continuity of life as they go and walk in the market; however, for

Matthew, with his father Harry affected by the heart attack and his own family's very different life-style in London, there is no similar experience to compare with "we went and walked in the market". If Harry's mother dies then, life still goes on and continues in the usual, ordinary pattern, while with the death of Matthew's father Harry the continuity is at once lost and reclaimed: it is lost in the sense that the physical connection between father and son is gone and "Glynmawr, now, had gone back to a memory and an image" (430); it is reclaimed in the sense that he resumes the feelings and realities of the past and feels the recovery of his childhood; thus, by living and growing through them he ends the feeling of exile in "a living connection between memory and substance" (394). That is the continuity Matthew manages to experience by "measuring the distance" (436) between a customary life and an educated one.

What Dal Mered, Matthew Price and Peter Owen encounter in their life and is felt most keenly by them is the experience of dislocation and for that matter disconnection. This is a consistent and insistent focus of Williams's novels, attempting to build continuities and fulfilling the author's commitment to voicing the social, economic and political transformations in terms of personal experiences. As the author himself recognized, "I was not able to write my novel Border Country until I was sufficiently conscious, both of myself and of the shaping history, to be able to go beyond it into a work which was a record of neither but rather a creation, a valuing creation, of both"<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> From an unpublished article "Commitment", stored in Raymond Williams archive in Swansea University under the catalogue: WWE/2/1/7/1/49 Miscellaneous.

## IV. Nationality and Locality

### 1. Nationality and locality

Williams seems to have been in many ways quite averse to the concept of nation, and is far more inclined toward the notion of a culturally defined ‘community’ than a politically defined ‘nation-state’, as Daniel Williams has pointed out in the introduction to his edited book *Who Speaks for Wales*. This concept invented on the national level seems to be highly problematic for Williams: for one thing, it is an invented and abstracted artifice to be imposed upon the subordinated people by a ruling class, and, as he asserts, “the building of states, at whatever level, is intrinsically a ruling-class operation” (Williams, *Toward 2000* 181); for another, it evades the native, immediate and real bonding of the people, and alienates the lived, worked and placeable social identities of inhabitants. These attitudes originate to a great extent from his childhood experiences in the border country and the influences derived from a solidly socialist Labour Party father. This direct lived experience, attributed to his socialist thinking and his critical mind, is highlighted in a variety of his writings. In both his critical writings and his novels he proposes that socialism, based on real social relationships, be struggled for as opposed to an arrogant nationalism and patriotism that overrides the common interests of a country’s people. The latter idea is embodied and played out in his fiction implicitly—rather than explicitly as in his criticism—and Williams even jumps out of the objective narrative, and involves himself in the discussion directly addressing the reader in *PBM-1* and *PBM-2*. Williams refutes the established system that naturalizes and is naturalized by the structures and relations of power, calling the relations of production into serious question.

In his fiction, Williams’s absolute refusal of overriding national and

international bodies has always been carefully embedded and reflected in the attitudes of his creations. In the episode of “The Monk’s History” in *PBM-2* that takes place in the year 1265 AD, the only two sons of the former monk, Conan, decide to join the army and fight for their lord. Conan takes them to the encampment and shows them around in an attempt to dissuade them from going into battle. He goes to the lord Roger Picard’s tent, and they have an argument:

“The Welsh fight for their own lands, yet Llewelyn and his princes are as fierce in their own privileges as any Englishman or Frenchman, offering the rest of us, mixed as we are, an idea of a new state.”

“A new justice, my Lord. Yet it is still a war of the barons. It is not a war for these barefoot boys.”

“They owe service, Conan. To their own due lords.”

“It is on that we differ, my Lord. To their own land they owe service. But not to the quarrels of others.”(Williams, *PBM-2* 254)

In this conversation, Conan refuses the idea of a state, claiming it as a camouflage by the barons who use the people to fight for their own interests. The barons as the ruling class never pay any regard to the real needs of the people living on their land. Instead they oblige the people to obey the law and bow to them as subjects by warring and conquering, eliding their distinct identities, and constructing a unitary identity within an abstract concept of the nation-state. For Conan, it is the land with its long unfinished history and its unique culture as well as the diversity and totality the people’s lived experience that the people should acknowledge, not the “willed and selected superstructure” (Williams, *Toward 2000* 191) without a whole lived order. Similar viewpoints have been argued a thousand years before, when an old slave named Karan righteously insists that the truth of his people and the sweetness of the place provide a natural law as opposed to laws imposed by the prevailing imperial order.

In the last novel of the Welsh trilogy, Williams specifically explores the tension between the predominant capitalist system and the local depopulated community.

The story is set principally in a small fictitious Welsh village named Manod, to where Matthew and Peter, the two protagonists from the previous novels in the trilogy, are sent to investigate the feasibility of the government's project for redeveloping Manod into a city. Matthew and his wife Susan come to live in Manod, and have immediate contact with the local residents. This experience, together with that of his early life in a similar Welsh village, prompts Matthew to fight for Manod in the interests of the actual generations of people who have been living there, who have made Manod into a living place rather than, a mere concept or a project. The implication of the Minister's complicity with a string of companies from Belgium to London, all the way down to local businessman John Dance's Development Agency, gives a vivid indication of the crony capitalism that Williams finds unacceptable within the real-life Thatcher government, the unitary British state, that promotes the goals of radical neo-liberal capitalism:

The companies. And then the distance, the everyday obviousness of the distance, between that lane in Manod, all the immediate problems of Gwen and Ivor and Trevor and Gethin and the others: the distance from them to this register of companies, but at the same time the relations are so solid, so registered. The transactions reach right down to them. Not just as a force from outside but as a force they've engaged with, are now part of. Yet still a force that cares nothing about them, that's just driving its own way.  
(Williams, *FM* 153)

Here Matthew deplores the brutally efficient capitalist system infiltrating its way into the everyday life of rural people, and leaving them no choice but to be engulfed by the system despite the general feeling in Manod as well as in Wales in general that ordinary local people are excluded from this rapacious globalization. Gethin and Ivor, though given a certain amount of shares in the newly founded company, are at a great disadvantage not only because the majority of the shares are controlled by John Dance, but also because, as farmers living in Manod, there is no connection between their lives and the manipulative operations of the corporate international capital.

Hence, in his article “The Culture of Nations”, Williams denounces the artificialities of nationality and of functional, flag-waving patriotism, favoring instead the rooted settlement and identifiable relationships in the actual and immediate groupings that have been living and making their lives in a particular place. In the author’s view the development of local infrastructure should be determined by the will of its inhabitants. Williams affirms his belief in the necessity and capability of self-governing societies that allow people to negotiate and decide local matters by themselves with their own interests at the center of their planning. For example, he lends his voice to Matthew in *FM* when Matthew insists that “Manod is not an empty space for other people’s solutions. Now the people must decide” (192).

In *SG*, Kate desperately inveighs against the intangible yet ubiquitous ruling class that overrides the will of the actual people and reduces them to simple figures in the labour market:

Where are they...while the rest of us are here? Where are they, the people who make these decisions and announce them as if they weren’t about human beings at all, but just percentage reductions in the labour force where are they, that they don’t feel what it’s like, here with us? (189)

Where are they? They are nowhere, yet they are everywhere. They are nowhere because one cannot identify any actual person or a group of people that directly makes top-down decisions irrespective of the interests of the actual communities and the real people. On the other hand, they are everywhere in that the system created by them overrides the direct and bonded relationships with a center of power and an invented unitary identity; as Kate discerns “they’ve taught us too thoroughly, in their own ways. Even the thinking that’s supposed to be against them is for them, on that” (190). The nation with the sense of people sharing a native land is overtopped by the nation-state with a predominant stress on political organization that becomes a vehicle for enforcement of unitary identity throughout the state. The resistance of

these imposed identities and the reassertion of the direct and responsible relationships are assumed by “community”, “the cultural sphere which is potentially the location of radical ambiguities and resistance” (Williams, *Who Wales* xxxiv). In *SG*, we sense with Kate the strength of a relocated community that “here are people marching for a principle, that they’ll see the available work, that they’d rather go short themselves than see others with nothing” (197) and “the real power, don’t you see, when you’re bound up with others, involved with them”(197).

## **2. Race and Class**

Williams has been criticized for his neglect of racial problems in Britain, among which criticisms Gilroy’s is most virulent, rejecting his approach as a new kind of racism. As we have observed, Williams cherishes the real lived experiences as the basis of actual and formed identities, claiming that, “always through long experience substantially, an effective awareness of social identity depends on actual and sustained social relationships” (Nonini 165). Therefore, from this Gilroy seems to draw the conclusion that Williams denies proper citizenship and genuine lived identities to the new immigrants since they have not formed substantial experience of living in the British Isles. Donald M. Nonini, though viewing Gilroy’s criticism of Williams as unfair and declaring Williams as a radical public intellectual who dedicates all his efforts to socialism and emancipation of humanity in all its dimensions, deplores that

Raymond Williams, the poor Welsh country boy, was perhaps not quite white and not quite British—at least not quite enough of either—and his peculiar resentment and intellectual shortsightedness with respect to the place of nonwhites within Thatcherist racial politics may have had everything to do with his ambivalent striving to become both sufficiently white and sufficiently British within the confines of elite British academic life. (162)

Indeed, in Williams’s fiction as well as in his critical writings, there is a certain



silence and neglect concerning the new immigrants; yet, he, as a Welshman, is keenly conscious of the racial problems within Britain, especially the Celtic people, just as Gilroy, as a black person, is very much concerned about the status of the black people in Britain. For Williams, Wales has been subjected to English power and later British imperialism in pretty much the same way as colonized states; for that matter, Williams's dedication to establishing a democratized society and his aversion to the supremacy of one over another (whether it be as specific as a person, or as general as a nation) are self-evident and without doubt. Hence, Gilroy's pointed critique of Williams's work as compliant with the new racism, thereby normalizing an unjust treatment of the new immigrants to Britain, is not well grounded and thus quite partial. Contrary to Gilroy's assessment, Williams fights for the democratic power for his Welsh people on the same basis that Gilroy justifies the legitimacy and authenticity of the citizenship of the black people in Britain.

Like many contemporary critics of post-structuralism, Williams sees both race and class as deliberate constructs related to political domination just like the concept of nation-state; for that matter, the modern definitions of race and class are complicit with the construction and naturalization of nationalism. As he points out in *Keywords* that, "nationalism has been a political movement in subjected countries which includes several 'races' and languages...where the distinction is a specific language or religion or supposed racial origin" (214). Race, a scientifically defined concept of objective physical traits of divisions of people, in its modern sense involves itself quite influentially with eugenics in which "ideas of both *class* and **racial** superiority were widely propagated" and "this doctrine of inherent **racial** superiority interacted with ideas of political domination and especially IMPERIALISM" (Williams, *Keywords* 249). Therefore, race is not something alien to Williams's critical theories.

As the notion of race is invented and employed to justify the superiority of certain grouping of people, a similar and overlapping notion—class—develops into its modern sense with the Industrial Revolution and diverges its meaning from such notions as rank, estate or order whose position are determined by birth; class is basically defined by economic relationships, which allows more social mobility as a result of industrialization and acquires increasing consciousness of social position as made rather than inherited. As a Marxist, Williams tends to view class more as a social and political formation than a simple dividing category, and, he argues that “insofar as there is merely a local interconnection among these small-holding peasants, and the identity of their interests begets no community, no national bond and no political organization among them, they do not form a class” (Williams, *Keywords* 68).

For Williams both race and class, as markers of physical, cultural and socio-economic differences, are artificially generalized and cruelly biased, and “the prejudice and cruelty that then often follow, or that are rationalized by the confusions, are not only evil in themselves; they have also profoundly complicated, and in certain areas placed under threat, the necessary language of the recognition of human diversity and its actual communities” (Williams, *Keywords* 250). Hence, both constructs are problematic and give rise to malicious generalizations in the attempt to assert political domination over subordinated regions and to undermine the diverse communities and groupings of people. This critical stance is also adopted in many of his novels with the most salient examples observed in *PBM-1*, *PBM-2* and *LY*.

In *PBM-1*, the native people in the Black Mountains encounter new people of different races as time goes by, and abide by the law of the Mountains of helping each other until the Vikings come with their swords plundering and destroying,

indiscriminately stabbing men and animals which is “beyond the ways and laws of men” (267) in the mountains. Following these transformative incidents, the laws of mutual help changes into the law of might and force of arms under the rule of lords, and then into the law of empire. The law of empire is first imposed by force and then by imperial discourses, among which race is most crucial. In the later stories of *PBM-1* and *PBM-2*, we see the native people subjected to the different military and political powers and subjugated as slaves with their British identities defined and categorized by the Romans and later by the Normans. The stories of the subjugated Celtic people were lost in the process and replaced by the reconstruction of legend and history according to the dominant Romans and Normans. *PBM* is Williams’s ambitious project of retrieving the stories shared and experienced by these silenced people and restoring a voice to these people belonging to what became an “inferior race”. For example, in the episode of “Gwyndir and Gwenliana”, Gwenliana is a British girl waiting for a Roman soldier named Lucius to retire from the army and to obtain Roman citizenship for her through marriage, while Gwyndir is a British slave boy who is secretly attracted to Gwenliana. At the time, the Britons are enslaved, whereas being Roman or becoming a Roman citizen confers honor and social superiority. Thus, Gwenliana’s father Cadalus is “a great admirer of all Roman ways” (Williams, *PBM-2* 22). This embedded racial discrimination has been established with military force and dominant political discourse, which is vividly exemplified in the following conversation between Cadalus and Gwyndir:

“Fair play is a word of the barbarian, Gwyndir. The better Roman word is law.”

“And the word for law is sword,” Gwyndir said, looking hard into his eyes.  
(23)

Cadalus has internalized the Roman version of his people’s identity, calling the native people of his own race barbarians and taking the Roman law as superior to the

indigenous custom of “fair play”; in contrast, Gwyndir sharply calls the Roman law into question, and denounces it as the mere outcome of military violence. The story assumes an ironic turn when the news reaches them that the Romans are defeated: Gwenliana is faced with two choices, whether to retreat with the Roman citizens to an occupied city or to flee with Gwyndir to the mountains, and considering the uncertainties of her pending Roman citizenship she chooses the latter. Gwenliana’s identity is problematic and epitomized in her double names as she is affectionately called “Liana” by Lucius while “Gwen” by Gwyndir, and this is where ideologies of race and class collide with one other. The native people are assumed to be the inferior race under the Roman political hegemony, and intermarriage seems to present an opportunity to escape from the destiny of a life of enslavement. However, with the defeat of the Romans, Roman citizenship suddenly no longer means comforts and honor, and therefore the escape of Gwyndir and Gwenliana back to the mountains at the story’s end affirms Williams’s recurrent theme of the lived life of a people on their native land.

*LY* likewise is a novel that focuses on the issue of identity: the central figure Gwyn is the illegitimate son of Norman Braose from the English ambassadorial class by Nesta Pritchard, a woman from the Welsh working class. Later, Gwyn is legally adopted by Nesta’s husband Bert Lewis, who is also of Welsh working class background. The contrast and tension between Norman and Bert, between England and Wales, between the upper-middle class and the working class is the central theme of the whole novel; Gwyn’s search for his real identity is also a search for the meanings of race and class. Norman’s tall figure, white skin and light-colored hair immediately distinguish him in race from Bert who is red skinned with black hair, and the antithesis is sharply underlined in Nesta’s paintings of the two:

“It was a two-colour portrait of Norman, his head and shoulders with the face half-turned forward. The likeness was startling although the colours were strange. The ground of face and hair was bright yellow, with small marks of light blue for features. All around the head was blue, with lines of yellow down into the shoulders, and some other yellow marks in the top left-hand corner. Emma stared at these marks and saw the shape of a tree: a broken pine.

“Well?” Nest asked.

“It’s terrific, Birdie. Absolutely marvelous.” (75)

Nesta shows to Emma her painting of Norman two months before the birth of Gwyn, and Nesta insists that it is “the colours” that most resemble Norman in the painting.

Hence, instead of bright yellow and blue, in the painting of Bert’s deformed face,

Nesta uses grey and silver, crimson and purple, all dark and lifeless colors:

“It was immediately Bert: the face was never in doubt. The oils were streaked and jobbed to the domination of the damaged eye: hard pitted lines of grey and silver and purple pulling down the staring dark socket. The whole face, under the cropped hair, was distorted around these lines which pulled from the dark hollow. Angry streaks of crimson and purple pulled beyond the hard shoulder.

...It was terrible beyond any likeness, as if the already damaged face was still being broken and pulled apart.

...

“..that pretty fantasy beside it...”

...

“I’m saying that in its way this is intensely beautiful. It is a kind of—”

...

Nesta screamed suddenly....She pushed him hard away. ....Nesta screamed again.

....

“It is not beautiful!” she screamed, in a terrible high voice.

...

“It is not beautiful!” she cried again. “It’s ugly. It’s destroying! It’s human flesh broken and pulped.” (346-8)

Bert’s painting is appallingly horrific, and Gwyn himself is startled by it at first, but he manages to conceal his real feelings and tries to comfort his mother by pointing to its artistic beauty and “pretty fantasy”, which unexpectedly drives Nesta into fury and hysteria. The marvelous and beautiful painting of Norman with its startling likeness and the terrible and ugly painting of Bert “beyond any likeness”

fundamentally point to the inherent tension between the two classes. Norman, as a

member of the communist party in his early days, works very closely with the working class people in Wales; he, with other intellectuals, brings to them the language of class and the ideal of socialism, just as Gwyn observes that “the Braoses were often quicker than his own people to talk the hard general language of class. Where Bert or Dic would say ‘our people’ or ‘our community, the Braoses would say, with a broader lucidity, ‘the organized working class’, even still ‘the proletariat’ and ‘the masses’” (293). Gwyn confronts Norman in the final chapter, accusing Norman of bringing “an alien variation” (358) of socialism, “a foreign state and social order” (358), “a distant and arbitrary and alien power” (359), which has damaged the substance of Welsh people, because it distances itself from the actual society and the real people in shared existence. In the end, the upper-middle class intellectuals can retreat intact to their own comfortable life, while leaving the people to bear the cost and the scars; and this is probably why Nesta paints Norman with beautiful brightness, while she depicts Bert with an irretrievably deformed ugliness, the ugliness resulting not only from fighting in the war, but also from the failure of the socialism that the working class people of Wales have been converted to.

Donald Nonini expresses an undoubted truth in criticizing Williams’s “fatal blindness to race, indexed in his use of the axial term experience” (173). Indeed, for Williams, the discourses of race and class are the hegemonic language of the ruling class, and his inverted emphasis on the lived experiences of the community challenges the validity of the dominant discourse, for he opposes unitary official identity: “Welsh Wales and English Wales. Wales and Cymru. To anyone looking for an official status it was a nightmare. To anyone trying to think about communities and societies a blessing: a native gift”<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Raymond Williams, “The Shadow of the Dragon”, p.67.

After all, what Williams ultimately insists on is that there is no “Big Difference” after all between different races and classes. In an unpublished short story “The Big Difference”, Williams describes two girls Akinna and Riksti who live on a tiny planet called Smalliwi. One day they visit Earth and find that everything is 100 times bigger than it is on Smalliwi, and they meet two girls there named Annika and Kirsti who are not able to see them because of their tininess. But Akinna asserts that “We’re real and we’re here” and Riksti confides to her father that “It’s a big difference” yet “in another way it is not. Not when you really come to think of it”<sup>9</sup>.

All in all, having fully discussed the Welshness of Williams, it can be easily detected how his theoretical ideas are closely related to his fictions. In academic circles there is a conventional tendency to read the fictional works of a cultural critic like Williams through the theory as the point of departure, i.e. using the formulated theories in the critical works to validate the creative writings. However, it is quite feasible that the theories emerged through the novel praxis in the critical works, so Williams’s novels are crucial to understand how his theory came to be formed. In exploring the Welshness of Williams, we find that the material process of the culture are consciously emphasized: for example, the railways, the motor plants and the telecommunication technology in *BC*, *SG* and *FM*, have a profound effect on the life and culture of the local people, even to the extent of defining how they earn their living. This keen observation of lived experience is developed into Williams’s cultural materialism, while the structure of feeling is meanwhile formed to depict the real customary lived process of the ordinary people’s lives, which is in a constant state of formation in relation to the process of material production. The emergent culture bred both in the natal communities faced with industrial technologies and in

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<sup>9</sup> From the Richard Burton Archive: WWE/2/1/2/3 The Big Difference

relocated communities, becomes incorporated into the new structure of feeling, as opposed to the urban Capitalist industrialism, which Williams sees as a genuine foundation for democracy and socialism. Again, socialism and the ecology movement both can find reciprocity in Williams's novels, especially in his idea of livelihood, with the local people deciding how to develop their land in their own interests, which ideally would lead to a harmonious relationship between humans and nature, for example, the fictional character Elis in *PBM* is the epitome of someone whose livelihood is conducted in harmony with the natural environment, and the people in *FM*, if endowed with the opportunity to develop their own village, would probably be more protective of the environment, at least from Matthew's perspective.



## Chapter Three

### Sexuality and Gendering in Raymond Williams's Fiction

We have seen Williams's preoccupation with themes like Wales, locality and the dislocated identity in the previous chapter, yet a closer reading of Williams's fiction reveals another recurrent engagement, with the theme of sexuality and gendering. There are several recurrent themes in these novels: the illegitimacy and the problematic fatherhood, the densely coded sex, the crippled males and the cryptically powerful women. Referring to his critical writing, Williams in *Toward 2000* attacks the patriarchal discourse on the grounds of "not only [neglecting] the internally subordinate position of employed women, but the radically different and more general subordination of women (including above all the 'non-employed') within wider social relations" (170). Yet, Williams's novels, published earlier, reveal a quite different stance towards women's situation within their social relations. Hence, this chapter sets out to examine the gendering problems in Williams's fiction, and to analyze how these problems relate to his own personal experiences, the wider social context and, on a more symbolic level, the subordinated state of Wales to the broader British imperial power in the context of English hegemony.

#### I. "The hidden, hiding father" (*LY* 355)—The Problematic Fatherhood

All through Williams's novels, there is a surprisingly recurrent theme of illegitimacy, the problematic identity of the son/daughter, and the ambiguous relationship between son/daughter and father/stepfather. Beth in *SG*, Gwyn in *LY*, Gan, Tami, Hilda and Olen in *PBM* are all illegitimate children as a result of premarital pregnancy.

In *SG*, Beth's mother Myra has a romance with a neighboring boy named Jack, who gets her pregnant before marriage; then, within a year after a prompted marriage Jack is killed in a motorbike accident, and Peter's uncle, Gwyn, later marries Myra, and becomes the stepfather of Beth. Because of the scandal of premarital sex and subsequent pregnancy, Myra becomes overly protective of and strict with Beth, preventing every possibility of her engaging in premarital intercourse with Peter.

In *LY*, a romance fails to end up in marriage. Norman Braose, a young middle-class intellectual from London, seduces a Welsh working-class girl Nesta, which results in pregnancy. Afterwards, Norman is appointed by the Communist Party to carry out an espionage task and thus sent abroad. Without a proper farewell he leaves Nesta and never comes back into her life again for the rest of his life. It is Emma, Norman's sister, who arranges a suitable venue for Nesta's delivery of the illegitimate son Gwyn. In despair, Nesta later marries Bert Lewis, a neighboring friend of her brother, who legally adopts Gwyn.

In *PBM*, more cases of illegitimacy are evident, ranging from the Stone Age settings to the later warring days in the Black Mountains. In the episode of "The summer lake and the new blood", which takes place among a small tribe, Gan is a son of Rano, "the dark-skinned quiet woman who had been exchanged", by "a people hunting north whom they had never met again" (42). And, Gan, half-blood to the tribe, retains a good relationship with his stepfather Sarn. Similarly, in the story "Tami in Telim and Grain Valley", Tami is born by Calina who lives on her own off her native community Telim, gives birth to Tami. Since Calina sleeps with any man (even from other tribes) who finds his way to her hut, there is no way to tell who the father of Tami is. When Tami grows up to be impressively strong, Nemat, the most respected man of Telim, gradually gets close to him, cares for him and takes him in

to their settlement after Calina dies. Hilda in the tale of “The Gift of Acha” is the daughter of the Saxon woman Acha who is sold to the British (Welsh) tribes as a slave while still pregnant with the baby of her English husband. Hilda is born among the British and inclined to identify herself with the British, yet Acha never ceases to teach her their own language—English, and inculcates Hilda with the idea of a different life in freedom. One day Acha accidentally saves the life of an English soldier named Hicel and makes him promise to escort Hilda back to England and legalize her citizenship as a free person. Despite her great reluctance to leave the familiar land and the known community life, Hilda follows Hicel to a land native to her parents yet foreign to herself and lives the rest of her life in freedom.

Among all the cases represented in the stories of *PBM*, the most curious one is probably that of Olen in the episode of “Widows of the Welshry”. Olen is the product of a rape crime committed against Nest by a soldier named Henry Bailey; consequently, Nest never treats Olen as her son but as a crime, a shame and a replicate of the criminal, and would not hesitate to desert him but for the protection of Idris who marries Nest after the birth of Olen. Hence, for Olen, Idris is “that real father, that man better than a father” (Williams, *PBM-2* 273), but with Idris’s death in a lethal accident Olen is immediately denied any kinship of the family and sent away by Nest. In the same story, Ieuan, who died in the same accident, has a pregnant wife who is about to go into labor, and his death again results in one more case of the absence of the biological father.

As a supplement to the above examples, Glyn, the linking protagonist of all the stories in *PBM* also loses his father when he is still small, owing to the divorce of his parents and his father’s later death in an air crash. Moreover, Lewis Redfern in *VT* is raised up by a widowed mother whose husband is killed as a soldier in Kenya in the

service of the Imperial Britain; and interestingly, Mark Evans and John Davies are half-brothers, who are devoted to the same volunteers cause, with the implication of the loss of the father. Again, in *LY*, Jon Merrit, the son of Gwyn's half-sister, also experiences the loss of the company of his birth father since boyhood following the divorce of his parents.

With so many cases of illegitimacy of a child and the absence of the natural father, it can be inferred that the ambiguity of fatherhood has not only become a personal complex for Williams, but also has served as a trope for the delivery of his ideas about the individual and society, Welshness and nationalism. The multi-layered connotations of this motif may well be analyzed according to the following aspects: Williams's personal experience, the historical actualities, the individual psychology in social relationships, and lastly the national discrepancy between England and Wales.

It is revealed in Dai Smith's biographical study *Raymond Williams: A Warrior's Tale* that Williams's own mother Gwendoline Bird, before she married Harry Williams, was seduced by a married groom and later in 1908 became the mother of an illegitimate son, Herbert, who was "presented to the world as her younger brother and registered as the son of James Bird" without any "formal acknowledgement of the child by the father" (18). Then in 1927, after the death of Williams's grandfather, Herbert moved to Pandy, and shared a bed with Williams who was actually his half-brother. The half-brothers were on good terms with each other for their whole life without any explicit discussion about their blood relationship; for that matter, though Herbert remained a countryman, Williams "would seek [him] out for long fireside chats whenever he returned home" (50). Yet, the plentiful cases we have marked in his novels gives evidence to Dai Smith's keen observation of Williams's

“knowledge of and, perhaps, obsession with the facts” (50). The absence of the natural father owing to either untimely death (as in the cases of Beth and Lewis) or no official or communal acknowledgement (as in the cases of Gwyn, Tami, Olen and Hilda) and the presence of a surrogate father are motifs explored to reflect on the dubious situation faced by Herbert; furthermore, the intimate affinity between Williams himself and Herbert is also revealed in his depiction of the harmonious relationship between the half-brothers Mark Evans and John Davies in *VT* and half brother and sister Gwyn Bert and Alex Braose in *LY*. In most of these cases, Williams attributes fault invariably to the biological father and represents the mother figure as deserted or exploited, which testifies to his unconscious intent to defend his own mother Gwendoline’s moral integrity and his reluctance to recognize her coquettish nature in her early years as Dai Smith observes (*A Warrior’s Tale* 51).

The premarital pregnancy and the illegitimacy of children so recurrent in Williams’s fiction also reflect the historical reality in the working-class communities in Britain. According to one of the surveys discussed in Jane Lewis’s book on British women since 1945, the amazing rise of illegitimacy began in the 1960s and has increased rapidly again from the late 1970s; and another fact is revealed that the “sexual and marital behavior changed with a dramatic increase not only in the number of divorces and abortions, but also in illegitimacy” (5). This may very much be owing to a lack of rudimentary knowledge from parents and proper sex education in school, and thus the working-class young people tended to be ignorant and ill informed, rather than sophisticated and worldly about sexual matters. Though the after-war period witnessed a substantial wave of feminism across Europe and the US and the transformation of the traditional passive role of women in the middle and upper class, the less educated working-class people in Britain were slow in receiving

those radical ideas and thus also gradual in changing their mores and behavior. This is not only because of the comparatively lower level of education they received, but also as a result of parental interference in a young adult's sex life which is also mirrored in the case of Myra who strictly prevents Beth from having premarital sex with Peter. There seemed to be still a high value placed on a bride's virginity: promiscuous girls would be treated as second-hand goods and thus in danger of being unable to find a suitable husband. Despite all these facts, Klein suggests in his study, "one in eight babies were conceived out of wedlock in the decade 1950-60, with 60 per cent being made legitimate by the subsequent marriage of the parents" (Roberts, *Women Families* 67). The still-prevailing traditional mores and reserved attitudes towards sex have been brought into an apparent discrepancy with the rising figure of premarital pregnancy and illegitimacy either in reality or as featured in Williams's fiction. The dominant culture morality is thus challenged by this new structure of feeling emerging out of feminist ideology and values, with its more radical behaviors and attitudes towards premarital sex and pregnancy. The structure of feeling is thus in a dynamic process of flux and development with the old residual, formerly dominant, culture persevering in opposition to a gradually ascendant alternative cultural consciousness amongst the younger generation. In the context of sexuality discourses the feminist wave represents an emergent cultural value-system that accepts premarital sex. According to Williams's theoretical constructs, this ought to be a typical site of contestation and part of the process of cultural change in which a fresh structure of feeling predominates. However, his fictional representation of it is, as we shall see, more loaded and complex.

This manifest conflict is adeptly negotiated and processed in all these novels through the modality of *realism* which Williams valued as an effective novel form to

achieve in a communicable way the living tensions of everyday living:

the realist tradition in fiction...creates and judges the quality of a whole way of life in terms of the qualities of persons. ...The society is not a background against which the personal relationships are studied, nor are the individuals merely illustrations of aspects of the way of life. Every aspect of personal life is radically affected by the quality of the general life yet the general life is seen at its most important in completely personal terms. (Williams, *The Long Revolution* 278)

There was a consistent attempt on the part of Williams in both his creative and his critical writings to deconstruct the binary opposition between the individual and society; yet, it should not be understood that he was endeavoring to conflate the two in order to view them as inseparable and mutually dependent; but rather, he means to posit the personal and the social in a dialectical relation with each constituted by the other in an ongoing process of becoming. Therefore, the social history of the illegitimacy data is personally experienced in Williams's stories and their characters are in turn voicing the changing mores of the time, as he contends through Mr. Dearman's view that "a lapse of individual morality would of course lead to a lapse of social morality"<sup>10</sup>.

Apart from being a personal obsession and a dynamic reflection of social realities, the motif of the natural father's absence also embodies symbolic connotations. In most of the cases listed above, the biological father is invariably of a different kind either in race or in class from the concerned community, while the illegitimate child is raised up by the stepfather who represents the spirits and values of the community. It is noticeable that the child identifies himself/herself more with the stepfather or the society s/he grows up into and rejects the natural father as foreign and culpable: Gwyn declares Bert to be "both actually and legally" (Williams, *LY* 264) his father and criticizes Norman for having deserted his mother and the

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<sup>10</sup> Quotation from the Richard Burton Archive, Swansea University: WWE/2/1/2/23, "Mr. Dearman Goes Home".

working-class people for his own good; Olen in *PBM-2* considers Idris as his real father who has always been protective of him, having experienced only, apathy from his birth mother because of his natural father's crime; Beth in *SG* even grows to resemble Gwyn both in appearance and in personality, as indicated by the description: "Beth and Gwyn stood close. It was strange how alike they were: the same hazel-green eyes and coppery hair, the same frankness of expression, the familiar ease of this house. They might have been physically, and not only from habit, father and daughter" (24), while she is sexually over-protected by her mother Myra owing to her own her birth father's social impropriety; Hilda in *PBM-2* is born and has grown up into the British (Welsh) society as a slave, while the idea of an English freeman father is remote and foreign to her.

In *BC*, Harry is portrayed as a dedicated loving father and man of few words, yet, as Matthew wins the scholarship to Cambridge and afterwards settles down in London as a college teacher, the divisions between father and son becomes clear. Matthew himself despondently remarks that:

a father is more than a person, he's in fact a society, the thing you grow up into. ... We've been moved and grown into a different society. We keep the relationship, but we don't take over the work. We have, you might say, a personal father but no social father. What they offer us, where we go, we reject. (Williams, *BC* 351)

This also accords with Bertrand Russell's view when he "deplores in power of the father, seeing the paternalist state and the caring professions as having usurped the father's authority over his children" (Lewis 20). For Russell, the social father seeks to replace the biological father. In *BC*, this semi-autobiographical novel, Matthew's experience applies to a great extent to Williams himself, the scholarship boy who, in his adolescence, is critical of the local culture. A good example of this is the passage in which Matthew feels discomforted at the Eisteddfod and where Williams



anatomizes the narrowness of the non-conformist community. Yet, as Matthew moves into a different society, to receive education in Cambridge and then to settle for good in the academic and intellectual world, the rejection of the native social father seems to be complete and thorough, as Morgan Rosser points out that Matthew is “getting more like them” (Williams, *BC* 352) and Matthew himself feels pressured and uneasy when coming back to his native village. Matthew has already accommodated to a wholly different society, one in which he finds another social father with whom he feels at ease with. The discrepancy and non-conformity between a personal father and a social father is represented as the division between the biological father and the stepfather in the examples above. The absence of the biological father signifies the primordial identity given by the native community, while the presence of the stepfather or the social father suggests the new culture that a relocated self identifies with.

The stepfather figure, as has been observed, is protective in Olen’s case, faithful in Gwyn’s, loving and affectionate in Beth’s, instructive in Tami’s and Gan’s; the new social father for Matthew plays a similar role, as he feels that

I am quite protected from ambition. Protected, really, by a different pride. I sit absorbed in these patterns, that are a substitute for my world and I know it. But at least they stop me crawling about in the world, looking for dead men’s shoes. (Williams, *BC* 354)

Matthew’s job in the academic world offers him a necessary living, yet “the patterns”, “dead paper” and “solid figures” deny an emotional pattern and a living and ongoing history, for the figures are not supposed to “get up and walk” (353), even if they do, they are “not people but ghosts” and his colleagues do not “deal in ghosts” (353). The urge to delve into the actual living experiences of the people is self-evident in Matthew and the return to his boyhood village Glynmawr gradually but positively draws him back to the whole concrete social relationships of an organic community.

The social father, though protective and caring in its certain way, can be a normalizing system that eliminates other possibilities of living that may exuberate into a full free and creative live experience.

Nonetheless, the break away from a safe protective social father is not so accessible if not for a dying father as in Matthew's case, the death of the stepfather as in Olen's and Gwyn's or the rescue of a man of her ilk as in Hilda's. In Acha's story, despite the harmonious affinity that her daughter finds in the British community with other slave girls, her reluctant return to her birth father's land bestows on her a citizenship as a free woman; Beth in *SG* is perpetually warned against premarital sex by her mother, Myra, as well as being influenced by the reserved and reticent temperaments of her stepfather Gwyn. Nevertheless, Beth follows her natural father's example, and sleeps with Peter before a proper marriage, which proves to be an icebreaking step in their love relationship. In Olen's case, after his bondman stepfather Idris dies, he is amazed to learn that he is of free blood from his father, but has never been told this either by his mother or by Idris. Gwyn admires and sides with Bert and the Welsh working-class people his whole life, and bears a grudge towards Norman, not only for deserting Nesta, but also for breaching the solidarity he once exhibited with the working-class and violating the true ideal of socialism, which is why he only feels right to meet Norman for the first time after Bert's death. As is revealed in the quarrels between father and son, Norman provides Gwyn with a quite distinctive perspective concerning socialism and ecology, the kind of broad vision that could never come from his adopted father Bert.

The problem of fatherhood at once points out the division in a dislocated self between the character's simple, native origin and the developed, sophisticated and normalized social system into which s/he is assimilated. As we note, Williams

registers the individual and society in an interfused, inextricable and constitutive process of becoming, hence the division is rather a starting point of negotiating between the two and in constant adjustment and attempted conciliation a state in which the character has to “live out the tension” (Williams, *Who Wales* 4).

The dichotomy of two fathers, whether it be personal father and social father or biological father and stepfather, may also allude more figuratively to the liminal experience of scholarship boys from the working-class as well as the Welsh people, or indeed, both. Wales has a long complicated ethnic history with different conquerors invading and claiming the land that has been subjected to the various sovereignties of the Roman Empire, the Normans, the Anglo-Normans, and the English state, metamorphosing into the British state. Each of these sovereign powers imposed their own overriding legal system and ideology. The “radically dislocated as well as subordinated people” (Williams, *Who Wales* 22), with their specificities and diversities trampled on by a superimposed and enforced ideology of nation-state, indeed have personal fathers but no social father or mentor, in conformity with their concrete true identities. Likewise, for the scholarship boys (embodied in characters like Matthew, Peter, Gwyn and Glyn) in the early half of the last century who later became intellectuals active in advocating Left-Wing politics as well as the labor movement, they received education in the renowned and traditional English universities and were imbued with an English version of the nation’s history and English classics in literature which served as a surrogate “father” or mentor. So when Williams rejected this imposed and monolithic pseudo identity, and looks for concrete and diverse specificities in lived experiences of Welsh people, he is denounced by the circle of intellectuals in England, including F.R. Leavis and his ilk, as “a prime example of the boy educated at state expense who had turned to bite the

hand that had fed him” (Williams, *What I Come Say* 17). The academic circle representing the upper-middle class treats Williams as typical of the scholarship boys who rise to rebel against the ruling class system and turn their back on their acquired identity to speak for their native community and the underprivileged people among whom they spent their formative years. The incongruence between what Williams receives and what he believed, between his intellectual education and personal lived experiences, is a compelling factor in his exploration into the recurrent theme of double fathers in his fiction.

In conclusion, the illegitimate children in Williams’s fiction are like Hamlet haunted by their biological fathers, a scenario that instigates the tension between and the detachment of the child and the stepfather. The absence of the biological father actually becomes reified as a positive existence, a signifier, which guides the child to step out of the known and normalized milieu so as to gain a double identity and an elevated perspective, in order to negotiate and reconcile the both sides and both of these distinct worlds.

## **II. Coded Description of Sex in his Fiction**

The mid-20<sup>th</sup> century of Britain witnessed the rise of the so-called “permissive society”, featuring the deregulation of adult personal relationships: the Women’s Liberation Movement, the legislative changes (the 1967 Abortion Act and the 1969 Divorce Act), the student movement and the generally modified attitudes of the Church towards sex and marriage, all of which brought a substantial transformation to the notion and construct of family and to feminist consciousness. While the concept of family and attitudes to sex became more and more privatized on the political level, seemingly distancing the personal from the political, Williams in his novels reasserts the complexities and intricacy of the relationships between personal

and political. As a matter of fact, every relationship involved, as he asserts, “this distinction (personal and social) is unreal, that there is a continuity of experience for any real person between the most intense parts of his personal life and his whole social experience”<sup>11</sup>; meanwhile, he highlights the increasing awareness of female sexualities and the dominating role the female plays in the marriage and the family while the male role is portrayed as more dependent, passive and in extreme cases that of a pathetic social being and an impotent sexual defaulter.

There are quite a few clumsy and embarrassing sex scenes and sex allusions in Williams’s novels, especially in *SG*. Sex has never been pure for its own sake, but rather, has invariably been entangled with politics, class, ethics, culture, etc. All through these novels, we may discern that a sense of chasteness is very much more imbued in the working class, while the middle class is oftentimes depicted as promiscuous in sexual relationships to counterpart their political attitudes towards people. Myra and her daughter Beth in *SG*, Nesta in *LY* and Nest in *PBM-2* all reveal how much significance the working class endow to the chasteness and virginity of women.

In *LY*, Nesta, an innocent working class girl, is seduced by a middle class communist party member named Norman, and falls for his persuasive arguments: “It wouldn’t be letting down your family. ... I have enough money, since my father died, and I shall get a college job by next year at the latest. And then you could let me help them, and you could do what you should be doing” (39). Though Nesta says that “it’s too soon” for them, Norman manages to take Nesta’s virginity and get her pregnant before marriage. “Birdie”, as Norman calls Nesta intimately, symbolizes the fruit of their love relationship inseminated by its father and raised in the nest of its mother.

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<sup>11</sup> Quoted from the article “Uniting life with social experience, by Raymond Williams, in the section of “New Books”, “Morning STAR, 17.08.1967.

However, she also signifies the ideas of socialism and the hope of a democratic society that are brought by the middle class radicals and socialists, and are disseminated among the working class; for that matter, “birdie” is, in the first place, the commitment Norman makes to Nesta, not only the improvement in her economic status but also the realization of Nesta’s dream to become an artist. Nesta’s rash behavior certainly violates the value system of the working class; furthermore, Williams appears uncomfortable with the idea of matrimony across the classes that would undoubtedly be a betrayal of his/her class. Hence, Nesta and Norman are meant not to be together, meanwhile Nesta has to pay the price. Nesta is later married to a Welsh working class man named Bert, whom she never really likes, and who later is crippled and disfigured during the war. It seems that the fact that Nesta loses her virginity and for that matter carries a baby fathered by a man from the upper-middle class, is testimony to her un-chastity as a girl and unfaithfulness as a working-class Welsh person; thus, Bert, as a staunch and loyal fighter for the interests of the working class and the Welsh people, has to be that severely crippled and deformed so as to measure “down” to Nesta. This solution to the plotting device seems acceptable both to the reader and to Williams himself.

Nest, another Welsh girl who features in *PBM-2*, experiences a similar situation to Nesta’s, only that Nest, as the name clearly reveals, encounters her destiny without any disguise. Nest, with no suffix “a”, without Nesta’s talent for drawing and without the lure of a socially advantageous marriage, is brutally raped by Henry Bailey an English soldier riding by when Nest is walking the ewes. Afterwards, Nest is further duped at the court as she is told to hold a box with “a holy relic: a fingerbone of Igon” in her right hand and then Henry the soldier’s phallus in her left one and meanwhile say “with this I now hold he penetrated my body, and from this I now hold came my

child” (277). To the English court, Nest is the box, the nest, where the English soldier inseminates his “holy relic”; while, to Nest, the baby is the rape, the shame of the rape as well as the act of the holding of Henry’s penis in the court. Henceforth, the court pays Nest a steer and silver for five years as the price for carrying the baby; however, the price Nest pays is that, as an unchaste girl with a bastard child, she has to marry a vagrant named Idris on the road and give him good stock and chattels. Later, Nest and Idris have two other sons, and life seems to go on smoothly, yet Williams would not allow the shame of that rape to be forgotten, and punishes Nest even further by killing Idris in an ox accident and reducing her to a widow.

From the cases of Nesta and Nest, we can accordingly conclude that sex before marriage and sex across classes and ethnicities for a Welsh female come at a considerable cost, because the behavior not only stains the virginity of the female but also evidences the betrayal of the class and the race she belongs to. If Nesta’s and Nest’s mischance results from the fact that Nesta is seduced and Nest is raped both by men from a different class and a different race respectively, then how does the novelist portray a female willingly sleeping with a man from the same class and race before marriage? Myra in *SG* is such a Welsh girl who falls in love with a neighboring boy named Jack, and the two taste the forbidden fruit before they are legally permitted. Myra gets pregnant, and a marriage has to be hurriedly arranged. Williams appears to “punish” this act of premarital sex and pregnancy by killing off Jack in a motorbike accident and killing Myra’s sexuality at the same time. Myra later marries Gwyn whom she never really cares for, for the sake of Jack’s posthumous daughter Beth. The consequence of Myra’s indiscretion is underlined in the plot, as Myra diverts her sexual appetite to food and her fervid prevention of Beth’s “misdeeds” before contracting a legal marriage.

Through these tragic stories, we may easily conclude that maidenhood is highly valued and matrimony is a prerequisite for sex and procreation in the Welsh communities since at least the 14<sup>th</sup> century when Nest lived. Despite the traditional values, these cases witness the breach into the established value system, which may very much have to do with the scandal of Williams' own mother who got pregnant in her maidenhood with a married man's child. The child was accepted as the younger brother of Williams' mother Gwendoline who was married to Williams' father afterwards, and carried on with her life as if nothing had happened before. However, it appears as if the secret became something of an obsession with Williams, to the extent of influencing his writing, as the cases above suggest. On the one hand, his fiction provided a channel for Williams to work out his obsession; by portraying the females in the similar situations and imagining their being seduced, tempted and even raped, Williams seems, consciously or perhaps subconsciously, to be finding excuses for his mother's misbehavior and justifying her deeds. On the other hand, by punishing these protagonists by marrying them to a deformed, landless or impotent man, Williams manages to find a way to get over his mother's scandal and purge himself of the obsessive memory.

Therefore, Williams, growing up as a well-behaved and gifted scholarship boy, held quite fast to his working-class value system throughout his life and spared no effort to fight for his own local people and community. Sex, for Williams, is never a pure topic in his fiction, and is always connected with others. He expresses this idea through the mouthpiece of the *SG* character, Gwyn, that "the life and the sex aren't separate...what you do in the one you do in the other" (230), and through university academic, Arthur Dean's observation that "all the great radicals have been sexual radicals" (36). Thus, as sex and pregnancy before marriage are denounced and come



with a heavy price, adultery, especially across classes, points to more problems relating to life, politics, culture, etc. Adultery in Williams' novels, like sex, is never purely because of sexual attraction, or often derives from something other than sexual desire.

In one crucial scene in *SG*, Kate and Myra have a quite confidential conversation, where Myra asserts that:

'You can't make love for yourself,' Myra said.  
'People do, Myra. Even women do.'  
'More fools than then.'  
'Why?'  
'Because it isn't love, that's all.' (121)

From this we may induce that for Myra sex is something for the one you love, or to say, sex is for the other's sake but for oneself, as a means to demonstrate love.

Towards the end of the novel, it is revealed that Myra actually "wants Jack then and is glad of him" (327), yet still, Myra regards Gwyn as her real husband. Hence, sex with Jack is, at least partially, out of Myra's own impulse, though she is ashamed to recognize that as it is not only against the social mores but also against her notions of what she believes a woman should be; whereas, sex with Gwyn is out of so-called love and respect for marriage, which is legally and morally conforming to the social code and Myra's value system. The "real" husband is being "real" simply because of the legal marriage between them and not because of Myra's real inner feelings.

Obviously, Myra's indiscretion and later pregnancy before marriage leaves a mark of shame on her for the rest of her life, as she is unable to coordinate her natural impulses as a result of the ideas she is inculcated with by the community (or to employ Williams' term, "structure of feeling"). Myra's situation very much conforms to what Elizabeth Roberts's comment that, "sexual intercourse was regarded as necessary for the procreation of children or as an activity indulged in by

men for their own pleasure, but it was never discussed in the evidence as something which could give mutual happiness. No hint was ever made that women might have enjoyed sex” (Roberts, *Woman’s Place* 84).

In comparison, though growing up in the same Welsh working-class family network as Myra, Kate apparently is far more open to receiving new ideas, and is less limited than the former. From the conversation, we see that Kate is more aware of female awakening, as she realizes that women can make love for themselves instead of just for men. Kate’s break out of the traditional convention is due to her active participation in the Labor Union, which imbues her with an intense urge to tear apart the “empty, narrow sort of half-life” (Williams, *SG* 124). This urge to escape the narrowness and the intense yearning for a new and different life motivates Kate to have an affair with Arthur Dean, the Oxford politics lecturer and the chairman of the working party where Kate is herself the secretary. However, the affair is by no means romantic or passionate, and the sex scene in Arthur’s place is very much disappointing:

She did not know what she, Kate Thomas, was doing here... Here, with this stranger? She would be suddenly hurt and exposed. She would be naked, knowing nothing, yet in some way committed. (98)

Indeed, it is the adventure itself that attracts Kate takes, “a political and intellectual adventure” (264), as she leaves her community, her class and her people, and steps into the life of a middle-class intellectual, and stripping herself of not only her clothes but also her established social identity and her value system. For that matter, she becomes vulnerable as well as “in some way committed”: vulnerable, because of her violation of the societal norms, and committed, because of the affair provides an available means to break away from the narrowness of her life and to acquire a taste of a new life. Nevertheless:

Everything he [Arthur] said seemed finally depressing and disintegrating. ... but at least, there, she could feel some active opposition. She belonged with people who were fighting against it. Here, with Arthur, it was different, yet she could not say why. (101)

For Kate, the whole action of sex with Arthur is formalized and abstract, and the whole meaning of sex is the pursuit of “this fantasy of their personal break-out” (273). However, “more and more clearly, the balance between them shifted. It was Kate now who seemed sure of herself, and Arthur who was uncertain” (132-3), and so, Kate becomes disillusioned about “this fantasy of the sleeping beauty, and any man is the prince come to wake her up” (273), and thus becomes aware of her female awakening as “a woman perfectly capable of managing her own life” (133). The whole affair is in the control of Kate, as it is started by Kate and likewise ended by Kate, while Arthur is reduced to a representation, a device or even a symbol through which Kate seems to obtain her female awakening. For Kate, the affair reflects, not only her disillusionment with and emancipation from patriarchal power, but also her disillusionment with middle-class intellectual’s radical thought.

Though both Myra and Kate have violated the prevalent moral standards, as one loses virginity and gets pregnant before matrimony and the other commits adultery within marriage, and in the end they both come back to the morally right track, their situations are quite distinct from one another. Myra’s “fall” is ascribed more to her own sexual instinct rather than Jack’s seduction, as she herself later admits that she wants Jack then; yet, the ideas with which Myra has been indoctrinated all militate against her sexual instinct, thus it is an exclusive choice between her sexual instinct and her moral standards. For Myra, the morality way outweighs the sexual instinct, which explains why she feels so ashamed about this past, why she makes such a fuss about Beth’s virginity, and why she “goes crazy if sex’s so much as mentioned” (49). Growing up in a remote Welsh village, Myra has never received any proper

education, and thus she is never endowed with any capacity to break out of the bounds of the traditional mores and justify her prior behaviors, hence, she has to live with the mark of shame or the scar that is unbearable to touch, until Kate ruthlessly uncovers the scar and forces Myra to face her narrow perspective on life.

Whereas, Kate, born into a teacher's family, has received much more education than Myra, and has directly or indirectly participated in the Union's work quite actively. Hence, Kate holds a very distinct attitude towards sex, and begins to receive new ideas through working in the party and from Arthur Dean whose words ("all great radicals have been sexual radicals") stick easily in her mind. These words seem to lead Kate astray, as she takes sex as a means to break into a new life about which she herself has no clear idea. So, Kate takes the leap to become a sexual radical so as to experience a radically new different life. This proves to be a failure as she is not only sexually disappointed but also witnesses the inability and incompetence of the radical intellectuals. However, the failure goads Kate into realizing the capability of a woman, managing not merely her own life but also the lives of the men around her, Arthur Dean's as well as Harold's.

As we have discussed, through the affair the positions of Kate and Arthur seem reversed, with Arthur becoming more and more dependent and passive while Kate grows more capable and dominating. This also indicates a strong sense of irony, since Kate feels no substantial pleasure in the sex with Arthur, whereas Arthur succumbs to the sexual attraction to Kate. That may also connote women's traditional sexual script, that is: "to focus on pleasure and gratification ignores the patriarchal structure in which women act, yet to speak only of sexual violence and oppression ignores women's experiences with sexual agency and choice and unwittingly increase the sexual terror and despair in which women live"(Sollie et al

61). Hence, Kate becomes an ideal female representative, possessing a neutral stance towards sex, as she by no means yields to the sexual “pleasure and gratification” while taking the lead in sex rather than being reduced to victim, a stance with reason and sensibility. Traditionally, “sex is depicted as dangerous and women as vulnerable potential victims of male sexuality” (Sollie et al 60), yet in the case of Kate, Williams empowers her to explore her own sexual interests and desires as a sober subject; for that matter, what is estimable in Kate as a subject is that she is capable of putting an end to what she starts.

Towards the end of the novel, as the scandal is exposed and Kate’s husband Harold is reduced to silence and apathy, the marriage is on the verge of collapse. It is Kate’s initiative by seducing Harold to sex that dissolves the marital crisis. Furthermore, in that scene, Kate calls Harold “boy” as a revolt against Harold’s invariable joking reference to Kate as “girl”. It is through sex that Kate fantasizes to overcome the narrowness and repression of her own mundane working-class life; it is through sex that Kate becomes aware of the innate power of a female; it is again through sex that she fixes the collapsing marriage. It seems to be hinted that sex may very well be a potent weapon for women to wield power over men; hence, sex is way off track from the act itself, as we may easily discern that Kate is, as a matter of fact, frigid, probably from the beginning, and is unable to experience natural pleasure from sex; sex is reduced to a tool, a weapon, a means of revolting against the patriarchal domination, but never is the end or the target in itself.

We have seen earlier how Williams’s mother Gwendoline Bird, tall and fair, and still a maid then, was already the mother of an illegitimate son Herbert as a result of having an affair with a married man before she met Harry Williams. Williams’s awareness of and consciousness of this scandal finds an apparent expression in his

fiction, as the cases of illegitimacy and adultery discussed above show. The effect on Williams is two-fold: on the one hand, the unconscious urge to justify his mother's behavior leads Williams to portray women either as victims of men's sexual desire, seduced or raped in cases of Nest, Nesta and Myra, or as initiators and dominators of the sexual relationship, like Kate, Rose and Telo, as manifestation of strong female power over men; on the other hand, either because of Williams's failure to transcend the prescribed sexual codes, or owing to the fact that he is unwittingly ashamed of recognizing his mother's sensuality, none of Williams's female characters is enabled to truly experience the pleasures of sexual intercourse with men, as they either retreat to the protection of received moral norms like a frightened child, or become disillusioned by the messy details that are involved in sex.

If we look carefully at Myra's case, a young girl falls in love with a handsome young neighbor boy, and they both feel attracted to each other; thus sex is very natural as the next step for this young couple, and then follows pregnancy, and afterwards they marry and live happily ever after. However, the law and the moral standards make the marriage as a decorous guarantee for sex, as Jane Lewis points out in her book *Women in Britain since 1945* that "it was the intention of legislators that sex should remain inside marriage and that marriage as an institution should be promoted" (5). Consequently, Myra's formerly natural behavior is suddenly distorted and deformed by the law and the morality, and thus is dismissed as shameful and lacking in decency. We may easily sense Myra's sense of distress and remorse over the affair: "a very passionate person, she must be, and it's as if it's all gone to fat... yet now she goes crazy if sex is so much as mentioned" (Williams, *SG* 49), and for that matter, she exceedingly warns Beth against losing virginity before marriage and thus "[twists and cripples her] daughter because of [her] own guilt" (122). Therefore,

Myra not only ruins her own life but also nearly ruins her daughter's, owing to her yielding to the traditional sexual script and the moral norms.

On the contrary, Kate, the one who sees through Myra's problem and who means to make a change for herself, indeed takes the step to make love for herself, but does she succeed? We can easily see from Williams's description that the Kate is neither emotionally nor physically inclined towards Arthur Dean; the reason for having an affair with Arthur may very well simply be that she means herself to be a sexual radical in order to become a true radical, and Arthur represents the facilitator for this process within easy reach. However, who teaches Kate the idea that "all great radicals are sexual radicals"? The cause is complicated on account of Kate's repression and suffocation by the narrow, mundane working-class work life, and her bewilderment over the enormous disparity between the working-class people and the ruling class of whom she even has no clear notion. In this scenario, Arthur's words seem to become a straw for Kate to clutch at. Hence, Arthur's seduction of Kate symbolizes the false hope offered by middle-class intellectuals and their abstract theories for the working-class people. Consequently, emancipation for Kate via the affair with Arthur is doomed from the start. Despite Kate seemingly trespassing and breaching the traditional sexual code and the moral norms, she also fails to achieve the true significance of sex, as she naively regards sex as something magically capable of opening up new horizons to her. What is fortunate for Kate is that she soon realizes the stupidity of handling her confusions through sex, and becomes much more conscious of her female power following this experience of disillusionment.

The truth is, sex is just sex, a natural instinct, rather than something one should be afraid of or ashamed about, not a weapon to be employed for responding to

problems caused by politics, society and life, as the middle class youth of the permissive society had believed. Myra and Kate seem to represent two extremes, but they are actually of the similar kind, in that they both make a great fuss of sex. This finical attitude towards sex probably results from Williams's unconscious preoccupation over her mother's affair, so that sex is never portrayed as pleasurable and enjoyable in itself. Rather, sex is invariably surrounded by or mixed up with too many confusing elements, as if sex should only take place when enough excuses or justifications are found to justify its occurrence.

To enumerate the few sexual scenes in Williams's fiction: the sex between Mirin and Pani is for the sake of procreation to produce posterity; the case of Nest is a result of the outrage committed by a soldier on a lower-class girl; Nesta's sex with Norman Braose is due to Norman's seduction and his false promises; Kate's sex with Arthur is motivated by her desire to practice her ideas and to overcome her personal predicament; Kate and Harold's sex is to resolve the marriage crisis and rebuild trust; Rose's sex with Peter is Rose's attempt to break out of the tedious middle-class housewife routine and to get revenge on her husband's cheating; Beth's sex with Peter is more a demonstration of walking out of her mother Myra's shadow than it is prompted by true enjoyment; while Myra and Jack's sex is comparatively more natural and spontaneous with no need for excuses and limits, but it comes with a heavy price, as Jack is killed in an accident and Myra becomes frigid diverting all her passion and sexuality to food.

"Individual sexual scripts are developed in the context of societal norms and expectations about appropriate male and female behavior and reflect cultural messages from parents, friends, religious and educational sources, partners, and the media" (Sollie et al 60); hence, it can be deduced that the sexual scripts back in



1960s British working-class Wales are still quite traditional as we see from the case of Myra. However, during these years, the power of the state to impose a moral code declined with legislative changes, and even “Church of England is urged to reorient its attitude towards sex and marriage... and that non-procreative sex could not therefore be condemned” (Lewis 53) and more radical views follow from some churchmen; moreover, by the early 1960s, “there was a more broadly based acceptance of the idea that sex and the expression of personality could be regulated only from within rather than through an imposed religious and legal code” (Lewis 52-3), and during that decade, “both informal and formal sanctions regarding sexual behavior were relaxed, but this had as much to do with men’s action as women’s” (Lewis 60). Therefore, the 1960s witnessed not only women’s legal emancipation, such as the political citizenship and the right to vote on the same terms as men, but also the permissiveness as a result of the student movement and the resurgence of feminism; similarly, the “fun morality” (Lewis 40) encouraged more liberality both in sexual behavior and child-rearing practices. At this stage, the ideology began to change with the power of the state and the Church altering the law and their attitudes towards sex and marriage. This is a typical example of the emergent culture develops into the dominant culture, while the prior dominant culture recedes into the residual.

Hence, Kate seems to epitomize the surging and currents of these liberal movements, and also legal, religious and moral liberations. In spite of Kate’s radical practices, she returns to the embrace of Harold and their family, not only because she is disabused of her fantasies about the radical theories of intellectuals, but also because she realizes that she has damaged both Harold’s and her son Peter’s lives, just as she previously accused Myra of breaking Gwyn’s and Beth’s. Accordingly, for Williams, on the one hand he intends women to be more broad-minded and

receptive to new ideas like Kate, while on the other hand he also values the familial attachment and home-loving atmosphere that Myra is good at managing; henceforth, Williams is caught in a dilemma and the way out for him is to deprecate sex, that is, a woman can become truly radical without being a sexual radical. This also provides strong evidence for the argument that Williams is indeed a reformist rather than a revolutionary figure, as he hopes that women can attain certain degree of female awareness, and break out from the rigidity of traditional societal norms, but meanwhile should conform to the current structure of feelings and prevailing marriage norms so as not to be detached from the local community.

### **III. The Politics and Gendering of Disability**

#### **1. An overview of the cases of crippledness**

One salient repetitive image that haunts Williams's fiction is the leg imagery, the rife-ness of which may be compared with another disability feature, i.e. —facial disfigurement. All through his novels, a variety of injuries in the leg or foot are portrayed and sometimes minutely scrutinized as if Williams were writing a factual text. First, the minister Buxton in *VT* is shot in both legs and thus crippled as a warning from a member of the Volunteers. Second, in *FM*, Ivor's left leg gets trapped by the engine of the tractor and severely fractured when he is ploughing on a tract of his land. Third, the heroic figure Bert Lewis in *LY* who fights in the Second World War is badly wounded in his right knee by the shrapnel, which causes his permanent lameness. Lastly, in the two volumes of his posthumous novels *PBM*, more incidences of leg injury are evidence to the reader: the first story of the fiction opens with the story of a crippled boy named Gan in "Marod, Gan and the Horse Hunt" whose lameness results from his father's carelessness and later becomes the burden of the tribe; Mirin, the strongest man in the story of "The Summer Lake and

the New Blood”, is also crippled in an accident which renders his right leg useless; a young man named Ral in “Cara Daughter of Cara” gets his left leg gashed by a boar in the game hunting competition for winning the priority to choose a bride; Dal Mered, the measurer in “The Coming of the Measurer” accidentally falls and turns his ankle on the way back to his native community, which prevents him from walking any further and thus has to stay with the tribe that saves him; the huge young man, Tami, in “Tami in Telim and Grain Valley”, “looked all right, though there were several healing scratches on his legs” (Williams, *PBM-1* 248) which indicates the earlier damage to his legs; Idris in “Widows of the Welshry” dies because his leg is trapped by the ox wagon in an accident; in the postscript, Glyn, the contemporary continuity figure of the *PBM* series, eventually finds his grandfather Elis “with an injured foot” (Williams, *PBM-2* 322). The plentiful cases of leg impairment in Williams’s fiction provide ample justification for in-depth discussion of their symbolic meanings and their wider connotations, whether they be psychological, sociological, political or sexological, in that the body can be read as a text.

The representation of bodily impairment in literary narratives has been influential, and fascinated sociologists, critics and philosophers alike. The artistic ethos of the Hellenic world is rife with disabled bodies, including Nude Venuses and Medusa, whereas the cripple image may well be traced back to Sophocles’ *Oedipus the King*. Oedipus, still an infant, is to be killed with his feet tightly bound with a pin by his father in the attempt to avoid the tragedy delivered by an oracle that “the father is doomed by the hand of his own son”; the experience of which leaves him limping and lame, yet paradoxically in an uncanny way helps him solve the Sphinx’s riddle partly by answering “man who walks with a cane”. The cane, as prosthesis for an old man’s sapping strength and disappearing masculinity, becomes a metaphor of

Oedipus's own limpness that serves a narrative prosthesis for the text. The story is thus explored through Oedipus's lameness and his subjectivity, his crippling and its symbolic social connotations. Montaigne especially wrote an essay "Of Cripples", where he treats bodily damage as a special trait out of God's "infinities of forms" that allows the cripple to experience things differently in a way that is inaccessible to a normal body, thus inverting the longstanding negative imagery against the disabled and challenging the received ideals of a normal or whole body. The disruptive presence of cripples in a society in Montaigne's eyes becomes a completing one, leading to open-endedness both in society and in literature. Nietzsche, in his *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, endows cripples who are exiled from the society the privilege of remaining immune from the inanity of the earthly world. The character Zarathustra openly seeks a rapprochement with the cripples marginalized by the society and formulates "inverse cripples" that are capable of cultivating "one trait or characteristic to the detrimental of all others" (Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis* 82) and thus showing the physically able-bodied as debilitated.

Sir Clifford in D.H. Lawrence's controversial novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is one renowned example of a crippled protagonist whose disability results from the War like that of Bert Lewis in *LY*. This physical impairment forms an obstacle to an ordinary sexual life with his wife, which links the leg damage to the phallus laceration, as is argued by Tom Shakespeare in *The Sexual Politics of Disability*:

*Untold Desires*:

The mutilated Venus and the disabled person in general, particularly one who is missing limbs or body parts, will become in fantasy a visual echo of the primal fragmented body—a signifier of castration and lack of wholeness. (61)

The link between disability and sexuality is brought into an intricate relation in the book mentioned above. Indeed, with the bodily impairment, especially leg damage,

that seriously affects a person's mobility, one is forced to rely on others, which forms the relationship of a patient and a caregiver; not infrequently, the disabled seems to be infantilized in the eye of the caregiver and thus in the process of interaction asexualized psychologically.

The preceding literary texts and social models provide rich context for the enquiry into the representation of disability in Williams's fiction. It is suggested that "the problems of disability are caused by society, not by impairment" (Shakespeare et al 16). Hence, relevant social theory tends to distinguish impairment from disability, with one meaning the biological attribute and the other the relationship between the person with impairment and the society. This distinction parallels the one between sex and gender in feminist theory; inasmuch as the disability studies, resting on the concern for the marginalized group, are to an extent informed by the gender studies and race studies.

As Tom Shakespeare contends that "there is no pure or natural body, existing outside of discourse" (16); disability involves an intricate relationship with not only biological and psychological factors but also social and political ones. One is only bodily impaired but socially disabled: so to speak, that the society holds an oppressive prejudice towards people with impairment, which causes the disabled's internal suppression and psychological inferiority; yet in a curious and uncanny way, the sequence may be inverted, for it is rather that the social ailments cause the physical damage and fracture. The image of crippledness first appears in Williams's third novel *VT* published in 1978, and then assumes a remarkable significance in all the subsequent novels. By 1978-9, Williams had already been disillusioned by the Labour government (Wilson, followed by Callaghan), and become concerned about the prospects of the Labor and socialist movements under the succeeding

government led by the Conservative party (Thatcher), and thus come to identify more and more with his Welsh origin. *VT* begins with the gunshots aimed at Minister Buxton's legs outside a Welsh Folk Museum that the minister is about to open, which is re-established to commemorate the active material history of the rural population of Wales. The novel was actually written in 1978, but is projected forward to a scenario in 1983 when the issue of Welsh devolution becomes nominal rather than actual under the economic control of the Financial Commission. Buxton is the secretary of the commission, so the general feeling against him is logical, while Buxton performs an undoubted authoritarian function in the government convicted of its "rational models of what is and must be" (12) which identifies him with "fact and reason itself (12). On the day he gets shot, he is visiting the opening of the new extension of the Folk Museum at St. Fagans which presents an active history of an old rural Wales but "with all the modern realities left outside" (31), a material history but with the people "essentially absent, not only physically but in the version that is given of them" (31), and finally a real history with the museum actually "laid out in the grounds of a castle" (31) but one that is "by descent a Norman castle" (32). Buxton is shot by the underground organization named "the Volunteers" for the purpose of promoting the socialist cause and ultimately bring about a more democratized society, and the schemed shooting is also linked to the death of a miner during a strike in Pontyrihw—a Welsh mining district. The shooting of Buxton in the legs seems initially to be a revenge act for the Pontyrihw incident. At least this is assumed by Hywel Rowland Dix for whom "the wounding of his legs leaves Buxton immobilized, cut off from the country house world whose power he is supposed to embody, and hence strikes at the authority behind that figure" (118). At the same time, the locus of the shooting bestows on it a more profound symbolic meaning: the

absence of modern elements, the people and the authentic Cymru (Wales) in the Folk Museum reflects the lameness of Wales which has been made foreign as a result of its history being transmitted and learnt through a foreign eye (that of the English), and thus the crippling of Minister Buxton—the representative of the overriding British ruling-class power over Wales—at the Folk Museum can be seen to symbolize the vengeful transference of the museum’s cultural lameness onto the representative of its political perpetrator. Interestingly, the crippling of Buxton immobilizes him in hospital, whilst the sensational event mobilizes the narrator Lewis Redfern to probe into different places and different persons, smoothing out the case while actually involving himself more and more deeply in the process of attempting to understand the facts and his own feelings. The shooting not only causes the rupture to Minister Buxton’s legs and work, but also breaches Lewis’s pattern of life as a reporter and helps him “find his own way back” (240) to Wales as well as to his socialist beliefs.

The gunshot wounds to Buxton’s legs also ruptures the previous pattern of the fictional texts resulting in a series of leg injuries in every single one of Williams’s subsequent fictions. *FM*, published a year later, features a farm boy named Ivor whose left leg gets trapped by the edge of the engine of the tractor when he is ploughing a difficult sloping farm field, and the incident leaves him with a badly cut leg. During the next days of recovery, he is confined to the house with daily visits from Gethin whose act Ivor misinterprets as a move towards a marriage with his sister Gwen; yet, it turns out that Gethin’s only purpose is to talk Ivor into selling his farming land. Later, the local solicitor John Dance establishes a private company—Afren Agricultural Holdings, Ltd—with Ivor and Gethin together holding fifteen percent of shares and acquires the freehold of the farms owned by Ivor and

Gethin in *Manod*. As is subsequently revealed, John Dance colludes with dealers in foreign capitals in negotiating the sales and purchases of the local lands. Hence, Ivor's leg injury working in the field seems to herald the loss of the land that previous generations of his family have worked on: the intrusion of the foreign capital, like the spinning tractor that debilitates Ivor, is disabling the local people's free choice of how their land is to be used and how their village is to be developed. This echoes the very condemnation of Marx in upbraiding capitalism as a "brutalizing force, suppressing 'a whole world of productive drives and inclinations' innate to human beings, ultimately leaving the worker 'a crippled monstrosity'" (Gleeson 38). Thus, in *Manod*, an agricultural way of life is being forced to change to an industrial pattern under the wheeling and dealing and collaboration of the multinational companies as well as the ruling government.

In *LY*, Bert Lewis is crippled in the Normandy landing in WWII after his right knee is severely fractured. Bert holds a firm belief in socialist thinking and in the Labour party, and his resolution to go to war and fight for a new future for the people is the best evidence of this. In 1947, following Labour Party's landslide victory in the 1945 general election, the mines in Wales become nationalized which Bert interprets as "belonging to the people" (119) and symbolic of "a people's government and a people's coal industry" (117). However, old Sam shrewdly points out that the new price list and salary are "no better than they was with the old owners" (117). Henceforth, Bert's lameness and his pains from his war wounds are by no means restricted to him alone; rather, they are emblematic of the pains of the Welsh people and the crippling of the Labor government in its attempts to bring a truly democratic society to its devoted people. As Bert seems to "almost disguise his limp, but as it went on it got worse" (119), it can be regarded as a metaphor for the Labour



government's incapacity to form a new and genuinely socialist society. As the situation progresses, it gets worse and the movement loses the trust of its people, including that of Williams himself. The disability of Bert also figuratively suggests the labor movement of the working-class people is hobbled by the loss of former middle-class socialist intellectuals from the 1930s (such as Norman Braose) who betray their sense of solidarity with the working-class and leave the people to their own destiny.

The novel with most cases of leg injury and disability is Williams's last one: the two volumes of the intended trilogy, *PBM*. Gan, Mirin, Ral and Tami are hunters back in the remote Stone Age and concededly their leg injuries relate to the hunting activities which depends on the swift mobility of the humans in catching the animals; accordingly, the lameness of a person would without doubt become a liability to the tribe and it would have made perfect sense that a crippled member should be abandoned by the tribe for the sake of the benefits of the whole tribe. Nevertheless, Marod and his tribal men in turns carry the cripple boy Gan on their back without complaint in the course of their nomadic life, and when they have to leave Gan behind and find him dead in a freezing storm the next day, Marod's conscience is severely affected. Here, the stories, notwithstanding their remoteness in time, are imbued with Williams's humanistic ideas and clearly illustrate Williams's endeavors to testify to the virtues of the Welsh people.

In another story, Dal Mered, repelled by the priest-like conducts of his peers in Menvandir in the White Land where he learns measuring and becomes an official Measurer, decides to go back to his native village and carry on measuring for its own sake, instead of exploiting the people and depending on them as parasites. Unfortunately, Mered falls and turns his ankle before he can manage to reach his

native land; he is rescued by a boy named Karan and is obliged to stay with Karan's community until the leg heals. The irony has already been made manifest by Mered's own realization that "I left Menvandir to be free of depending on others. Then I came to your place and my foot turned under me. Now again I am dependent, asking others for food" (Williams, *PBM-1* 180). His lameness is at once dually symbolic: in the first place, just as the measurers claim to measure for the people and depend on them for food, the current academic work and research in universities seems to Williams abstract and meaningless, failing to form real connections with the realities, as Matthew in *BC* and Peter in *SG* come to feel; secondly, Dal Mered's failure to return to his native community earlier resonates with Matthew's as well as Williams's own or the experience of many other such scholarship boys. Their exposure to higher education and relocation to cities in England forever alienates them from their motherland both physically and spiritually, and it becomes even more difficult to return to it. This explains why Williams chooses to incapacitate his character Mered to detain him on his long journey home. Williams claims in *Politics and Letters* (289) that his stories are based on his lived and known experiences; hence, he finds difficulty in depicting the ruling class which he rarely has real interaction with, and likewise, it also becomes a problematic for him to narrate an experience of real homecoming, something that he himself failed to achieve in his own life.

In "Widows of the Welshry", the bondman Idris owes his whole life's service to the lord and even his death triggers a death penalty due to the lord by law; he is born native, yet without ancestors or lineage. In the accident happened that the oxen cart crushes Idris's leg and causes his eventual death; this scene figuratively represents the predominant law of the lord binding the people to laboring service all their life and allowing no opportunity for social mobility to them.

The lameness befalling these men, whether in ancient time or modern, seems to echo their debased social status and low-status social identities: the laboring men in the society are just like the legs are to the body, for “the feet are performing the hardest labor in the republic of the body” (Mitchell and Snyder, *Body Physical Difference* 83). The physique of the disempowered people is deformed by the severity of their labor and the imposition of an overriding institution of law, as Dorn argues: “the body constitutes a material intersection between structure and agency where lived experience of the power structure is revealed most clearly” (Gleeson 50). Furthermore, Williams concurs with Marxist theorists in denouncing the destructive power of capitalism and the dehumanizing effects of division of labor, and thus the crippled figures may serve as good examples of the victims of the crippling divisiveness of capitalism as “a mechanized Leviathan of productive forces, crippling and mutilating the bodies of workers” (Gleeson 38). For that matter, “it [capitalism] rejects, depersonalizes, degrades in grading, other human beings. On such practice a structure of cruelty, exploitation and the crippling of human energy is easily raised” (Williams, *Culture and Society* 336). Thirdly, as mobility also points to a vertical structure in the society, immobility resulting from the leg damage or deformity in a symbolic way bespeaks the rigid stratification of the society into different classes. Buxton is just such as a case in point: he is “not, by origins, a ruling-class man” (Williams, *VT* 12) and has “always been a functionary” (75) instead of a thinker, hence he becomes the surrogate rather than a real member of the ruling-class which reduces him to the role of scapegoat. Fourthly, the first and second industrial revolution brought Wales into fast development, with its coals and minerals mined and exported to the metropolitans, which not only severely destroyed the nature and the environment, but also damaged the harmonious livelihood of the

Welsh people who were emigrated from their natal communities to these coal-mining quarters. Hence, it is a double crippling on the side of the Welsh land and the Welsh people. Finally, these limping men represent those marginalized people, who are the ordinary people of Wales, whose voice are constantly silenced and submerged; their crippled state is the epitome of the colonized, crippled and disabled Wales, attesting the reality that Wales is politically, economically and culturally subordinated to England and to the British power, and that the Welsh people have little discursive power in their own affairs. Even if Wales is not exactly a disabled nation, it is certainly a geographical space that has over the course of history been stunted and impaired by its relationship with more aggressive economies and governments, especially its English neighbor.

## **2. A gendered interpretation of the leg image**

Curiously interesting is the fact that all of the leg fractures without exception happen to male characters and mostly to stalwart, seemingly robust men. The one and only incident in which a female's foot gets violated takes place in *LY* when a policeman deliberately stamps on a woman's feet during the strike, as the woman is about to cross the line and is pushed from behind. In almost every case, there is a female figure looming in the shadows behind the limping man, who assumes the role of the care-giver to the injured man, but in some uncanny way it is rather this female figure who is dangerously powerful and endowed with the capability of inflicting misfortune and leg disability upon her man. Previously, many of the figures with physical disability that feature in the English novels tend to be female. On the one hand, this phenomenon imposes the double handicaps on females by a patriarchal society (as women have been characterized, since Aristotle, as "mutilated males") while on the other hand it signals "very real cultural fears about women, female

sexuality, and the maternal” (Mitchell and Snyder, *Body Physical Difference* 190). Williams revolts against this literary “tradition” by crippling male characters instead, which literally devitalizes and emasculates them, as “the absence of physical ‘impairment’ is so clearly bound up with popular culture’s images of masculinity” (Morris, *Pride Against Prejudice* 94). The leg damage, symbolically hinting at the malfunction of the THIRD leg—the phallus, may very well signify the de-sexualization of the male, as the handicapped are largely portrayed as “pathetic needy childlike people” (Mitchell and Snyder, *Body Physical Difference* 68) and thus infantilized by their dependency on female caretakers. For instance, Mirin, once the strongest man in the tribe back in the time around 10,000 BC in *PBM-1*, can no longer hunt but only fish alone by the lake; he becomes just like a child looking forward to a compliment from a mother when “he stood, proud of some fish, and came to show it” (41) to Telo, his wife; again, he is even more infantilized at night, for he is “shy like a boy, trembling and clenching his body if she came near or touched him (41). The male characters that are reduced to lameness all experience this process of slackening masculinity and loss of sexual energy, which serves as a foil for the strong resilient women counterparts, who reverse the normative power relation between the sexes.

Ivor Vaughan, the farm boy in *FM*, lives with his big sister Gwen who is seventeen years older than him in Pentre in the Manod village; things function routinely when he works on the family land and Gwen manages the house. Gwen Vaughan, “the most extraordinary creation in all of Williams’s fiction” (Pinkney 80) as Tony Pinkney comments, bursts upon Matthew’s as well as the reader’s view with her “extraordinary gallop” on a powerful tall roan stallion called Cavalier, dressed in rough and mud-stained “jacket and breeches, high boots and a black jersey” (41),

impressing the reader with nothing feminine except her childlike shy voice; worse still, Gwen has suffered from skin trouble since sixteen which causes minor facial disfigurement that reduces her femininity to an even lower grade. That is probably the reason that Pinkney views Gwen Vaughan as “a witch” (80). Despite Gwen’s hermaphrodite characteristics, with “her abandonment of conventionally feminine dress and passion for hard, ‘male’ riding” (Williams, *FM* 80), her little brother Ivor spares no efforts to attempt to feminize and infantilize her, not only by teasingly calling her “girl” (47-8), but also by rejecting her offer to plough the bracken, claiming “the slope...[is] too dangerous for a woman, and she [has] no patience, going at it like a gallop” (46). The ingrained patriarchal motivation of Ivor is transparent: at home, he is used to Gwen’s rules about the house and makes no objection to them, or rather, he has no power to object, thus an infantilizing appellation “girl” serves as a consoling placebo that compensates his patriarchal pride; the field, for Ivor, is the last bastion against his sister’s overweening and encroaching power, and he can only defend it by reasserting her female identity and treating her exceptional skill in horse-riding as though it were a form of naughty child’s play. A battle of the sexes arises later when Ivor attempts to buy Gwen out of the house and take in an obedient wife Megan, and Ivor’s anxiety grows with his inability to pay Gwen off. Unable to establish himself as the master of the house, hence, the tractor he drives to plough the bracken as well as to pick up Megan for dating, becomes a signifier of his remnant of masculine power, causing him to guard it jealously, “he shouts whenever she [Gwen] is to touch it” (46). And, “so now she left it alone: let him learn the hard way” (46): the witchery of Gwen works on Ivor, when his leg is trapped by the tractor and consequently broken by it.

Gwen’s most impressive piece of witchery...is the fact that it is Gwen, picking her way through the ancient grave on Cavalier, who seems to

function as the very catalyst of the accident, as if her physical presence in the grave completed some deadly ‘electrical’ circuit between it and her brother’s body. Forcing Ivor back into a dependency on his sister he was threatening to grow out of, the accident accords well enough with Gwen’s unconscious wishes, and its nature—the trapping and breaking of Ivor’s leg—links it with the castration symbolism... (Pinkney 81)

The uncanny empowerment of women to inflict misfortune on men and infantilize them further reveals itself in the other cases of male crippledness in Williams’s fiction. The shooting of Minister Buxton in *VT* turns out to be the deed of a young female disguised in man’s clothes and fake beard and moustache, while “a woman’s coat over his legs” (20) can be interpreted as signifying his emasculation and the return to the cover and protection of a female and motherly power. Mirin, the strongest man in the tribe in the episode “The summer lake and the new blood” of *PBM-1*, is reduced to a cripple in an accident, which also deprives him of sexual energy, in that he even needs to be helped by his wife Telo in the sexual activity, as “she [bends] over and [kisses] his lips...[goes] on kissing until at last he [responds]” (56). In “The coming of the measurer”, Dal Mered with an injured foot is demeaned by Karan’s mother Seril, who sees through Mered’s dependence on others’ provisions and frankly judges that “he is not like a man” (159). While the men in Karan’s tribe respect Mered as a measurer whose measuring work seems to them sublime, the women like Seril hold quite different views: Seril rejects Mered’s offer to measure exact midwinter for “it is known” (182) not measured; “midwinter is under the order of the women” (184) and Seril reaffirms women’s law of midwinter by confronting Mered:

“You will not [measure]...After we have kept and fed you, would you do anything so wicked? Would you dare to break the law of midwinter?” (182)

The story “Cara daughter of Cara” in *PBM-1* talks about the midsummer feast back in around 10,000 BC, where young boys and girls from families of different kin gather together and choose couples for the wedding contingent for a hunting

competition. Cara, the girl from one of the Black Mountain families, is expected by her tribe to bring them from this wedding “the best and strongest of the young men” (61). “Yet that [is] always how they [think] and it [is] not how she [thinks]” (61), as Cara’s heart secretly goes to Ral, the tall and thin boy from the Bear family. When the boys come back with their game and begin to pick girls, Cara still spots no sign of Ral coming back; so, fearing to be picked by the other boys, she tears and disarranges the flower rings in her hair to give her a wild look and thus avoids being chosen. In the end, Ral carries back the biggest game, a boar, but with a limping leg as his left leg is severely bitten by the boar during the hunting, and the only girl left for him is Cara. As Cara treats Ral’s wound with damp moss, the young couple hold each other’s hands tightly and feel they are bound in marriage. Though Cara previously imagines Ral winning the game heroically and offering his hand to her among all the girls, Cara inverts the discourse power by exerting Gwen Vaughan’s witchery to limp and symbolically castrate Ral so as to reassure herself as the caretaker. She represents an archetypical Gothic female figure familiar to us, of which Jane Eyre’s return to care for the now blind Rochester is the most renowned.

The lame disfigured body of Bert Lewis in *LY* provides another instance of the exertion of Jane Eyre-like Gothic witchery. Nesta Pritchard, an innocent working-class Welsh girl, gets duped in a love relationship with Norman Braose, an ambassador’s son with an “impeccable upper-class English voice” (16). The love is short-lived, and Nesta is wrongly accused by Norman of only pretending with him while really wanting Bert (74), after which Norman is relocated to a classified spying job and never comes back to Nesta ever since. However, the premarital sex renders Nesta pregnant with Gwyn, a stigma that lays heavily on her. In consequence, Bert is inevitably lame and disfigured so as to enable Nesta to resume her status equal to



Bert's or even to gain a superior status and discourse potential by infantilizing him as a dependent needing looked after. Though Bert's disabilities result from his fighting against Fascism, in an uncanny way they exert a symbolic function for Nesta: the ugliness she has to live with all her life. Some time before the end of their relationship, Nesta draws a picture of Norman which strikes Emma and Nesta's son Gwyn, as well as us readers, with brightness and exuberance; yet, Nesta sees Norman "one day turn ugly" (345), but this ugliness seems not to be of Norman but by him: Norman returns to his patrician society with his good looks intact, while his double betrayal stigmatizes Nesta on the one hand and disables Bert who is representative of the working-class people on the other. Bert's lameness provides a metonymic ugliness of Nesta's disillusioned love experience with Norman; she is shocked by the ugliness of Bert's ruined face in an uncannily similar feeling that she experiences Norman's ugliness in disfiguring their love.

In an earlier version of *BC*, Morgan says to Harry, "women like that... should never, see, have kids. They're not built for it, Harry, you only got to look. ... It seems there's spiders, female spiders, eat up the male, you know, when they've done the job"<sup>12</sup>. This striking spider image provides a vivid and striking picture of the male's horror about the female's overpowering and mystifying capacity for vanquishing and mutilating him.

### **3. A gendered interpretation of the facial disfigurement**

In contrast with the crippledness of the males, the females in Williams's fiction face a different kind of the problem with their appearance just as the males with their legs. While the legs serve a symbolic metonymy for male phallic power, the physiognomy is essential to a woman's chances for attention, respect and power.

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<sup>12</sup> *Border Village*, p.170. Form Richard Burton Archive, Swansea University.

Recognizing this, a female treats beauty as an aspect of her responsibility and authority, as she “will be valued and rewarded on the basis of how close she comes to embodying the ideal” (Chapkis 14). In *PBM-2*, during the Roman conquest of the Black Mountains, Williams tells about how Welsh girls, born slaves, can be legitimized as Roman citizens by being attractive and thus marrying Roman soldiers, as it happens that “it [is] often their attractions rather than their birth which [have] got them these advantages” (22). Conversely, the deformity and disfigurement of a female body renders the subject undesirable and asexual, unfit for marriage and even unsuitable for motherhood, which is typified by several female characters in Williams’s fiction.

Gwen Vaughan in *FM*, as discussed above, has minor facial disfigurement since the age of sixteen, around the time she enters puberty, and the skin condition deteriorates after the death of her father. As noted above, Gwen’s fervor for horse-riding (which even wins her a medal) and her forsaking traditional feminine apparel have already excluded her from the proper definition of womanhood; while the disfigurement further reduces her to a witch-like figure with whom few men attempt intimacy, as she cannot even bear her fiancé touching her (50). To some extent, the disfigurement of Gwen’s face becomes a shield for her distinctiveness as a woman, in that the fact that the skin problem occurs in her puberty greatly reflects her own reluctance to gender herself as a woman ready to reach sexual maturity; moreover, the disfigurement worsens after the loss of a protective father and further diminishes her feminine charm, which again secures her from any compulsive violation from the opposite sex. In a deeper sense, the facial issue plays as a signifier of breaking away from the conventional gendering. The following speech from James Partridge, a man deformed by fire in an accident, applies perfectly well to

Gwen:

I am never going to conform to society's requirements and I'm thrilled because I am blissfully released from all that crap. That's the liberation of disfigurement. (Shakespeare et al 81)

Towards the end of the novel, Gwen gets the money that enables her to get away from the Pentre home and then settles down alone in Cae Glas, another cottage in Manod, which connotes her ultimate liberation from patriarchal constraints and normative gender conventions. As it happens later in the novel, "since Ivor had married, and she had moved to Cae Glas...some of her awkwardness gone and her skin less disfigured" (198), Gwen's disfigurement seems to lose its significance.

Bibra, probably the most extraordinary case of female disfigurement in Williams's fiction, appears in the story of "Bibra in Magnis" in *PBM-2* based on real archaeological finds. Bibra's face and body are severely twisted and deformed. The disfigurement is ascribed to her participation in the boys' work, clambering up to the roof to sweep the thick snow off in her childhood when a strong, bitter east wind hits her and as a result of the experience, Bibra's face starts to change and become twisted. Later, Bibra is sold as a slave into Magnis and works in the kitchen ever since; at the time of the story, she is "well over sixty but in height like a child of ten" (44). The reader can infer that Bibra is a self-sufficient and determined woman, as when the vendor of ostrea comes to deliver the goods she is "sharp and bossy with him, telling him exactly where to put the barrels" (44). A look at Bibra's deformed face gives the vendor a real shock, implying that Bibra is empowered by her disfigurement to inflict on others, especially men.

She was a creature of another kind, like those women in stories who were born old and ugly but by the same token never died. They lived in mountains and forests or in the other world, and were dangerous to all humans who met them. The stories were not really to be believed, but looking at Bibra they almost seemed possible. (46)

There seems to be no necessity to quote the detailed depiction of her ruined face, as

the words above suffice to gothicize Bibra as a wicked witch of supernatural power. The poor health of her master Lord Burros may very well be the work of her witchcraft, as Burros cannot bear the sight of her and threatens to drive her away back into the mountains.

As we have observed, Gwen in *FM* suffers from her skin disfigurement. However, another very different character in the novel is also distinguished by remarkable facial characteristics. Juliet Dance, who is represented to the reader as a perfect and impeccable beauty, but one whose cold beauty is represented as somehow preternatural, constitutes what might be considered an example of counter-disfigurement:

She seemed a rare prototype...of the beauty of the figurine or the doll: a random human achievement, in flesh and blood, of the perfection so often achieved...in porcelain or in paint...But there was no way of knowing whether such figures were imitations, records...or whether the occasional Juliet...was not a human repetition, an imitation in its turn, of the dolls and the figurines. Her finely dressed blonde hair had the intricate fixity of sculpture. Her deep blue eyes...had a brilliance of colour...that is seen more often in paint than on a living face. The moulding of the mouth, the slight flare of the nostrils under the fine nose, had the theatrical quality of a portrait...a face living beyond faces, yet in its isolated movement unchanging and impressively still. (111-2)

Juliet Dance is virtually the female version of Dorian Gray, with non-human beauty and perfection: she is not a living human being with feelings, but rather a doll, a figurine, an imitation, a painting, a sculpture, a piece of porcelain, or an apparatus, or even an apparition. However, this unnatural completeness and extraordinary perfection is not celebrated and appreciated, “for the quality of her face was a completeness, an immobility; indeed an incapacity to extend to or be touched by the imperfect and varying community of life beyond her” (111). Hence, Juliet’s immaculate beauty becomes a predicament rather an advantage, immobility rather than mobility, incapacity rather than able-ness; somehow, she is also disabled and

disfigured, different from the commonality of life, reminiscent of the witches' line in *Macbeth*: "fair is foul, and foul is fair". On the other hand, the fair appearance contrasts immediately with the foul nature of Juliet, in the manner of Dorian Gray. She eats "practically nothing" since her marriage (itself as a kind of disease) while gets paranoid about the food being stolen by the maid. When Ivor gets drunk in their house and resists John Dance's pressure to move him to the door, it is Juliet who resolves the embarrassing situation: she comes abnormally close to Ivor and gazes into his face so that he does not dare to move, then she catches tight hold of his hand and keeps the tight grip on it until she takes him out of the house and eases him inside the truck; then, "Ivor looked around at Juliet, confused, as if he did not know where she had gone" (130). In spite of the exceptional refinedness of Juliet's appearance, she is as much desexualized as Bibra and Gwen, unable to arouse any sexual desire and unfit for motherhood, whereas her meanness and exceptional strength reiterate the themes of androgynous fantasy and gothic witchery.

Williams's obsession with facial disfigurement extends further into one of his eerie short stories, "The Rat"<sup>13</sup>. The story is highly autobiographical, as it tells about a soldier who comes back from war to visit his wife Milly and their baby. Milly has already set up her order of life without her husband Jim, sufficient in herself and managing the family alone. Consequently, the return of Jim disrupts her routine and breaks her self-sufficiency, and pains her as a result of the inevitable disorganization caused by the change and the surrender to his love, "yielding, and feeling her independence ebbing away from her tired glowing body; feeling part of him again, and wondering how she could ever bear losing him", until later she finds herself "rude and snappy at a man's least familiarity, losing her temper at the slightest sign

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<sup>13</sup> From Richard Burton Archive, Swansea University with Reference No.: WWE/2/1/2/27

of friendship”. The bulk of the story centers on the readjustment of the couple’s life at their reunion, and only towards the end does Milly bring up the subject of the rat:

“Its funny”, she said slowly, “I’m not a bit frightened of a rat when I see it out in the open. I want to go for it with a poker. But when I hear it gnawing away in the darkness, close by yet so’s you can’t get at it, nor forget it...”

Then, the tale comes to a sharp and bizarre climax as they hear the cry of the baby and rush to the cot, only to find “its face terribly bitten [by a rat] and covered with blood”. The rat symbolically connotes the oppressive patriarchal system: instead of derogating women as the second sex out in the open, it is “gnawing away in the darkness”, encroaching on women’s autonomy in conventionalized gendered relations. This is the typical point of stance of the twentieth century feminists, as they reassert their female independence; the rat may also as well point to the non-expressive female semiotic *chora*, to employ Kristeva’s term, rupturing into the symbolic language of the dominating and naturalizing patriarchal language. The disfigurement of the baby, rendering it faceless, betokens the sad failure of communication between the sexes and the absence of a reciprocal and appropriate gender relationship.

As is observed in Williams’s fiction, male characters are disabled by leg impairment caused by external circumstances such as war (Bert), work injury (Ivor Ral and Idris), or accident (Mirin, Buxton and Dal Mered); while the females’ disabilities tend to be attributed to facial disfigurement resulting from internal causes or mysterious reasons. This illustrates how specific examples of Williams’s character portraits echo the social perception that, “to be a disabled man is to fail to measure up to the general culture’s definition of masculinity as strength; to be a disabled woman is to fail to measure up to the definition of femininity as pretty passivity” (Mitchell and Snyder, *Body Physical Difference* 92), thus a disabled man is

asexualized to the same extent as a disfigured woman; for that matter, the gendering of disability and the disabling of gender is highly intertwined and mutually reinforcing.

#### **IV. Women, Marriage and Nationalism**

##### **1. The importance of a wife**

As has been mentioned previously, Jane Lewis insightfully perceives that “it was the intention of legislators that sex should remain inside marriage and that marriage as an institution should be promoted” (5). And that greatly explains why, in spite of the permissiveness in 1960s and liberal attitudes towards sex from many sides, John Gillis has suggested that “so many people had never married so elaborately and so conventionally as they did in the 1950s and 1960s over four centuries of the history of the marriage ceremony” (Lewis 44). Accordingly, marriage as an institution has been successfully reconfirmed; we can also see in Williams’s fiction that his characters, especially the working-class ones, attach great importance to marriage, the nuclear family and other societal norms. However, the institution of marriage is to the more advantage of men than women, as Kate in *SG* shrewdly points out: “the woman’s never there as a woman, as herself. She’s just a bit of portable property, that he’s going to take possession of” (123). Furthermore, as Josephine Klein has argued, “once married, a girl must settle down to child-bearing and domestic duties, and, when she has not a young baby on her hands, work outside the home. ...It is as if all effort is made to attract a husband, and then inertia and apathy follow” (38). Ellen in *BC*, Myra in *SG* and Nesta in *LY* all epitomize the institutionalized marriage in working-class Wales.

In Williams’s fiction, marriage is highly treasured by his working-class protagonists, and familial ideology is very much entrenched in the minds of the

people. In *SG*, Rathbone, a delegate from Longton, an associated motor factory whose workers are already on strike, comes to the Goldsmith factory where Harold works, to incite the workers there to cooperate with the Union and join the strike. At first Rathbone explains the complicated situation that has led up to the strike; however, his audience find it hard to follow the facts and the figures of the remote dispute he is describing; so, Rathbone tries to win his audience over with a more familiar approach, saying: “I’m a happily married man, as my wife would tell you... a happily married man” (106), then “the whole mood of the meeting had changed now” and “there was a direct relation between speaker and audience, for the first time” (106). For the factory workers, the particulars of management lie beyond their familiar knowledge; all they are trained for is their specific job on the factory assembly line, a cog in a giant machine. Their experience is the family life with their wife and family. And that is why Rathbone fails to connect with the workers at first talking about the dispute in Longton and how that may relate to their own, but once Rathbone starts to refer to his married life, the audience suddenly feels the connection.

Also, in *BC*, Harry on his deathbed imparts to Matthew that “only a small part of your life’s your work” (396) which greatly contradicts what we observe in the novel as well as Matthew knows about his father, as Harry works for most of his waking hours in the signal box every day and the rest time on his allotment and bee-keeping. Moreover, Harry also reveals to his son that:

Only the one trade to get into and that’s a wife to love you. The only trade, sweetheart. A loving wife. The only trade to get into. (396)

This also makes a strong impression on the reader, as Harry for his whole life never seems to really care that much about his wife Ellen, and makes decisions with rare reference to Ellen’s inclinations: Harry registers their son’s name as “Matthew”



instead of “Will” against Ellen’s will; Harry goes to rent the house across the street after the birth of Matthew without telling Ellen who would much prefer to stay at Morgan’s house with the company and help of Mrs. Lucas; again, Harry decides where Matthew gets his education without any discussion with Ellen. For that matter, Harry invariably calls Ellen “girl”, consciously or unconsciously infantilizing Ellen and thus dismissing her as insufficiently mature to deal with important events. However, the words he says at his deathbed confirm how much Harry cherishes their marriage and his wife, which also correspond to what he says previously:

you’re a man suddenly, and with a wife and a family. ... People get driven, see, but not just for the money. That’s what we don’t understand now in politics. We see it as a system, but what it is, at the start, is a man working for his family. (311)

All these examples point towards an overwhelming conclusion: the reason why Rathbone immediately gets connected with the workers once he begins to talk about his wife and marriage; the reason why Kate protests that the woman is never there as a woman, as herself, but a piece of property to get possession of. What the husband cherishes is probably more the idea of marriage and family and having a wife, than the actual wife, the real-life woman or the actual individual he is living his whole life with. The wife has been stereotyped as supportive and tolerant of the husband, loving and caring of the family, enjoying managing things around the home, “a steady and self-forgetful routine, one devoted to the family and beyond proud self-regard” (LeMahieu 71). When Kate breaks out of this stereotype, the depiction of Kate’s house as always dingy and cold and Myra’s as bright and warm suggest that the former is not a suitable role model as wife and mother while the latter is.

Again, in *SG*, Peter’s supervisor Robert Lane reveals his lived experiences from a boy to a man, during which time his wife May Lane has been the mainstay of the relationship. Robert goes badly to pieces when his mother is dying, and only May is

there to save him; he also admits that “while I stayed with my wife, the light was so fixed and so certain” (247), because May

held to that [experience], to the reality of that. Without compromise and without evasion, she stayed in her own world, that her own life defined: a world concerned with the reality of others. (249)

Robert has wavered in his earlier years, trying to run away from marriage, as he realizes that “it wasn’t a person I wanted ... To be myself... there must be no other” (248), hence, he leaves May, only to find he gets lost and his wife saves him again (249). Finally, he comes to comprehend that “I came back to myself, when I came back to my wife” (249). A boy grows up to be a real man when he takes his wife and settle down his family, and that is probably the importance of a wife.

Therefore, the role of the wife within marriage is highly appreciated by the husband, to the point that the wife defines the man and the family, or rather, the wife is backbone of the man and the family, without whom every effort of the man would be nullified. However, the wife is objectified and stereotyped, as she is never a woman or even an individual complete in herself. Frederick Engels, writing in 1884, was also quite clear that women were oppressed by marriage, which for many Marxists derives from men’s control over the productive activities in the home. Despite all being said, is it safe to conclude that in Williams’s critical and theoretical perception women are exploited and oppressed within marriage? Further evidence from his fiction actually reveals the opposite, as will be argued in the following section.

## **2. The re-definition of power within marriage**

In *BC*, In spite of the domineering and overbearing style of Harry who seems very controlling in family matters, Ellen is by no means submissive and meek as she appears to be. One salient example is choosing the name for their son: as has been

mentioned, Harry wants the child to be named “Matthew” while Ellen wants “Will”; when Ellen learns that Harry registers the name “Matthew” against her predilection, she smiles as a reaction to Harry’s final words that “anyway now it’s down, girl, no use us quarrelling” (67), and

turned her face so that her cheek rested along the baby’s head. “What do it matter it’s down?” she said as if to herself. “He is Will whatever”. (66-7)

And Will, her son has been, for all his life at home as well as in their community, even Harry calls him Will all his life, and the name “Matthew” seems never to be known to the community, but rather is a whole new different identity outside their circle.

The name dispute of course carries deep symbolical meanings: it not only denotes the conflicts of divided identities both Matthew and Williams have experienced, but more importantly, it connotes the power struggles between the conjugal roles, each partner contending for her/his discursive power. Although it is the male that is in control of the relationship and familial matters on the surface, the female somehow finds a secret and cryptic channel to imperceptibly influence her husband.

Kranichfeld points out that the definition of power has been masculinized by the patriarchal society and women have to adopt the characteristics of men if they are to be recognized as exercising power. So, as has been depicted, women are often portrayed as passive and powerless, even victimized by their role in the family. However, if we redefine power as the ability to exert influence on others and make intentional change, and for that matter shape the personality and behavior of others, then, women in society can certainly be considered immensely powerful. In direct confrontation, women may not appear to compete equally with men; yet, women are endowed with the capacity to influence their husband indirectly and, for the latter,

unwittingly.

Another pertinent case is May Lane, as mentioned above, who is portrayed as a pitiful woman initially unloved and deserted by her husband Robert, yet is always in wait for him to be reclaimed by Robert at a future point in time, and tolerant of all his rash and hurtful behaviors. However, this seemingly passive and pathetic impression of May on the reader as well as on Peter is reversed later as Peter becomes acquainted with May:

Peter had always thought of May as someone defined by Robert, existing primarily in relation to him. What he knew now was quite different: that the Robert he respected was really May's creation; that he drew all that was valuable in his life quite directly from her. . . . . Without his wife he [Robert] would be merely the acquiescent, complacent, rather silly man . . . . . as if she, really, were his whole direction and energy. . . . Robert was really more a part of her than a man on his own. (Williams, *SG* 246-247)

This testifies precisely to the tremendous power a woman can wield on her man, despite how passive and timid she appears to be. At first, it looks as if Robert, a well-established professor at Oxford, achieves his accomplishment through his own free will, while May is rather a vague and supportive apparatus in the shadows, or even that May is parasitically depending on Robert as she has been a housewife without any salaried job. Quite surprisingly, it is May, rather, that shapes Robert, and makes him who he is, and has influenced him in every possible aspect. Moreover, Williams further overturns the authoritative traditional perception that a woman is considered as part of a man, according to lines in the Bible stating, a woman is made from the rib of a man; here, the husband becomes a parasitic part of the wife, which manifestly subverts the biblical tenet. Marxists often deplore the passive and lower status of women inside the family, and attribute it to the economic condition, however, it is dually rejected in Williams's fiction where women are portrayed as cryptically powerful, despite the fact that they rarely bring income to the family.

May is one case in point, while Kate is another. The conjugal relationship of May and Robert is represented as the model of the mother-son relationship, in which the son needs to be tolerated for his immature acts and to be guided and led in a particular way, as the mother seeks to mold him to become a proper man.

More examples of powerful wives can be observed in later novels. In *VT*, Sarah, Mark Evans's second wife, was once Mark's editor, and then she has an affair with Mark and marries him later, and afterwards leaves her beloved job, and stays at home. Again, despite her consequent inability to make any economic contribution to the family, Sarah likewise exerts great power over Mark:

Mark's editor: the description was appropriate. I could see the smooth affair, the smooth marriage. . . . He would have been cut, proofread and indexed so politely and so fast that he'd be a paperback husband in no time: of course a successful paperback husband. (87)

Hence, Sarah, though no longer the editor of Mark's books, becomes his life's editor, correcting Mark and shaping him into the ideal husband she wants him to be without any difficulty. Mark's plotting of the shooting of the minister Buxton may very well be Sarah's work in the first place, or at least, the scheme must have been prepared and checked point by point by Sarah for its feasibility and chance of success.

Although still very young, only two years older than her sister Rosa, Sarah is "an epoch different: wholly composed, deeply confident and satisfied, an efficient continuity of body and what serves for mind" (86). Sarah, like May, has already defined her own steadfast and unwavering existence, attracts, then shapes and trims the man that come into her life while she is the center and pillar of the conjugal realm.

Juliet Dance who appears in Williams's third published novel *FM*, provides a further example of this. As has been discussed previously, Juliet eats nearly nothing, as she insists that "it's greedy and disgusting...to eat more than you need" (118), so

she also makes John Dance eat little at home, and she is accused of starving her husband by the housekeeper. Juliet is portrayed as a very strong character, a character that builds an invincible realm for herself, for “the quality of her face was a completeness, and immobility; indeed an incapacity to extend to or be touched by the imperfect and varying community of life beyond her” (111) and even their house “seemed built around her, a finely kept frame for her” (112). Though John Dance is the one who is dealing in the real estate and capital investment and the related business, his shrewdness and canniness as a businessman cannot make him shrewder than Juliet, as is evident from Juliet’s minute description of how her food was stolen by the housekeeper. In spite of the fact that Juliet eats practically nothing, she still looks out for her food very attentively, the kind of trait that corresponds symbolically to the acquisitive and selfish nature of Capitalism. Juliet’s strong will is vividly depicted, as she effortlessly handles the embarrassment Ivor has created, while John seems not to know what to do (129-30).

Elizabeth Roberts points out that though “men had superior rights both legally and politically, and in the world of work... Within the home woman has the active power and man ‘influence’” (*Woman’s Place* 117). And again, Joanna Bourke likewise comments that “men gained power within the public sphere, but they lost some of their domestic influence as they crowned women ‘angels in the home’... The womanly woman was gentle, domesticated and virginal” (Bourke 13). Contrary to the traditional feminist views that women are oppressed and exploited within the family structure by the patriarchal masculine power, Williams, as a matter of fact, portrays a whole different picture of women’s situation in his fiction: women are actually tremendously powerful in covertly and subtly manipulating their husbands into fulfilling what they mean their man to be, while men tend to be dependent and

manageable at home, leaning on the core pillar of the family. The examples cited above can easily lead one to imagine that the husband is the performer of the instructions emanating from the central nerve, the wife, while the wife and the husband have actually been merged into one personality with the wife at the steering-wheel. However, it is never represented as an easy job for a woman to manage her husband, for instance, May Lane is being unloved, hurt, broken and nearly killed (Williams, *SG* 53, 77) by Robert's willfulness and simplicity, and she has to live with the consequences. A quite similar case with a different result appears in an earlier version of *BC* titled *A Common Theme*, where we are more informed about the relationship between Matthew and Susan, indicating that they split up during in the middle of the novel.

In this unpublished version, despite the fact that Matthew has left Susan already, he turns to her whenever he feels puzzled and uncertain, and is trying to figure out an answer he expects from Susan. On one such occasion, Matthew has a terrible dream the night before, and he deliberately comes to tell Susan and goes on chattering about how the dream might be interpreted in his own terms. At last, Susan bursts out, saying "You are coming to me, but I can't be sure why. ... I wasn't here just for you to come and tell me of your life elsewhere. I'm willing to help, but I can't be hurt any more"<sup>14</sup>, as she has been already deeply and persistently hurt by Matthew to an extent that he seems insensitive to. A key expression comes out when Matthew is trying to define his father Harry, i.e., "self-centered"; and likewise, Matthew inherits the trait from his father, and hurts and destroys Susan without being fully aware of this. In Susan's eyes, even though they have had two sons already, Matthew is still "the same excitable boy" she met and fell in love with at first sight. However, in the

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<sup>14</sup> Quoted from *A Common Theme*, WWE/2/1/1/9/1, provided by Richard Burton Archives, Swansea University.

published version of *BC*, Susan has already become a May Lane or an Ellen, while Matthew's excitability has been toned down.

A further insightful example can be seen in an unpublished short story by Williams entitled "Fragment"<sup>15</sup>. The story describes an ordinary night of a family, with the man, the woman pregnant with a second baby, and their first daughter still small. There is no specific appellation for the man or for the woman, so the story could be about any family; however, it is most likely to be drawn from Williams's own experiences, as he and the man in the story missed the birth of their first child when he was away fighting in the war. The man and the woman have a quarrel concerning the man's return to his own mother with their first child, leaving the woman wholly on her own with their unborn baby. During the dispute, the man complains, "our marriage was a study in exclusive morality. We are self-contained... My life is taken up with you and the child", which draws a burst of laughter from the woman, and that in turn induces the man to feel "impotent and denied". At the end of the story, the man "sinks his head on to the woman's breast" while the woman's arms "comes round and encloses him"; considering the previous foreshadowing, describing that their child "sprawls over the woman's breasts in heavy sleep", and later when the man struggles for the child, the child "pulls back to the warmth of the mother's breasts", a conclusion can be safely drawn that the man is in the end infantilized and tamed by the woman. The man is fragmented outside the marriage and is only to find completeness in union with the woman.

Chafetz in his 1980 article "proposes four strategies that individual may use: authority, control, influence, and manipulation. ... Manipulation is a strategy that depends on having intimate knowledge about the other so that one can covertly get

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<sup>15</sup> "Fragment", WWE/2/1/2/10, provided by Richard Burton Archives, Swansea University.



the other to do something without being aware of being influenced in any way. This approach stereotypically has been seen as a female way of influencing the behavior of others” (Baber and Allen 233-4). In Williams’s novel, we seldom see a woman confronting a man directly which would be doomed to be a failure as in the case of Megan in *PBM-2*; instead, we observe how his women characters employ a particular strategy to influence the man through this strategy of manipulation. Hence, Williams gives a more nuanced definition of power in his characters and situations by infusing great capacity in women to not only harness and shape the male but also apparently to weaken and infantilize them.

### **3. Welsh women and Welsh nationalism**

Williams’s trust in women’s innate and resilient power and his seeming disappointment in the masculine power of men should not, however, be linked to his putative support for the feminist movement which asserts the complete equality of women and men. Williams admits his neglect of “the problems of women and the family” in *Politics and Letter*, remarking that, “it was not... that I wasn’t thinking about them... I think the likelihood is that I had such a comparatively unproblematic experience both in my own home and in my own family... that I was not as intensely aware of disorder and crisis in the family as I was in other areas” (150).

Consequently, Williams’s perception and intuitions about female power in his fictions precedes his recognition of the problems of women as a social fact and the feminist movement spreading throughout Europe and America in the era in which he was writing. Rather, this unconscious elevation of women and the corresponding unwitting degrading of men that we can detect in his fiction result from his own “unproblematic” experience in his home and family experience.

As noted by Dai Smith, Gwen, Williams’s mother, is “a self-assured woman,

content in ‘very loving’ marriage and much respected within the village for home-making qualities and her firm, sensible opinions” (*A Warrior’s Tale* 51). Also, Williams’s wife Joy Williams proved a capable and efficient partner throughout his life and work. Without her presence, Williams would almost certainly have been a very different person and writer, and would probably not have been so prolific and insightful in his work. Hence, women in Williams’s life and fiction play a very crucial role and become the source of men’s life power and energy, which demands tolerance, resilience, wisdom as well as integrity; the high respect for the role of wife and the deep appreciation of the wife’s contribution and sacrifice are undoubtedly intimated between the lines in Williams’s fiction.

On the whole, the female characters in Williams’s novels, particularly those from the working-class in Wales, are infused with a specific Welsh flavor and Welsh morality and ideology. Since the conquest of Wales first by the Romans and then the English, the various dominant powers spared no effort to homogenize Wales, not only in political and economic terms, but also in terms of culture, religion and morality. For example, the 1847 Report of the Commissioners condemned the Welsh as immoral and uneducated, which thus provided justification for the English authorities for a program of Anglicization. The Commissioners especially accused the Welsh women of immoral acts and deviant sexual behaviors, so as to subsequently attack the Welsh culture and morality; Myra could very well be the victim of such remnant morality and ideology used against the Welsh women generally. Later, early Welsh nationalists like Lady Llanover endeavor to identify, teach and advocate Welsh women’s domestic and moral roles in Welsh society. We can still see obvious traces of these efforts in Williams’s fiction, as the Welsh female characters are mostly advocates of familial ideology and represent the backbone of

their family. Such inherited moralistic considerations in Welsh culture may explain why Kate realizes that her adultery constitutes an act of infidelity to the family and of disruption to her class loyalties, and in the end chooses to return and “learn it again, being really married”; by sharp contrast, Rose, a middle-class housewife, in spite of having an affair with Peter, seems not to be charged with any affliction of conscience, as she has never been the core nucleus of the family with her husband messing with other women around and seldom staying at home.

For Williams, as his fiction suggests, the Welsh women are the central pillars their families and play a vital role in constructing Welsh identity and promoting a sense of national cultural integrity. In *BC*, Matthew experiences a difficult time rediscovering his Welsh identity, until he is confronted with Eira’s straightforward jesting about his study on Wales from London and her accusation of forgetting his sense of ordinary feeling and belonging. After this talk with Eira, Matthew phones Susan who discerns that her husband has resumed his Welsh intonation; walking through the total darkness of that night, Matthew easily finds his way back to his home in Glymawr, feeling in touch again with the place finally (347). Eira, the Welsh name for snow, hints at Williams’s intention to symbolize the purity and beauty of the unblemished Welsh community culture, which seems to be the decisive factor in reconciling Matthew to his “home”. Furthermore, snow possesses a powerful force to cover everything and give the familiar landscape quite new different appearance thereby transforming it into something new; Eira, too, seems to embody this capacity for projecting an enticing and attractive power on the local, ordinary and familiar feelings of the native culture, pulling Matthew back to the relationship he has long left behind, and enabling him to reconnect with it for future life.

Thus, by engaging in constructing the Welsh national identity and true democracy, the Welsh women are not only active participants, but they also constitute ideological symbols in asserting greater independence from the dominion of the political masters in London, as well as a genuine spirit of social democracy. In political, judicial and economic affairs, Wales has been subjected to England's sovereignty. Various endeavors to achieve independent nationhood for Wales had proved futile. Writing well before devolution and a Welsh assembly, Williams never saw the likelihood of Wales being totally free from British power politically. At the same time, however, he denounced the arrogant sovereignty of London and of the British government trampling on the will and rights of ordinary local people, who, as he saw it, should have self-determination in developing their own environment and community. As is acknowledged, Williams was a reformist rather than a revolutionary, and thus, what he valued was the Welsh working-class community culture, the kind of bonding that connects the ordinary people with one another, so as to form a powerful feeling of class solidarity. If we view the masculine power of the Welsh men as epitomizing the quasi-colonized state of Wales, then it can be very legitimately argued that the Welsh men are severely crippled by Britain; to pursue this trope and connect it to the preceding arguments of the present chapter, all the tough strategies of resistance against the overruling power of England failed and the manhood of Wales had become lame, or even partly emasculated. This explains why the image of crippled Welsh men is so recurrent in Williams's fiction; following this line of interpretation, it seems for him, the resolute, masculine and revolutionary way of rising up against the British dominion and fighting for an idealized democratic society for the working-class people has become disabled by various inevitable factors. Thus what Williams's fiction appears to suggest is a soft power embodied in

the strong women characters, a manipulative strategy to influence the ruling class in England, that is, to assert the Welsh culture as a completeness, a vigorous and solid existence, endowed with a forceful capacity and attraction, so as to influence England in a subtle and nonviolent way.

Therefore, to conclude, the gendering in Williams's fiction carries rich symbolic connotations: the author chooses to cripple many of his male characters, while, consciously or unconsciously bestowing on the female characters a quietly effective capacity for exerting strong influence over their husbands or brothers, etc. However, in this particular process of gendering power, Williams stimulates the reader to rethink the traditional gender orthodoxies and the established patriarchal discourses. In the process, consciously and unconsciously, he offers the reader the possibilities of a re-gendered social and political configuration, primarily in his Wales and by implication beyond. In this sense his fictional practice can be seen to connect implicitly, but compellingly, with his sociocultural theory.

## Chapter Four

### Modern Tragedy in Williams's Fiction

The notion of “tragedy” has been used to refer to a particular form of literary genre, dating all the way back to the Ancient Greek theatre, when Sophocles and Euripides wrote their masterpieces. It was subsequently revived during the renaissance period when Marlow and Shakespeare in England and then Corneille and Racine in France revived this classical literary genre, up until to the modern times when T.S. Eliot, Arthur Miller and others, played a significant role in extending this form of literature. However, George Steiner's book *The Death of Tragedy* in 1961 pointed out that tragedy, as a specific literary genre based on religious ceremonies, noble fallacies and historical mythologies with dancing and chorus singing, cannot be sustained in the modern period. Whereas, Williams, responding in part to Steiner's argument, asserts an extended understanding of tragedy, applying to the tragic events, moments and emotions in every ordinary feeling and experience of the common people. Moreover, Williams views the modern period as intrinsically tragic, as he quotes from one of Brecht's poems that “I ate my food between massacres. /The shadow of murder lay upon my sleep... There was little I could do” (Williams, *Modern Tragedy* 227), which reveals the intensity of suffering weighing on the modern people who long for a new democratic society and who find themselves incapable and helpless through struggles and failures. Tragedy, for Williams, is in “the life of a man driven back to silence, in an un-regarded working life”, “a terrifying loss of connection between men, and even between father and son”, “the loss of connection built into a works and a city”, “an action of war and social revolution... reduced to the abstraction of political history”, or in the events like “a

mining disaster, a burned-out family, a broken career, a smash on the road” (33-4), etc. Hence, Williams in his theoretical work reconceives the sublime concept of tragedy as a particular form of dramatic art, and draws it out to engage day-to-day lived experiences of the ordinary people especially.

In *Modern Tragedy*, Williams traces the history of tragedy from the classic age to the modern times, from Aristotle through Hegel to Nietzsche, and specifically examines the contemporary ideas on tragedy from the perspectives of Liberalism, Naturalism and Romanticism, and then draws out his own ideas on the relationships of tragedy, social disorder and revolution. Tragedy, in Williams’s ideas, is manifold, resulting from a variety of causes, among which, the most important for him is the incapability of maintaining the specificities of vivid and lived experiences through a number of factors related to loss of order and a sense of inevitability. This chapter will attempt to align Williams’s ideas of tragedy with the innately tragic stories in his fiction as well as one of his plays entitled *Koba*, which will be examined from five themes: tragedy and suffering, tragedy and order, tragedy and death, tragedy and evil, and lastly, tragedy, disorder and revolution.

Before we delve into specific discussions of the suffering characters and the tragic events in Williams’s fiction, one crucial notion has to be especially highlighted, that is, alienation, which is closely connected with tragedy. A core notion in Williams’s thoughts, which he not only reiterates in his various publications of his critical writings but also practices in his fiction is, specific lived experiences. Hence, Williams instinctively rejects the kind of theorization of tragedy that has not been lived through, the process of which ultimately constitutes alienation. Alienation has been formed of multiple layers. In the first place, classic tragedy solely centers on characters of noble status, indicating that the death of some people simply matters

more than that of others, which is a sort of alienation that, strips some people of basic humanity and reduces them to nobodies, but mere things. Second, even the man of noble status in tragedy becomes ceremonial and thus no longer “[embodies] his people and [embodies] also the common meanings of life and the world” (Williams, *Modern Tragedy* 74). Third, in the modern industrialized society, the imposed capitalist order is rather an abstraction without specific institutions, rendering humans as machines in a mechanical system, or even cogs in a giant machine, thus alienating the real people and assigning them to the nameless masses. In Williams’s opinion, Naturalism’s confidence in and emphasis on reason is a kind of alienation, the tragedy of which is invariably about the passive suffering of humans whose act and efforts are rendered insignificant confronting the overwhelming status quo; while, Romanticism, though focusing on the full humanity of an individual, is in turn also a form of alienation, an alienation of the irrational. To fight against human alienation, revolution is a necessary channel, however, “the revolutionary purpose can become itself abstracted and can be set as an idea above real men” (107). Hence, throughout the modern times, alienation has been prevalent, and a primary source of modern tragedies; it even infiltrates revolutionary movements and ideologies designed to end it. In the following section, the way that Williams embodies his ideas of modern tragedy in his fiction will be investigated as well as the way he sought to resolve practical and theoretical tension between tragedy and other related elements.

### **I. Tragedy, Accident and Suffering**

It has been a subject of contention in the modern age whether we can describe an everyday accident as “a tragedy”, or whether the usage is hyperbolic. Tragedy, as a classic dramatic art, centers its actions on kings, princes and such, whose fall or death leads to significant social and political consequences; hence, an accident



happening to an ordinary person, however appalling and pitiable it may be, has tended to be regarded as insignificant and thus devoid of tragic substance. In Williams's humanistic value system, however, bourgeois ideology has made positive efforts to assert that the suffering or the death of any individual is equally important as that of the king or the prince. According to his broad interpretation of the term, the excessive emphasis on the individual as an entity in himself has an inevitable corollary: "the general and public character of tragedy was lost" (Williams, *Modern Tragedy* 74). Therefore, Williams's conceptualization represents an insistent attempt and endeavor to extend the experience of ordinary suffering to a generalized social structure of feeling, bestowing the tragic significance onto what previously counted as mere accident and endowing it with the quality of tragedy. As Williams asserts, "where the suffering is felt, where it is taken into the person of another, we are clearly within the possible dimensions of tragedy" (71); consequently, the feelings of the sufferers have to be communicated through the shaped response of others who relate them to more general body of facts, and this communicability of the suffering is taken as most substantive for Williams. That explains exactly why Williams dwells on the tragic experiences of his relationship with his father through a variety of stories in his fiction, which represents a persistent effort to communicate the tragic feeling and a fictional but also autobiographical exemplum of his theoretical arguments and conviction.

This rather salient theme recurring in Williams's fiction involves the estrangement between father and son, between two generations; and in representing this, Williams generalizes his own acutely felt private experience and attributes to it a universal and public meaning. By infusing actual feelings and lived experiences into the typified representation of common suffering, Williams brings out what he

calls the actual and genuine tragedy through its literary articulation, thereby endowing it with deeper significance. Williams transfers his own divided feelings and split identity to many of his characters, and by so doing, he not only justifies his sufferings by referring to the similar cases of others, but also manages to extend individual experiences to the shared collective structure of feeling. This is achieved through the special form of the fictional writing and literary creation that illustrates his theoretical institutions and ideas.

In Williams's most known and read novel, *BC*, the story that centers on the negotiated relationship between the father and the son, Williams drafted six versions before he finally found an appropriate form, the non-linear fictional form that structure the past and the present into interludes, in order to create a sense of continuity amid the reality of an unfortunate father-son alienation. In this half-autobiographical novel, the protagonist Matthew, who grows up in the Welsh-England border village of Glynmawr, at first feels resistance toward the local community culture and narrow religious belief system. He experiences a sense of detachment from the community gathering Eisteddfod and on one occasion he even throws the chapel book into the nearby river; however, as Matthew leaves the village for higher education at Cambridge and then settles down in London as an academic scholar on Welsh emigration during industrialization, he in turn feels more and more attached to his Welsh identity and the more inter-connected and binding community life. Now his father seems to be the bridge between him and the firm and adamant beliefs in the community life of the local people. Matthew is exposed to a very different ideology from Cambridge and London, and the kind of academic work assures his means of livelihood, while abstracting him from real, actual and lived experiences of the real people he studies via statistical data and impersonal records.

In the novel, Matthew reflects that he has “a personal father, but no social father” (351), indicating that he ultimately identifies himself with his own father, but that ironically he is educated to take a more detached perspective on his own Welsh community; hence, he falls into an impasse: a personal father who gives him life, fails to provide him with the inspiration he seeks; a social father who provides for and supports him, fails to convince him. This dislocation between the natural father and the social father, ideology and everyday life, actuality and abstraction, causes Matthew to feel divided and opens him up to considerable anguish.

The same kind of suffering is also germane to Peter in *SG* and Dal Mered in the story of “The Coming of the Measurer” in *PBM-I* whose cases we have discussed in the previous Chapter. Peter, similarly, coming from the working-class family, receives education at Oxford under the supervision of a middle-class intellectual who does not really understand the real situation of the working-class yet still talk about it as though an expert on the subject. Likewise, Dal Mered, a boy from a small village in the West of Wales, leaves for Menvandir to learn to become a measurer, yet the measurers in Menvandir are utterly detached from the ordinary manual labor of the people and later they even make cunning use of their knowledge to extract food and material benefits from the people. Hence, Williams holds a very skeptical attitude towards knowledge, education and academic work, which have become the preserve of the ruling class, removed from his original purpose, to study and help the ordinary people. The ordinary people, the real people, are simply reduced to faceless statistics in the study of the academic work where “men seem to close their eyes and construct a conceptual world” (Williams, “dialogue tragedy” 26), and that’s why Matthew in the end starts learning to see through the blinding sun at its very center (Williams, *BC* 436). Thus his constructed fictional world reflects Williams’s firm belief as

advanced in his theory of modern tragedy that by living through a tragic experience, a man can be remade, and after disintegration, reintegration can be eventually achieved.

The problem of alienated father-son relations extends to *LY*, the protagonist of which named Gwyn, is born out of wedlock from a liaison between his working-class Welsh mother, Nesta, and his middle-class English father Norman Braose; although Norman indirectly takes care of Gwyn through his sister Emma, who not only facilitates Nesta's delivery of Gwyn but also provides necessary money for his upbringing. Norman also helps with the enrollment of Gwyn into Cambridge and discreetly makes the arrangements for his subsequent job in London. However, Gwyn never gets to see his natural father, the person who actually paves the way for his young life, a father at once absent in his life yet in another sense always present. Despite that, Gwyn grows up in the home of his adoptive father, a devoted working-class socialist worker, whose acts and ideas influence Gwyn to a much deeper extent. Despite his blood connection and arranged life in London thanks to his higher level education, Gwyn has experienced the particulars of everyday life in the working-class Welsh community, which has taken deep root in his life and thoughts; hence, though seemingly back on the right track of his original identity and social status, Gwyn still retains his firm belief in the socialist ideas he is imbued with and in fighting for a more egalitarian and democratic society for the working-class people.

A similar situation encountered by Hilda in the story of "The Gift of Acha" in *PBM-2*. Hilda's mother Acha, a Saxon woman, is sold to Idwallon as a slave when still pregnant with Hilda; thus, Hilda is born among the British, learning "to speak among other children, and [thinking] their language her own" (121) while Acha

keeps her English language and teaches Hilda in private. Nonetheless, Hilda “never [accepts] her mother’s idea of her: an idea of a quite other future, in freedom” (121). Later, Acha accidentally saves an English soldier named Hicel, so she jumps at the chance to gain a life of freedom for Hilda by making Hicel escort Hilda back to England. However, Hilda feels rather reluctant to go, as her whole life has been among the British, “all the people I know are round here” (131), she complains. In spite of her daughter’s reservations, Acha manages to send Hilda back to England where she is eventually given freedom. We are not informed whether Hilda enjoys her free life in England or not, yet Hilda’s reluctance to leave is evident, and in response to her objection, Acha asserts that Hilda’s free birth and status wouldn’t permit her to remain a slave in a foreign place.

Another similar encounter is experienced by Olen in the story of “Widows of the Welshry”, whose mother Nest is raped by a soldier. Olen has lived his life with Nest’s late husband, a bondman name Idris, until Idris dies in an ox accident, and Olen is informed of his free blood; however, Olen would very much prefer to stay with his bondman adopted father and his mother but for the accident; nonetheless after it occurs he is forced by Nest to leave to pursue a free life of his own.

All these characters—Gwyn, Acha and Olen—are by birth of a higher social status while living the first and formative part of their life among the lower-class people; later, they are forced to leave their cherished homeland, yet still holding fast to the more connected life of their known community. Though we are not told how Acha’s and Olen’s lives in freedom materialize, a free life for them could be comparable to the supposed free-minded spiritual life valued in academia; for better or worse, it is definite that the life among the working-class people for Gwyn, the life among the British slaves for Acha and the life among the bondsmen for Olen are

really lived and truly experienced by them, and that accounts for everything according to Williams's line of argument.

In the article "A Dialogue on Tragedy", Williams put forward a concept of regulation, a way of regulating oneself and regulating relationship under a particular order of values, or to employ his own terminology, "structure of feeling". While the order is more than purely individual, regulation normally occurs in one individual, but "in a different form of the same statement it occurs in many" (25). The characters that are born into a particular family, a community, a class, and live their life until fate turns their life in a different direction, often find great difficulty in adjusting themselves to the new life, in spite of having a blood relationship to the ones in the new environment. Hence, Williams draws the conclusion that what counts most is the lived experience and the specificities of reciprocal relationships within a particular community. Williams presents the view that the academic and intellectual work in the new world is based more on words than on lived experiences, and that the supposedly new freer life is more of an idea than an actuality. For him this is where tragic regulation occurs; although Williams is very much aware of the distinction between ordinary suffering and traditional concepts of tragedy, he manages to elevate this ordinary common suffering to a more elevated level of significance.

## **II. Tragedy, Design and Order**

Williams's argument that ordinary sufferings resulting from accidents can be considered tragic when endowed with common universal significance is compelling. The criteria for judging whether or not a specific example of suffering or accident contain general significance and thus can be assigned to the domain of tragedy, in accordance with the existing beliefs and the social order. Williams deems the

Romanticist emphasis on the individual as the entity complete in himself, in opposition to the necessary social and general ethos; hence, for Williams, tragedies of intensity occurs not in the conflicts between the existing beliefs and actual experiences, but in the real and dynamic tension between the old order and the new, “between received beliefs, embodied in institutions and responses, and newly and vividly experienced contradictions and possibilities” (Williams, *Modern Tragedy* 78). The conventional view is that “the essence of tragedy is a sense of order...an order of life not only more powerful than man but specifically and consciously operating upon him” (51), however, Williams intends to stress the dynamic role of the individual, asserting that “the relations between order and tragedy are always more dynamic” and that “order, in tragedy, is the *result* of the action” (75). Therefore, in Williams’s mind, order, rather than being static and fixed, represents a dynamic process of the tragic action, through which the individual and the social order are constantly interacting with each other, and thus the order is deprived of its conventional controlling and overwhelming element.

In “A Dialogue on Tragedy”, Williams argues that “the reality of tragedy is tension”, the tension between man and order. It is in the attempt of the man to break the order that tragedy generates, and during the negotiation between the two, the tragic action regulates the order as well as the man. In the fiction of Williams, it can be seen how the sufferings of the ordinary people and their individual tragedies are ascribed to an overarching order beyond the individual’s reach or even understanding. The substance of the tragic action lies between the existing and overriding order and the attempts of the oppressed to break that order.

In *SG*, what is presented to the reader is the concrete lived experience of two working-class families that emigrated from Wales to the works in Oxford. At the

time, there are conflicts between the management of the works and the workers: when the management means to reduce the work force so as to cut down expenses due to the decreased demand for the products, the workers are going on strike to keep jobs for everyone. Their declared position is that they are “marching for a principle, that they’ll share the available work, that they’d rather go short themselves than see others with nothing” (197). The life of the workers is bound up closed with each other, epitomizing the inter-connectedness and mutual responsibility of their former village life back in Wales. Here in the factory, the men who represent the Union and try to call for a strike know most of the workers by their first names (199), which shows the concreteness of their actually lived experiences. Conversely, the management representative, or the ruling class, who make decisions affecting the livelihood of the workers, seems to be anonymous and distant, as Kate observes bitterly:

“Where are they... while the rest of us are here? Where are they, the people who make these decisions and announce them as if they weren’t about human beings at all, but just percentage reductions in the labour force? Where are they, that they don’t feel what it’s like, here with us?” (189)

What strikes the reader is that the social order is at once dominating as well as abstracted, that is, it is present as well as absent: it is present, because it permeates every corner of the workers’ lives, which corresponds to Williams’s concept of hegemony; meanwhile, it is also absent, because the power is not specified in particular institutions or agencies, and even the management is just the delegate of the actual ruling elite—those who “just cut themselves out from people and society altogether, and they control everything, the people and the society” (189). Thus the tragic action occurs in the ordinary people’s struggle against their perceived enemies, because they have no idea where the enemies are or even what or who the enemies are; all that the ordinary people can do is to “stick by each other, and then they can’t



touch us” (190). Therefore in solidarity they go on strike together, not for their own sake, but for others’ sake, for the whole class’s sake, just as the workers in Goldsmith go on strike for the ones in Longton in *SG*, and Meredith consciously goes on strike in order to get Harry back to work in *BC*. Notwithstanding, the order or the system is simply there, somewhere, untouchable and intangible; what the workers fight for is never outside the system, and Kate realizes that the ruling class have taught them “too thoroughly, in their own ways, even the thinking that’s supposed to be against them is for them, on that” (Williams, *SG* 190). And thus, disorder and agitation has to be introduced so as to regain order in a dynamic process that will be discussed in the later part of this chapter.

In *FM*, Matthew is sent to Manod to investigate the feasibility of the Manod project, and through the survey, Matthew feels more and more reconnected to the closely inter-related community life of Wales. Through his official involvement he discovers behind the project, an illegal land acquisition scheme, the roots of which lie beyond the understanding of the local people. The scheme involves developing mid-Wales through the international investments and the participation of the government in Westminster, collaborating with multinational companies and acting as intermediary, for the transactions between the local people and the wealthy and powerful beneficiaries of the scheme. John Dance, once a local villager, is responsible for buying the lands of Manod from the local people who have inherited the fields from their fathers and grandfathers and worked on them for generations. The reader follows Matthew to Manod, and together with him, becomes acquainted with each of the local families; what the reader experiences through most of the novel is the actually lived life on the land with the inhabitants. However, it also strikes the reader that the life in Manod is rather bleak and deprived, having

experienced severe depopulation during the era of industrialization; under the provisions of his covert scheme, Manod will be used to develop Oil company subsidiaries, telecommunication company, some merchant bank and so on, regardless of the will of the local people, as it involves, “a force that cares nothing about them, that’s just driving its own way” (153). Hence, whether back in the industrial era or in the present time, Manod, as a microcosm of the whole of Wales, is subject to the overruling order from the remote and powerful forces outside the community, which never involves the interests of the people actually living on the land. The tragedy deepens when Matthew tries to break the pattern and re-adjust the Manod project to create some new possibilities which would address local people’s concerns and interests, settle people, give them work and bring them home, while the local people have no idea what the money they get means, since they are barely able to make ends meet and are unable to understand the hegemonic system that oppresses them. The novel is set up to illustrate the tension and contrast on the border, between the old order and the new one, between father and son. This is what Matthew, as well as Williams himself, envisages as a pressured renewal inside the people, through the land and through the lives that are already deeply shaped and committed by an ongoing process of changing and transforming. What constitutes the tragic action in the novel is exactly within the narrative tensions of these pressured lived experiences.

In the story of “The Wise One and the Slave” in *PBM-I*, the order is brought into a lot more concrete and actual form. At the time, the Black Mountains are occupied by an invading force, which establishes itself as the overlord, while making the local people slaves. It happens that when the lord’s son is riding back to the place after triumph in battle, a slave girl named Gorda accidentally grabs his boot and thus

commits an offence; as the lord's son is about to lose his temper and slash the girl, the girl's brother Derco shouts at him and warns him against the action. As a consequence, both Gorda and Derco are arrested and tried. At the trial there is contention between the old male slave, named Karan, and the Wise Man, Lugon, who serves the lord, regarding what law should be abided by. Karan interprets the incident as "a misunderstanding following a mere accident", while the Wise one named Lugon dismisses it as "a deliberate and repeated act of defiance" (299) which is a capital offence. Karan then goes on to insist on the law of the place as the sweetness of the place in their earth, saying that "to shed blood would sour it" (299); however, for Lugon, the law is not the place, but the order of the world, or the nature of the world, as they are guided by the gods to rule this place and enslave the people there, and so the power of the overlord should be respected. In the end, despite Karan stresses the law of protecting their kin and their ties with the native earth as well as each other, Derco is sentenced to death. So, Karan secretly releases Derco and is hanged in place of him. This is an open confrontation between an old inherited local order and a powerful invading order from outside that very much epitomizes the overall relationship between Wales and Britain at the time Williams was writing. It can be easily discerned that Williams sympathizes with Karan in valorizing the ties with the land and between the people, and also his magnanimous act of dying for Derco. The new rule of law on this land appears to respect the law of the slaves, as Lugon seems to debate the concept of the law with Karan on equal terms. Yet in reality the overlord's law takes precedence over local law, regardless of the place or the people, not to mention the customs and the ties between the people and the land. It is quite tragic for the enslaved people not only to be stripped of their freedom and rights by enslavement, but also to be given an illusion of justice and due process that

only deepens the tragic element of their predicament.

According to Williams's definition of the tragic action as "a kind of putting experience to the order, for ratification or containment" (Williams, *Modern Tragedy* 75), the core of tragedy will wither if an excessive emphasis is attached to order. The tragedies of Williams's characters are often attributed to their striving to retain their old beliefs in the challenging environment of an overriding new order. The tension between the man and the order is also, rather and actually, the tension between the old order and the new one, as the man himself is embodied the old beliefs. We can see therefore that the real tragedy lies in man's inability, even though he may be unconscious of it, to break out of the web of old beliefs, a dilemma that applies to Williams himself, as will be discussed in the final part of the thesis.

### **III. Tragedy and Death**

Death has been regarded as an ultimate and significant element in tragedy, especially the death of the tragic hero in classical tragedies. Williams has pointed out the archaic nature of tragedy that just focuses on the destruction of a hero of high rank, highlighting the significance of some deaths while dismissing other death as simply negligible. He argues, not only in *Modern Tragedy* but also other essays, that the unnecessary death of a citizen could be as real as and as tragic as the death of a king or a prince. Death is universal, inescapable and fated, a generalized experience for every man, that can generate a tragic sense of life not only for the people concerned but also in strangers who feel the sympathy. Death may be incurred by accident, or by disease, or by war; yet, "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" (80). Death symbolizes the loss of connection and the dislodging of social relationships and becomes a tragic reminder of the inevitable fate of the living; for

that matter, the process of dying itself is rather a tragic actor than a tragic action. Furthermore, Williams also contends that, “there is no tragedy before the release of personal energy, the emphasis of personal destiny” (Williams, “Hero Victim” 55), which corresponds to Williams’s earlier argument that the sense of tragedy withers with the increasing emphasis on order. If all tragic incidents can have a proper and convincing explanation as in religious belief in an afterlife, there would certainly be few tragedies; however, following the development of bourgeois tragedy and the tragedy of the ordinary individual, individualism and humanism are very much highlighted, thereby conveying a deeper sense of tragedy for modern times. In Williams’s fictions, the deaths of ordinary people are invested with intense tragic feeling and also a sense of universal significance. A number of deaths are depicted in his fiction, and these fall into three main categories: one kind of death results from senility and diseases; the second is because of unfortunate accidents that could have been avoided; the final sort is the result of war and conflict.

In his representation of the deaths of the old people, tragic action occurs not simply in the contrast between their strong prime years and the weakening impotent dying days, but also in signifying the dislocation between generations and in social relationships. In *BC*, in addition to Harry’s death, the reader learns of the deaths of Harry’s parents. When Harry’s mother is severely sick in hospital, Harry and his father and his brothers “went and walked in the market” (237), and the words stick in Matthew’s mind when he faces his own father’s dying. In spite of the death of a parent, life has to go on with “a living connection between memory and substance” (394-5). Also, there is a contrast and correspondence between Harry coping with his father Jack’s death and Matthew coping with Harry’s. When Jack dies, “the home is quite, the patch quite. The valley quite still, the mountain dark. When will the cry

come? Let it come now, let the voice come. In silence now... Let the cry come, let the son cry" (324), yet, Harry arranges Jack funeral without crying and without words, suppressing all the woeful feelings deep within his heart and memory.

However, when Harry dies, "there [is] no need for a voice for these words, which [is] already deep in memory" (427), Matthew "[stands] and [weeps] as he [has] not wept since childhood: beyond the possibility of control" (422), as Harry's death "beat into him, without pity, without meaning, without pause" and "the terrible mindless rhythm [allows] nothing but itself, its own annihilating darkness" (424). Matthew as well as Harry both feel the dissipation of generational relations, in silence and in crying, in stillness and darkness, a seemingly irretrievable loss of identity and continuity.

In *FM*, Mrs Lewis, the only one of the older generation remaining in Manod, meets a timely death before the implementation of the Manod project. In her dying bed, she imparts the sentiment to her listeners that "only I've been all my life here in Manod. I don't want to see it cut up" (101) and that "It's for the young ones, the changes... It'll be all cut up, all the fields around here. I don't want to see it" (101). The death of Mrs Lewis, to a great extent, corresponds to that of Elis in *PBM* who lives his whole life "in one piece, in one place" (Williams, *PBM-1* 5), and also to Karan the slave's belief in the "mark of a tying" to the earth; for that matter, it is the belief of the whole generations of lives in Wales. Hence, Mrs Lewis's death also means the loss of a whole old generation or even older generations in Manod and is emblematic of the death of an old way of life and an old order, giving way to a new way of life and a new order, so that "a whole order is destroyed in the one death" (Williams, "Dialogue Tragedy" 30). What's more, watching Mrs Lewis dying, Susan "[feels] old herself, her effective life finished, as her boys [grows] up to young

men... a generation further on: a single frail life, on beyond her family” (Williams, *FM* 101); hence, the tragic action spreads to the audience as well as the participant arousing in them the traditional response of tragedy, pity and fear. Therefore, the death of old people carries multiple meanings, personal, generational as well as social: it is indeed a loss of identity and connection as the younger generation goes on living in a whole new different way, yet in another sense, the identity is regained and the connection is resumed in continuity through the tragic action remaking oneself and one’s relationship.

In the second type of death depicted in his fiction, Williams involves the reader in deliberation on tragedy and ordinary death by accident. Such accidents bring about unnecessary deaths, the untimely interruption into their former life of continuity, a severing of a whole network of social relationships and an ending of further possibilities for the people concerned. Williams argues, “tragedy is not facts, but the response to the facts” (Williams, “Dialogue Tragedy” 24); when the death becomes significant to other people and the feelings generated in them are articulated, the action of tragedy is in process and is carried out. Jack’s death in a motor accident itself appears to be a simple case of a traffic accident, yet where the tragedy lie is in the repercussions the incident has sparked: leaving an old man alone lamenting the death of his son, letting a woman bear the mark of shame and ultimately lose her sexuality, and making a girl fatherless before she is born; moreover, the girl is on the verge of losing her sexuality because of her mother’s disgraceful mistake. The death of Jack is by no means an ending in itself, but it sets off a series of tragedies afterwards. In the story of “Marod, Gan and the Horse Hunt” in *PBM-I*, the cripple boy Gan has to be left behind by the river when the others go hunting. Unfortunately, they are prevented from coming back to fetch Gan owing to the unexpected storm,

and the next morning Gan is found to have died from cold during the night. One of the men shouts “Wrong. Wrong. Wrong” (28) and weeps with the others; the response to Gan’s death is indeed intense, and the tragic feelings become even stronger when they realize that it is wrong—whether in the sense that it is a mistake that could have been avoided, or in the sense that they feel morally guilty for the death. In the story of “Bibra in Magnis” in *PMB-2*, Bibra has served most of her life in slavery to the lord in Magnis, and when her nephew Olen from her homeland Banavint comes with his lord to Magnis to make a deal, Bibra and Olen quarrel, each defending the interests of their own lord. In the dispute, Bibra is accidentally knocked down and trampled to death by the fugitive stallions. Though Bibra dies from fighting for her master’s benefits, it is Olen who acknowledges Bibra as “the sister of [his] father” instead of “the servant of the lord in Magnis” (60) and buries Bibra. There is a profound sense of tragedy in the discrepancy between how Bibra has served her master and how she is treated in the end, and also in the distinction between the attitudes of Bibra and Olen in the face of hard choices. Again in the “Widows of the Welshry”, when Ieuan’s wife is about to go into labor, Ieuan intends to get back home early after the transporting the logs on the oxen wagon, so Ieuan overloads the wagon regardless of Idris’s warning, which causes the fatal accident in the pouring rain. It is ironic that Ieuan’s intention of being present for the birth of his child leads to his demise, which again results in a tragic case of a fatherless child and an unsupported wife. These deaths resulting from accidents bear deeper tragic significance for the living as the sudden severance of the relationship causes, an even more tragic aftermath than the death itself.

The final category of death in Williams’s fiction is that of war deaths which creates tragic significance on multiple levels. In his study *Modern Tragedy*, Williams



deplores the fact about war that, “millions have been killed, and in the end they are no more than statistics” (31). In the novel *LY*, we witness, through the eyes of Bert Lewis the death of a young boy named Paul Howe, still a second-year Cambridge undergraduate, in the Spanish Civil war. Paul makes the choice to fight in Spain, coming to Spain as a stranger to fight something alien, or in the words of Norman Braose his recruiter: “In a strange country, wearing a strange uniform, in a strange formation. Fighting as strangers against aliens, in a bare land” (49). Paul is aware of the fact that “the outcome, either way, will be a new strangeness. If we live to see it we shall still be strangers, to each other and to ourselves” (49). What Paul denounces is a doomed sense of alienation in a dislocated capitalist world, and the choice to fight in the Spanish war just represents a different kind of alienation and strangeness to him. During the war, when asked whether his mother agreed with his decision to join up, Paul says, “of course she didn’t want it. She thought I was rejecting her. Rejecting the kind of life she’d been making” (56). Hence, Paul’s decision also symbolizes a resistance to an old order, while his sudden, cruel death in the war reaffirms the alienating order of the world.

Likewise, in the episode of “The Monk’s Story” in *PBM-2*, two sons also reject their father’s way of life and choose to go to fight for their lord in a war. The father Conan is a monk who as a younger man abandoned his job as a priest and marries a girl named Eirwen for love; and for the present, their grown boys take the fighting in a war as a vision from God and want to see a history being made by joining the Welsh forces as bowmen. In an attempt to dissuade his sons from going to war, the father reveals the truth that, “it is a war of the barons. It is not a war for these barefoot boys” (254); he also tells the boys that they only owe service to their own land, not to the quarrels of others (255). Sadly though, the boys decide to go to war

and are killed in the battle; the father regrets involving the mother in all this, while the mother comforts him for the loss, saying that, “but then there would have been no real life at all” (258). It is tragic, just like Conan says, “that we know such things must happen, while our world remains of this kind” (259), yet, however tragic and inevitable the suffering in life would be, the people are actually living out their real life, and that seems to count greatly. Williams claims tragedy to be in the images of connection, and “the death is a break in continuity and is absolute”, however, “in seeing it [death] the connections are made again, made new” (Williams, “Dialogue Tragedy” 35).

#### **IV. Tragedy and Evil**

Evil has always been a central concept in Christian theology, as well as in other specific ideologies. However, Williams seems rather reluctant to view evil as absolute and transcendent, as some may claim, or support the belief that people are born to be good or evil. Rather, he argues that a theory of innate evil would be in its turn “a suppression of other facts of human life” (Williams, *Modern Tragedy* 82). In some particular ideologies, evil might be generalized as an absolute and even singular force, yet Williams argues that evil, as embodied in individual persons, epitomizes the vile social system. The criteria for judging somebody or something as good or evil are for him the normalizing consequence of some particular dominating order, typically political and/or religious. In such case, the real tragic action seems rather to lie in “the struggle of good and evil in our souls and in the world” (83). Furthermore, classical tragedy often shows the fact of evil as inevitable and irreparable, so that tragedy becomes a theory or a mere salutary reminder, with oversight of the actual tragedies. Also, such a concept of tragedy generally dramatizes evil in a specific form, which detaches us rather than moves us towards

actual tragedies, since all we can interpret in such tragedy is the dramatization and reaffirmation of evil. Hence, a generalization and abstraction of evil would certainly lead to a loss of connection with the real and actual experiences that could have been lived through, as “evil ends, and is meant to end, any actual experience. It ends, among others, the normal action of tragedy” (83). Finally, Williams regards the act of putting out his eyes of the tragic hero as not containing the tragic action, but rather, creating an absolute blindness, “a rejection of particulars, a refusal to look into sources and causes and versions of consequence” (83). For Williams, it is significant that a particular evil in a tragic action be at once experienced and lived through:

in the process of living through it, and in a real action seeing its moving relation with other capacities and other men, we come not so much to the recognition of evil as transcendent but to its recognition as actual and indeed negotiable. (83)

It follows that people are evil in particular ways and in specific occasions owing to the innate limits of humanity, but in choosing and struggling, in negotiating and weighing, the tragic action is actually experienced through the act of evil whose real source is precisely “this continuing and varying activity”.

In *SG*, the wavering and aching bewilderment of Kate is shown as well as that of her son Peter in face of conflicting forces and orders in a time of personal as well as social disturbance and commotion. Kate’s adultery with Arthur Dean, is not only morally condemned by the community but also hurts and breaks her husband Harold and his son Peter greatly. It could be viewed as an evil action by the standards of its social as well as personal ties and obligations. We, as the spectators as it were of this tragic situation, witness Kate’s gradual “fall” and see how she is frustrated by Harold and the mundane life she leads, how she meets the challenge from the ideas of a different class, how she fantasizes about a new life lived in freedom and how she

finally becomes disillusioned; thus, it is a specific evil that is being weighed, negotiated and experienced, so that old relationships are made new from a new perspective. Likewise, Peter, son of working-class parents, and student in Oxford with the potential future of becoming a middle-class intellectual, is immensely confused and feels a sense of emptiness. He is repulsed by the middle-class hypocrisy and their detachment from the ordinary people, while he still envisions a new life with Rose, a middle-class housewife friend, as a way of escape from his split identity; in the meantime, he still gives Beth, the adopted daughter of his uncle, the expectation of marrying her, more a sign of faithfulness to his people and his class than out of a really sincere love. In the process, Peter ends up with hurting both girls; in Williams's depiction, though, Peter is certainly not evil, nor does he commit any evil act; rather, the evil in the class system and established order is expressed through Peter, who is not just an individual character but a young man trapped in his cultural heritage and an intricate web of social relationships.

Gethin Jenkins in *FM* inherits the family's land in Manod, with his younger brother Trevor working for him. Gethin is shrewd and calculating: he delays Trevor's wages for months which makes the future prospects of Trevor and his wife very difficult; he willingly becomes an accomplice of John Dance in starting their sinister enterprise of buying up all the lands in Manod; for that matter, he cunningly persuades Ivor to buy with his land the shares of the company that Dance and he started using Ivor's portion of the land as collateral, which is clearly a despicable act. Gethin, a native villager in Manod, becomes the final link of the alienating and unethical venture-capitalist system that means to develop Manod on the sole basis of capital expansion and profit making without any regard to the actual needs and will of the local people. Hence, Gethin can be characterized as evil, and as a complicit

lackey of the Capitalist system; however, since we see Gethin's evil being lived through, it becomes a rather liminal form of evil. Gethin is otherwise depicted as a very gentle and caring man, who comes at Gwen's first call to save Ivor's life when his leg is trapped leg under the overturned farm vehicle. Moreover, in spite of the harsh rejection of the financial demand of his sister-in-law Modlen, he "[follows] her, unnoticed, and [watches] her along the road" (96) when she goes back home through the dark night. Thus his complicit dealing in the acquisition of the land in Manod can also be interpreted as his last hope of raising money to pay Trevor and help his brother and Modlen achieve a better quality of life. Hence, what Williams portrays in the character of Gethin is not pure evil, but a process of negotiating and flux in the struggle between good and evil.

By contrast, in the story of "Seril and the New People" in *PBM-1*, we witness horrible evil inflicted on an innocent girl as well as on her lover in this story set in 1700 BC. Seril grows up as a slave to Laran and Kevil, both of whom treats her cruelly, with Laran constantly beating her since childhood and Kevil giving her hard blows while raping her when still an adolescent of fourteen. So, Seril runs away in terrible pain from her wounds and bruises, and is saved by a young man from another tribe named Anailos who takes her in to his own people in Stone Valley; having been nursed back to health and now living with Anailos's people, Seril feels the beginning of a new life, and the young couple naturally fall in love and plan to marry.

However, Anailos insists on the law of the mountains, that is, it is necessary to get the agreement of Seril's own people. Seril, despite her tremendous reluctance, accompanies Anailos back to her own people; though the agreement is reached, Seril's return lets Kevil know that Seril is still alive. Afterwards, Kevil covertly goes to Stone Valley to recapture Seril and kills Anailos with a heavy axe, and in despair

Seril drives a knife into her own heart and dies beside her beloved. Kevil is indisputably an evil character in this story, but from his perspective, Seril is his possession and Anailos has stolen her from him, presumably he would not have killed Anailos if he had not been in the way of his plan to regain Seril. Again, the evident evil in Kevil is the epitome of an evil system of slavery that facilitates and appears to justify his actions. To consider another angle, if there had not been such a paternalistic law, or even if Anailos could have weighed Seril's feelings above the law, the story might have ended with a conventional "they lived happily ever after". Hence, even back in ancient times, a law or a hierarchal order may be beneficial, but it also constrains and limits people, sometimes with unfortunate outcomes.

In emphasizing the lived experiences and particularities of evil, Williams does not seek to suppress other facts and aspects of human life. In *VT*, the reader's impression of Minister Buxton is that he is a member of the ruling-class who opposes genuine devolution for Wales with an air of arrogance and contempt. However, Williams adds the character detail that:

Buxton is not, by origins, a ruling-class man... whose authority and whose ruthlessness derive from his absolute brief in his models: rational models of what is and must be. It is never Buxton you challenge; it is fact and reason itself. (12)

So Buxton himself is also partly a victim of an alienating and dehumanizing system that solely stresses facts and reason, profits and power, irrespective of the concreteness and actuality of the life of the ordinary people. Williams here suggests that evil is inherent in his political function and representation as opposed to being simply a flaw in this humanity. Similarly, in *LY*, on the surface, Norman Braose, from an ambassador's family, seduces Nesta, an innocent working-class girl, and gets her pregnant. He subsequently deserts her, despite his claim that he loves her and leaves her permanently, just as he gives up his socialist beliefs, betrays the

working-class and becomes a double agent after his involvement in the Spanish Civil War. However, it is revealed in the later part of the novel that Norman has provided Nesta and their son Gwyn with financial assistance and personal connections to help Gwyn go to Cambridge and then establish himself in London; besides, towards the end of the novel, old Norman discloses that, what he has deserted is not socialism in its proper sense, but generalized ideas, shortsightedness and prejudice, and what he feels responsible for is “conserving and saving the earth” (360), which represents “not generalities but life” (362). Hence, what Williams conveys through these specific characters is lived through experiences in the struggle between conflicting ideas, social and political orders, classes and cultures, of men and women who have their true beliefs and real humanity.

## **V. Tragedy, Disorder and Revolution**

In *Modern Tragedy*, Raymond Williams devotes a significant section to his discussion about tragedy, disorder and revolution. He critiques the conventional tragic ethos for being separated from actual societies, and being associated more with ideas and metaphysical concepts than with social reality and social action. A time of revolution is a time of disorder, and given the inevitable suffering and killings, is also a time of genuine tragic actions. What Williams explores is the possibility of the vicious and inevitable circle of tragedy being dissolved in the revolutionary disorder, in a process of furthering and realizing the full humanity of all people. In this part, Williams’s ideas on this aspect of modern tragedy will be discussed by linking the revolutionary aspects of his novel *VT* with his 1966 play *Koba* (incorporated in the earliest version of *Modern Tragedy*).

In any society and culture the actual lived experiences of disorder and tragedy are usually assigned greater significance, at least retrospectively, than talking and

writing about revolution, for, “in experience...the new connections are made, and the familiar world shifts, as the new relations are seen (Williams, *Modern Tragedy* 87). The connection between revolution and tragedy has to be lived and known, rather than simply recognized and acknowledged as ideas. Thus, the real tragic action occurs most deeply in the experiences of disorder suffered by the people, as well as in their comprehension and recognition of the events, and in the process of ultimate resolution and change. Ideas of revolutions may be heroic and epic and invested with grand and novel intent, yet the experience of the revolutionary struggles, is inevitably harsh and bleak. Hence, Williams’s novels convey the harshness of the disorder, and the bitterness of chaos and suffering. Only by lived-through experiences can new connections could be found and made, conflicts and disorder resolved, a fresh social order established and society changed for the better.

However, during a revolution that is intended to end the alienation of humanity, a new alienation is produced according to Williams’s perceptions. For one thing, as the revolution continues, its original purpose can become blurred, even abstracted, with the slogans and banners communicating more a general idea than a specific human need and action. Frequently, as history reveals, revolutionary action aimed at liberating the people, descend into mere fighting for power, which becomes an end in itself, rather than a means. Joseph, the leader of the revolution in *Koba*, asserts that, “The revolution... for me, for the people, it is a fight for power” (217). Besides, the real pains and actual tribulation borne by the people tends to be glorified as heroic and necessary sacrifices. Consequently, the revolutionary purpose becomes negated in the exact process of freeing the people, and become its own enemy.

Alienation is also inherent in the process of revolution in another sense: the revolutionary leading the suffering people to revolt against the old system, at first



identifies himself with the people, and then more and more, the revolutionary and the ordinary people become alienated from one another, until both become mere appellations and abstract notion. In Williams's illustrative drama *Koba*, Koba, as a figure from romance ballads, is an outlaw and characterizes himself as "the avenger of his people, and Koba means the man who cannot be mastered" (210). The revolutionary Joseph picks Koba as his name, since he is determined to be the avenger of his people; thereafter, Joseph never sees himself as an ordinary man, but as Koba, and asserts, "I am nothing. I have no name, for I am the people" (222), and for that matter, "I, Koba, am many men. I myself am nothing, but I have become Koba" (222). As the play develops, despite Koba's reiteration of his role of representative for the people, it becomes clear that Koba's aim is in fact to remake the people. Koba sees himself as the abstract emblem of the people, rather than actual living people. And in turn, Koba himself becomes more and more abstracted and alienated, and thus no longer a real individual, but a Party leader and symbol of a regime; as towards the end of the play, the doctor sees Koba as "the image, the sign of the leader", but has already forgotten who he is as a human being like everybody else. Ironically Koba himself is abstracted by the society as an image and sign, has been reinforcing this view of himself by constantly reaffirming himself as the people, to the point that he is no longer a man "but... a machine, an absurd machine with prefabricated answers" (249). In *VT*, Minster Buxton is also more a representation, an image of British imperial power, than an actual human person. However, in order to undercut the sense of alienation that we see in *Koba*, Williams informs the reader of Buxton's personal history, thereby clarifying his role as simply the functionary of the oppressive system.

Likewise, although Koba reiterates that he employs every means to fight for the interests of the people, supporting them in their poverty and suffering, the people, as individuals, are, in fact nowhere to be found in his words; in any case, the plural form “people” denies the specific need to reference any actual person by referring to an abstract entity. For example, when the character Mark protests about Joseph’s (Koba’s) way of talking to him as if he were speaking to a dog, Joseph maintains, “how you are spoken to is of no importance. You are one single person, a tiny individual among millions” (225). Hence, a specific person does not count for anything, only the people, the vast majority of the ordinary people, have any significance for him. Joseph also argues, “if we have fifty members then we have fifty ideas of the revolution, all different” (213) which according to him will make the Party fifty times weaker, so from the very start he demands order, discipline and obedience from the people; consequently, the free will and real needs of at least forty-nine people will be denied and negated. Hence, the revolution is imposed upon the real men and women who constitute “the people”, rather than being a free choice they have made; ironically, therefore, the active agents of revolution become in their turn the factual enemies of the people. Accordingly, the revolutionary action which aims to end the human alienation, creates a new alienation, reducing the men and women of whom the society consists to an abstracted condition.

Besides disorder and alienation, another primary tragic action created by revolution is created through the dilemma between good and evil, between morality and revolution, between a tragic humanist and a tragic revolutionary. Williams deplores the unavoidable hardness in the process of revolution, not only during the revolutionary struggle when millions of ordinary lives have to be sacrificed themselves in order for the millions after them who will live better lives as a result of

their sacrifices, but also after the success of the revolution when the hardest discipline has to be imposed: the discipline that is imposed “on itself and over relatively innocent people” (Williams, *Politics Letter* 395) has the aim of protecting the positive outcome of the revolution from being undermined, which for Williams would compound the tragedy. The inevitability of barbaric killing and chaotic disturbance accompanying the revolution does not necessarily preclude a space for negotiation, but the harsh reality of the situation militates against such a compromise solution. As one of the revolutionaries in *Koba* observes, “it is the hardest, the deepest tragedy: this coming to terms with the world as it is, when we have seen what it might be. There is never a choice” (Williams, *Modern Tragedy* (1966) 243). There is an obvious dilemma: revolution is always accompanied by necessary evil, as “we have to fight the enemy with the enemy’s weapons or we shall simply be beaten, as the good have always been beaten” (243). Hence, in order to succeed, the hardened revolutionaries who have become skilled in using the enemy’s weapons, are in danger of ending up simply replacing the rulers instead of winning a bright future for the people in whose names the revolution is launched; if the revolutionaries try to behave ethically, the revolution is doomed to be a failure, since the struggle represents “the best of humanity against the worst, and the worst always won” (232). Consequently, the revolutionaries in *Koba* come to the following conclusion: “when we were praised, we knew we were wrong. When we were seen as reasonable, we knew we were weak” (233), and then “the language of good and evil is madness, is death” (244). Indeed, the dichotomy of good and evil forces them into an impasse, which ineluctably leads to where the deepest tragedy lies. For Williams this conundrum defines the inextricable relationship between revolution and tragedy, which is essentially a vicious circle.

And so, for Williams, the revolution needs to be a long revolution, one affecting the lived experience of each individual personally and in harmony with the community as a whole; revolution should never be a fixed determinate event, a fluid state of continuity. In *Koba*, the revolution against the old regime succeeds, yet there occurs a new alienation within the previous revolutionary Parties; an iron-willed leader demands hardened discipline from the people, and deliberate slaughter follows. The outcome of all this represents a paradox whereby, “the fixed harshness of a revolutionary regime... has turned to arrest the revolution itself” (Williams, *Modern Tragedy* 241); therefore, a new revolution should be started against the fixed consciousness of revolution, struggling against the new alienation. What Williams follows is a fresh call to 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” (Williams, *Modern Tragedy* 108); and in making such connections, the people are living through the real action and experiences of tragedy.

In one of his articles, Williams defines “tragedy” as “mainly the conflict between an individual and the forces that destroy him” (Williams, “Hero Victim” 54); the forces could be natural catastrophe, accidents, a suffocating and alienating system, war, revolution, human flaws, and so on, so in his critical paradigm the concept of tragedy is present in events encountered in everyday experiences in life, as lived by ordinary individual. Williams stresses the tragic facts of these events and queries, “how it is finally possible to distinguish between an event and response to an event” (Williams, *Modern Tragedy* 70). This explains why Williams becomes trapped in the tragic impasse, for all the “facts” that occurs to him are integral to the “responses” he has made to these events; given that he identifies himself so deeply with his own value system, he cannot see any other choice of responses. The fundamental

premises he adheres to are these: the concreteness of actually lived experiences should be valued, the complete humanity of every single person should be fulfilled regardless who he/she is; death is a sad but inescapable reality and evil is socially conditioned and should be condemned as such. Hence, for Williams, caught in a dilemma between being both humanist and a revolutionary, ordinary human tragedy and suffering cannot be redeemed either through revolution or through gradual social enlightenment. Whereas his theoretical work suggests the opposite, the plots and characters of his novels attest this harsh truth.

## Conclusions

Raymond Williams's fiction is a vivid embodiment of his ideal conception of true realism, in which "society is seen in fundamentally personal terms, and persons, through relationships, in fundamentally social terms" (Williams, *The Long Revolution* 287). What is presented to the reader throughout his body of fiction is a high degree of personal feelings and concrete realities in the lives of individual characters, rather than an epic panorama of historical events; at the same time, the big events in modern history have been lived and personally experienced by the characters, for example, in *BC*, the 1926 General Strike is not depicted from a general perspective, but is felt and experienced inasmuch as it concerns the characters, including Harry, Morgan and the station master.

Williams's endeavor to achieve a very high degree of realism exhibits itself in the following aspects. In the first place, the protagonists of all these novels manifest distinct autobiographical traits, in particular, *BC*, which draws greatly from the author's own experiences. By exploring the split identities of the characters, Williams himself re-examines his own identity and seeking to remedy this split. Besides, the fictional form of *BC* is very unusual having undergone revision repeatedly until Williams finally arrived at the version we see in the published *BC*. The chapters in *BC* alternate between the period from the settlement of Harry and Ellen in Glynmawr to Matthew's leaving for Cambridge on a scholarship and the current time when Matthew comes back to visit his dying father Harry. The time gap narrows as the novel goes on, and the two time lines converge to the present, by deliberate arrangement, by which Williams attempts to symbolically narrow, and ultimately reconnect, his divided identities. As Dai Smith notes, in *BC* Williams was

able to “discover a form which would let him present his parents’ lives whole, and from inside their perspective, whilst connecting their lived experience to his own, necessarily uncoupled existence” (*A Warrior’s Tale* 41). Finally, the stories and the characters in these novels are mainly grounded in working-class Welsh communities among people that Williams had grown up with and with whom he was familiar. As he disclosed in *Politics and Letters*, “it’s incredibly difficult to create characters who you don’t feel in the gut; at some level if you don’t know who they are you perhaps don’t have sufficient energy to project them” (289). In his fiction he tries to evoke and embody a genuine community, as well as an assertive individuality, in an attempt to bridge the gap between more detached social observation and actual deep personal feeling.

One interesting observation of Williams’s novels shows that *BC*, *LY* and *PBM* are composed according to more of an extended, and in the case of *PBM*, epic, diachronic narrative structure, whereas *SG*, *FM* and *VT* are more compressed and synchronic in terms of their narrative trajectory. In the synchronic narratives, Williams deploys the tension between the given social and political system and the emergent structure of feeling, which is reflected in the inner lives as well as the action of the protagonists: as the stories go on, the intensity of the conflicts increases and the system becomes more manifest and at the same time more elusive. These narratives usually end with an exposed glimpse of the overriding social and political system that accompanies a deepened awareness of the class differentiation and a heightened tension between the ruling and the ruled. Likewise there is the perceived sense of powerlessness to change the system that is mitigated by a strained optimism and fervent hope for the future. Thus, *SG*, *FM* and *VT* are all open-ended: *SG* ends with Kate and Peter seemingly reconciled with each other, yet it is certainly clear

that radical ideas and aspirations endure in their minds. However, the gap between mother and son, the well-educated and the under-educated, the working class and the intelligentsia, is still deep between them; *FM* ends with the Susan's departure from Manod, after the climax where Matthew argues for a true Manod project in the interests of the people rather than for the benefit of the international investors and the ruling class; *VT* ends with Lewis Redfern joining the Volunteers in fighting for democracy, for socialism and for Wales, against the overriding government, yet without a strong sense of faith in future prospects. Hence, through the synchronic narratives, Williams manages to amply unfold the conflicts and the implicit tensions between the characters and the classes. As a result the outlook of these narratives often strikes the reader as somewhat gloomy; in contrast, through the diachronic narratives, Williams points to a quite promising and bright direction as to how things will develop in the fullness of time. For example, in *BC*, even though the loss of connection between the father and the son, between an intellectual and his natal community, is represented as unfortunate, a possibility of reconnection is suggested with Matthew going back to his own family and his sons. Most readers may regret the love relationship between Nesta and Norman in *LY* being cut off by Norman's callous deception, and the two never care, or rather, dare to meet each other again for the rest of their lives; however, such regrets are compensated by the transitions of the time, the generations and the society, as well as the new generation's structure of feeling as represented by Gwyn. *PBM* presents to the reader a panorama of the changing groups of people living in the Black Mountains with shifts in social structures and dominion, which posits a social history that challenges the grand narrative of imperial discourses. While the synchronic narratives tend to illustrate more short-term social tensions and conflicts, the diachronic ones leave the reader



with a sense of social and cultural continuity and, ultimately, of reconnection and solidarity. It is in the diachronic narrative structure that the reader gains a clearer view of an emergent culture superseding the dominant culture. In this way, the reader achieves a clearer understanding of how the structure of feeling changes and evolves.

What Williams reiterates in his recurrent themes is the importance of measuring and assessing in order to reconnect and ultimately cross the border. Indeed he argues that “borders are meant to be crossed”, not only the border between England and Wales, but also between academic research and actual lived experiences, between the present and the past. His fictional writing reflects this dichotomy on a very personal level, not only in relation to his past experience but also to his present nostalgia for the border country in light of his work-imposed exile from the land of his parents and ancestors. These gaps can be wide, and to measuring the gap becomes important in order to build a connecting bridge. Matthew Price’s job is to measure the Welsh people’s displacement and their relocated settlements, yet he becomes confused about the method and process of measurement, “what is it really that I must measure” (Williams, *BC* 4); it is not until quite late in the novel, after he is questioned by Eira about the his job, that he finally learns to measure, and that night by “[taking] the measure of the darkness” (347) he comes back home. Furthermore, in the end of the novel, “the distance is measured, and that is what matters” (436), thus Matthew realizes that “by measuring the distance, we come home” (436). In *PBM-1*, Dal-Mered is a measurer, measuring the sun, the moon, the stars, and the natural phenomena, yet the work of measuring in Menvandir distances him further and further from the actual lives of the ordinary people; it is only on the way back home that his close contact with people from another community in the Black Mountains rescues him, and teaches him how to measure the important things in life in its real

sense. The objective measurements of his previous life have become alienated from lived experiences and actualities, and only the subjective measurements, measuring the people's real life and their real feelings and their thoughts, can bring relief and a sense of deep-rooted satisfaction. In this connection Jeremy Hooker<sup>16</sup> refers to the act of measurement: "to measure as a historian, but without abstracting movements from their lived experience" (5), because "seeing and measuring the human world require both attachment and detachment" (56).

The Welshness of Williams is evident to the reader throughout his novels, as all of the fictions attest. Both in his fiction and his critical writings he endeavored to justify the legitimacy of working-class culture and Welsh culture. Nonetheless, having been educated in and influenced by Leavisite criticism, he seems to have had difficulty rejecting the Leavisite idea of "the great tradition" that the critic can establish precisely what represents the best works of English fiction. Though he proposes considerable changes to the great tradition in his critical study *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence* by highlighting George Eliot, Thomas Hardy and D.H. Lawrence as the three working-class autodidacts, Williams never succeeds in freeing himself from the influence of Leavis. His firm belief in the best high cultural tradition in educating ordinary people may well have been a factor in this seeming inability to reject Leavisite categories of detached and elitist criticism. And clearly a number of his early writings carry the obvious mark of influence of Leavisite criticism. Another point that needs to be taken into account is that, although Williams is speaking FOR the working-class, and FOR Wales, he is fundamentally speaking TO the ruling-class, TO the elite, or possibly TO Leavis. Williams writes specifically about the aloofness of Leavis in "Seeing a Man Running" in his late

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<sup>16</sup> Hooker, Jeremy. "A dream of a county: the Raymond Williams Trilogy" in the journal *Planet*.

published book *What I Came to Say*, and the neighborly and genuine community he has depicted in his fiction represents something of a polemical response to Leavis's arguments about the loss of true community and Leavis's obvious view of himself as member and representative of the elite. One of Williams's motives for writing appears to have been to prove to the ruling class that the lower-class of Wales, could be as gifted and capable as the English, rather than speaking to his people and helping them to modify their narrow value system and become more broad-minded and well-informed in their pursuit of self-improvement and betterment of their lives. This may well reflect Williams's lack of confidence in his own working-class Welsh culture, which in turn results in his over-confidence and obsession in defending his native community by repeatedly writing about it in his fiction, and arguing for it in his critical theory.

Williams would have been seen by the ruling-class as "a prime example of the boy educated at state expense who had turned to bite the hand that had fed him" (Williams, *What I Come Say* 17), yet in the circumstances this was rather an unavoidable necessity than a situation to be lamented. Indeed, Williams was an outstanding example of the typical scholarship boy born into and raised within a working-class Welsh culture and community, who had succeeded in winning the scholarship to Cambridge; however, such boys were bound to encounter snubs and frustrations among the middle and upper class students during their university life. Hence, with the working-class values ingrained in his mind, and the pull of the working-class on the one side and the influence of the middle-upper class lifestyle and cultural experiences on the other, Williams had a natural impulse to justify the validity of his working-class origins. In his writings, therefore, he promotes the meanings and values and the positive traits of the working-class Welsh people and

his native community. It appears that, to a great extent, his whole life's work was to validate the value system of his birth community. However, Williams's success was never due to his working-class value system, or to his Welsh awareness, or to the nourishment of his birth community and environment, or to his father's influence, but, ultimately, can be attributed to the compromises and the concessions the ruling class made to the working-class people at a specific historical time. The reason why Williams emphasizes reconnection and continuity so much is at root because he remains wedded to his past and to his old value system. This paradox explains why his perspective is somewhat distorted: on the one hand, he is dedicated to speaking for the values of the working-class and Wales; on the other hand, he enjoyed the privileges of an academic scholar and seldom came back to spend time with his people in Wales after leaving as a young man.

Despite Williams's great contribution to cultural studies and to the theoretical base of New Left Politics, his concern for women's situation and status does not appear in his critical writings until the 1980s; however, his involvement in gender issues started as early as his first novel. It continued, and even increased and deepened, in each subsequent fiction. In her article "Refractory Girl"<sup>17</sup> published in the *New Left Review*, Eileen Haley argues that the emotional attachments between mother and child are better depicted than those of father and child, and that "what Williams is talking about is not working-class culture but what might be called female culture" (26). This argument contains a certain validity, as the prolific cases of problematic fatherhood all through Williams's novels demonstrates, even beginning as far back as *BC*, as Clare Davies's article testifies. Invariably, the illegitimate child grows up with the total involvement of the mother, but with barely

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<sup>17</sup> "Refractory Girl", by Eileen Haley, in Summer 1972/3 *New Left Review*, copy stored in Richard Burton archive under WWE/2/1/7/2/7.

any contact with the birth father; despite the fact that the child tends to grow up and leaves the mother and moves on to the natural father's road, the child remains loyal to the mother.

In his fiction we may not detect salient conflicts between men and women, or any conspicuous intention of the female characters to revolt against the patriarchal system, as the predominant theme is the conflict between the ruling class and the working class, between urban and rural, between England and Wales, and between the academic and the lived experiences. Besides, Williams himself concedes that he had "such a comparatively unproblematic experience both in his [my] home and in his [my] own family" (Williams, *Politics and Letter* 150), which seems to result in Williams's well recognized neglect of gender problems, although he argues that he has "in mind... that ideological reduction of sex to consumption" (149). However, a closer examination of Williams's fiction reveals innate conflicts beneath this calmer surface. Indeed, there seems not to be too many gender problems in Williams's fiction, for, despite the fact that some female characters get duped, hurt or even raped, they manage to take the lead in familial affairs and even in sexual relationships with a redefined power. This does not appear to be what Williams himself was attempting to reveal, but rather relates to what he had experienced in his working-class culture and subsequent domestic environment, where his mother and his wife were both clearly dominant figures in the family. Some critics may argue that Williams's wife, Joy, sacrificed a lot for her husband's academic cause, as she assumed responsibility to take care of the children and the family, abandoning her own potential for a possible academic career, and instead reserved her talents for assisting Williams's career. However, it might equally be argued that Joy never wanted an academic career for herself, or that her life's ambition was satisfied in leading her husband in

his pursuit of his academic achievements. Joy Williams, in her contribution to Raymond's achievements, could be compared perhaps to May Lane who shapes Robert Lane's career in *SG*, or Sarah who edits Mark Evans's work in *VT*. Hence, it could be argued that Williams's gendering both in his personal life and in his fiction is constructive, or even a re-construction of feminist ideology.

Feminism contends that women should have equal right with men, and fight for economic, political and sexual equality between the sexes. Though Williams bears in mind the commercial reduction of sex as objectification of women as products, he, subconsciously, between the lines of his fiction, puts forward a distinct variation on feminism. According to this perspective, women actually wield a definite power on men by means of a nuanced strategy of manipulation. In direct confrontation, according to his theory, women do not attempt to rival men and indeed do not have to do so in order to be powerful or equal. After all, it can be said that the type of feminism that fights for absolute equality between sexes, is by default in itself a derogation of women as the inferior sex. In Williams's life and fiction, by contrast, females tend not to be the inferior or weak sex from the start, but set out to be at least equal, if not stronger, by comparison with the often lame or emasculated males. Hence, a more promising "feminism", if it has to be called so, is suggested in what Williams's fictional portraits of the sexual relationships in working-class families.

To sum up then, despite the great contribution of Williams to Western Marxist theories and to cultural studies in general, there are inevitable flaws and tensions that can be discerned in his body of thought. Williams always emphasized the mutual and reciprocal shaping of the individual and the society, but this process is depicted as complicated and never clarified in-depth. Williams has a strong belief in the individual's creative capacity in changing the whole common culture, but still holds

the view that the individual is the product of the societal influences. According to the extent of conformity of the individual to the society, Williams classifies five types of individuals, among whom “member” is the most valued designation. Each individual member in a community has been imbued with its particular value system that is normally taken to be the correct and appropriate moral code and system of belief. Typical scholarship boys, including Williams himself, leaving behind their native community to be educated in the urban university context in England, assuming dual perspectives, as both participant and observer, to view their community of origin, in this case rural Wales even fundamentally still cherish the same value system with which they were familiar in their childhood years. Williams rejects and feels himself to be rejected by the value system of the upper-middle class, and therefore, both in his critical writings and his fiction he seeks to make a case for the aptitude of the ordinary people of his own social background to participate equally not just in their local community but in society as a whole. Yet, it has to be conceded that an ordinary individual in a rural Welsh community can exercise relatively little influence on the wider community, not to say the whole culture, while the decision-making process at the national level is under the control of a relatively small number of individuals from the ruling class.

Williams dedicated his life’s work to a truly democratized society where local people get to decide how to develop the region for themselves, rather than having policies imposed upon them by the ruling-class, who have no intimate knowledge of and feeling for the local area and who generally seek to exploit the region for their own benefit. *FM* is an accurate representation of this argument; since the Manod development project is developed with the collusion of the government and foreign investment without any regard to the interests of the people who actually live there;

what Williams, through the consciousness of his protagonist, Matthew, envisions is a Manod that is shaped according to the genuine interests of the local people in the way they wish to see their community developed. However democratic and idealistic this seems to be, there is an inherent contradiction within the argument that underlines the difficulty in executing such a plan. For one thing, a prosperous future for Manod is both in the interests of the government and the local people, so there does not necessarily have to be a conflict between the two; for another, as Williams himself observes, “if we have fifty members then we have fifty ideas of the revolution, all different” (Williams, *Modern Tragedy* 213), and so it is difficult to reach a unanimous decision and achieve complete consensus on how to develop Manod; besides, as we can see from the novel, what the local people are lacking and pursuing is financial support, which enables Gwen to gain independence and allows Gethin to pay for his brother’s wage representing an immediate material benefit for the couple. Hence, if we see the situation in the novel purely in terms of Williams’s ideological and cultural value system, his position fails to clarify these contradictory arguments and bring them into conformity. On the other hand, though, if we see them as necessary contradictions in a dialectical relationship in the novel, we can view the fiction as being more realistic than the idealism expressed in the critical and autobiographical discourses.

One salient feature of Williams’s fiction is the problematic dialogues between characters, which tend to be heavily coded. There is often incongruence between what one character says and what the interlocutor understands. Likewise, the conversations are sometimes evasive and ambiguous from the perspective of the reader. This characteristic, as illustrated in previous chapters of the thesis also testifies to Williams’s assertion about the innate difficulty of communication in his



critical writing. It may well help to explain the reason why he highlights the significance and means of interpersonal communication. As his novels suggest, an individual is definitely an artist in the eyes of their author if s/he manages to communicate effectively.

In conclusion, Williams is an important intellectual figure coinciding with the ascendancy of the Labour Party in the post-war years of the last century, and he has advanced many interesting arguments both in relation to Leftist politics and also cultural studies. However, as he acknowledges, “it is not the business of the artist, or even the thinker, to provide answers and solutions, but simply to describe experiences and to raise questions... To conclude that there is no solution is also an answer” (Williams, *Modern Tragedy* 79). This important insight underpins the plots and character interactions of all his novels and illuminates his thought-provoking and stimulating ideas, constituting a formidable body of thought that continues to inspire intellectuals in different fields. From the above arguments in my dissertation the significance of Raymond Williams’s fiction for a more profound understanding of the man, his times and his ideas will be manifest to the reader. Thus my prime objective in writing this study has been to stimulate more scholars to incorporate his fictional writings into their assessment of his literary and sociopolitical interventions. Arguably, scholarly work on his creative output is far from exhausted, and may well be still in its infancy. As this exchange between Matthew/ Will and Morgan Rosser in *BC* puts it:

“It’s late. I’d better be going.”

“With nothing finished?”

“We shan’t finish this, Will. It’s a life time.” (359)

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