Implicating Environments

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The Earlier Work of Paul Carter & J.H. Prynne in the Context of Related Aspects of Later Modern Neo-Pastoral

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Dedicated
to my Father and Mother,
Harry & Joan Hardy

and to
the town and all the people of Oldham,
living and dead

Chapter One: Introductory

In this age, if they read any, many people and many publishers, even of the academic variety, tend to like their books short, as do some, though by no means all, writers, of various types, sometimes with good reasons, sometimes with less admirable ones. This book is long, not because it is the product of a lifetime's work, or because it is an extensively researched scholarly work but because it is what it is, from the perspective of its writer and, differently, from that of any possible reader. In the climate and context in which it was written, the present study, as I shall tend to refer to it, has been consciously conceived of as a long, unapologetically rambling, discursive walk, consisting of a series of 'tours', or trackings, through the work of a number of later twentieth century authors and essentially, on my part, as a somewhat lengthier development of earlier preoccupations,[1] one which primarily concerns itself with analysis and discussion of aspects of the work of two writers, the British poet J.H. Prynne and the British-born, Australia-based, cultural and spatial historian Paul Carter.

With respect to both writers, the study provided is essentially introductory, rather than reflectively analytical and focuses upon 'following' or, as indicated in my opening paragraph, 'tracking', a certain initial thread of what can still be termed 'interpretation', if as we shall partly see later, this conceptualisation is itself constantly increasing in terms of its parameters of complexity and implication. The study as a whole concerns itself, if to a less substantial extent, with elements of the work of the poets Charles Olson, Edward Dorn, and David Jones, as well as, in this opening chapter, with a series of perspectives provided by a number of representative practitioners working in fields considered pertinent to those regarded as being under discussion, primarily in terms of environments, politics, ethics, aesthetics, and literature and classifiable, at least from a certain perspective, as pertaining to the notion of 'pastoral', a term subsequently to be explored in more detail.

The primary title of the study is loosely (as in the active rather than passive form of 'implicate') intended to intimate, among other things, a certain sense of the melancholy aspect of the spirit of T.W. Adorno haunting its pages, although by no means in primary or predominantly, or even very perceptibly, pessimistic fashion. A large proportion of human beings still live, probably always have lived, and for a long time will, almost equally probably, continue to live, in one part of the planet or another, one section of society or another – in considerably demanding, to the point of desperate, practical and existential circumstances. The role of pastoral in this respect is as much cautionary as it is idealistic.

It is partly with regard to this observation that the environments posited in the discussion which follows are not only those of the traditionally 'natural' variety upon which the still relatively emergent sub-discipline of literary eco-criticism has recently focused, but rather the wider range of intimately related, more often than not predominantly human, environments which are implicated in their 'natural' counterparts and

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[1] See Stephen Hardy, *Relations of Place: Aspects of Late 20th Century Fiction and Theory* (Brno: Masaryk University, Opera Universitas Masarykianae Brunensis Facultas Philosphica: Spisy Masarykovy University v Brne, Filozofika Fakulta, c.376, 2008).

in which, as we have become increasingly aware, such natural environments have themselves become increasingly implicated, as those of us who are in a position to view ourselves entering into the epoch of the Anthropocene in what are, at the time of the writing of this study, very rapidly developing technical environments.

What might be regarded as the increasingly baffling, dangerous, sometimes positive and intriguing, as well as, again, complex, nature of these mutually implicating environments is not addressed in this book with any specifically qualified degree of expertise or breadth of range, other than a literary appreciation of the work of those writers primarily discussed. At the same time, the study seeks, in the context of more precise forms of literary analysis, to impart a sense of the way in which aspects of human learning, ingenuity and creativity, as exemplified, above all, in the work of systems-theory sociologists such as, and primarily, Niklas Luhmann, derive considerable inspiration from the work of the natural sciences, despite their partial critique of aspects of those same sciences' perspectives and effects.

In like fashion, the closely related but also specifically literary and environmentally focused perspective provided by Andrew McMurry, in addition to the environmentally-oriented cultural philosophy of Arran Gare, are also referenced here in introductory relation to what are, in many respects, the closely related concerns and approaches of the central focus of this book, the poetry of J.H. Prynne produced between 1968 and 1997. This work is itself considered in close proximity both to the aspects of that of the three poets regarded, in this context, as anticipating certain, significant aspects of Prynne's approach, just as the final cultural initiative to be considered here, the earlier work of Paul Carter, is regarded both as recognising the importance of certain elements of Prynne's multi-perspectival poetic and as complementing and developing those elements in specific respects.

Despite and because of the faint allusion to Adorno as initial pessimist but ultimate optimist, the aims of the analysis and commentary subsequently provided here are most intimately and ultimately related to questions of joy and the love of life, rather than to those tendencies which serve, on what often seems to be a depressingly consistent and overwhelming basis, to deprive many of us of both. In this respect, a substantial amount of this opening chapter is devoted to elements of the post-war philosophical reception of aspects of the ethics and politics of the radical seventeenth-century European, Portuguese-Dutch, metaphysical and political philosopher, Baruch Spinoza, a thinker reputed to keep a copy of the Bible next to that of the Koran on his bookshelves and like Erasmus, though perhaps to an even greater degree, a believer in and promoter of religious toleration in an age when many considered such an aptitude or attitude to be tantamount to the encouragement of a state of anarchy barely contained in many parts of Europe in the middle part of the seventeenth century.

In spite of what might be seen as the disturbingly comparable form of troubled times in which we live at present, the aim of human life and, in relation to it, the aim of literature, philosophy, and much else besides, will essentially be viewed in this study from what is understood as an essentially Spinozian perspective (or, in related terms, a perspective on Spinoza) in terms of its potential for en-joyment, albeit in the face of immense misery and sadness in the world; that is to say, not so in terms of self-enjoyment – the hedonistically-oriented carrot complementing the stick as provided by those forms of socio-economic relations engendered by what might be regarded as the currently dominant forms of capitalism – but, as far as is possible, the actively open and as other-oriented as self-oriented enjoyment of as much of the rest of the world on which

each pertinent self or being, human or otherwise (but with an inevitably primary emphasis on the human – a non-anthropocentric human perspective on the world will be regarded as a contradiction in terms, an arguably non-Luhmannian perspective on a still significant form of self-observational paradox), is dependent, of which that self or being is composed, and with which it has much, though by no means everything, in common.

Closely related to this notion of en-joyment are, again, strongly Spinoza-informed, notions of knowledge, understanding, feelings, and in this latter respect, not least, as already intimated, fellow-feeling, as well as the endless problems presented to anyone or anything finding themselves following their path in life. At the same time, these will be complemented by aspects of one of the more recent developments in eighteenth and nineteenth century philosophy, that of modern aesthetics, with elements of Andrew Bowie's work on the development and implications of the retrospectively deeply flawed but still inspirational developments in modern, nineteenth and twentieth century German aesthetic philosophy serving as primary guide in this respect, but with a preliminary, prefatory perspective provided by Anthony Cascardi's reading of some of the political implications of Kant's *Critique of Judgement* for our own times.

As with Kant, to an even greater extent, the consideration of Spinoza's philosophy provided in this chapter will be limited to a small, very specific, fraction of the reception of his work mainly derived from two readings, one Italian-Marxist, one French 'post-structuralist', produced between the later 1960s and early 1980s. Spinoza, like many of the philosophers of his own time, but also those of a certain attitude writing in earlier ages, notably that of the Epicureans, was particularly fascinated by the implications for ethics and politics to be derived from the various and more precise forms of observation derived from the discoveries of contemporary sciences, particularly in their use of the optical technologies of the telescope and microscope, and in his case in terms of the conclusions to be drawn in terms of the composition of, and relations between, various forms of body.

A comparable philosophical preoccupation, it can be argued, has steadily developed since that time and has been evidenced in the post-War era by initiatives such as Niklas Luhmann's specific form of systems theory, itself strongly informed by those theories of biochemical autopoiesis as notably posited and investigated in the work of the Chilean biologists Humberto Maturana and Francesco Varela, classically, in *Autopoietic Systems*: *The Realization of the Living*,[1] although also by a great many other researchers in the field, to some of whose work brief attention will be paid, in a limited study of this kind more specifically concerned with developments in literature, notably in the section on the Australian cultural philosopher Arran Gare's approach to the metaphysics and politics of potentially effective forms of environmentalism.[2]

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[1] Humberto Maturana & Francesco Varela, *Autopoietic Systems: The Realization of the Living* (Dordecht, Holland: Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science [Robert S. Cohen & W. Wartofsky Marx, eds.], Vol. XLII. D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1980). Arran E. Gare, *Postmodernism and the Environmental Crisis* (London: Routledge, 1995).

[2] Arran E. Gare, *Postmodernism and the Environmental Crisis* (London: Routledge, 1995). Attention should perhaps also be drawn at this point to at least two of Gare's more recent publications, by whose subsequently developed perspectives my own study as presented here is not significantly informed: 'From Kant to Schelling to Process Metaphysics: On the Way to Ecological Civilization,' in *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy*, Vol. VII, no. 2 (2011), and *The Philosophical Foundations of Ecological Civilization* (London: Routledge, 2016).

Between the earlier modern developments in the relevant areas of work in physics, chemistry and biology, it was in the mid-to-later eighteenth century that the related discipline of geology, the measurement of the nature, composition, and age of forms of non-organic life, began to develop its own, increasingly influential momentum. The combination of discoveries derived from work in the fields of geology and biology in many respects leads us to the most prominent English figure in modern science, following that of Isaac Newton in the seventeenth century, namely, Charles Darwin, contemporary of Karl Marx and in many respects equally feared by those who preferred the metaphysical and political status quo to remain in its current state. Darwin leads us, even if he barely managed to recognise the fact in his own lifetime, to the significance of Mendel's discoveries in Brno and the subsequent development of modern genetics.

All these scientific developments have had an enormous impact on the social and political environments in which we live, quite apart from the technological influence that related discoveries have exerted. Among them has been a reassessment of the nature of human consciousness and subjectivity in relation to the rest of nature and the history of the planet, the latter one particularly significant to the modern environmental movement whose essential roots lie in the ethics and politics of the Romantic era. In their *Economies of Signs and Space* [1] Scott Lash and John Urry refer to as 'instantaneous time', that form of time embodied in the modern, computer-based, post-'Big-Bang' form of socio-communicative relations increasingly dominant in our own era. Accompanying this form of time, in Lash and Urry's view has been a complementary, alternative conceptualisation, also emerging in considerable part both from developments in modern science and from the closely related environmental movement, a conceptualisation which they refer to as 'glacial time',[2] a conceptualisation that will shortly be explored further, in relation to aspects of the writing of D.H. Lawrence and Charles Olson.

In this 'glacial' notion of time human identity and activity are situated in a much broader, evolutionary perspective and the horizons of the future are left correspondingly more open in comparison to the immediate, if complex and diverse, gratifications of 'instantaneous time'.[3] This particular conceptualisation of glacial time as thus characterised is itself at least distantly comparable to the earlier notion of *la longue durée* promoted by Lucien Febvre and the Annales school of historians and epitomised, in environmental terms by the work of Ferdinand Braudel, of whose historical approach, and its geological, geographical and general environmental emphasis, Elizabeth Clark observes, in relation to Braudel's *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II:* [4] 'the history of kings was here displaced by the history of the sea',[5] will have a particular relevance to most of the concerns of the literary authors discussed in this book. As in the sociological literature, the connection to the immediate concerns of a dominant informational culture, as referred to in part by the 'instantaneous' time

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[1] Scott Lash & John Urry, *Economies of Signs and Space* (London: Sage Publications, 1994), p. 242.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ferdinand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and The Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, translated in 1972 and 1973 by Sian Reynolds (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995; originally published in 1949).
[5] Elizabeth A. Clark, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

of a technologically mediated and complexly organised present, needs to be kept carefully and constantly in view in relation both to the notion of a glacial time, and, as we shall see, particularly with regard to aspects of the work of Paul Carter and a number of what can be regarded, from the perspective provided in the present study, as related writers, in terms of closely comparable notions of space.

In some respects, the concept of glacial time, perhaps in part characterisable as an environmentally focused perspective on the social and cultural implications of modern technologies which it seeks to critically examine, and in relation to which it also aims to develop what are consequently considered to be more healthily viable alternatives along with aspects of literary and related cultural works, will be considered in the present study as forms of pastoral. The term pastoral has numerous connotations but might be considered as a form of at least potential nourishment, presenting the possibility of a better world, free of the corrupting elements associated with the current world in which it is conceived, or, in a more actively positive sense, that of seeking to develop a more attentively caring, as well as critical, approach to that same, but never quite the same, world by indicating the precise shortcomings of its contemporary social situation and perhaps also offering indications of how that situation might be improved.

In this respect, the notion of pastoral, as represented in the present study is close although very far from identical to many forms of what might be characterised as utopianism. The emphasis in pastoral might comparably be considered as pertaining to care (and not merely in its various Christian or specifically Heidggerean modalities) perhaps not for all, but for most forms of life, especially human life, as well as those related forms of life which are revealed as essential to the maintenance and development of human life; although, as in all human life, not just the lives of a tiny minority of socially privileged human beings. In this respect, while pastoral is not synonymous with utopia it can be claimed to contain a socio-ethical core whose political implications provide it with an inevitably intimate relationship with what we might provisionally term the more future-oriented notions associated with its conceptual cousin.

Raymond Williams's *The Country and The City* (1973) and Related Observations on Literature and Social Space

IN connection with these opening observations, the first of those perspectives considered relevant to relations between aspects of contemporary literary production and those elements indicated that I propose to consider, or reconsider, in relative detail, is Raymond Williams's far from stodgy analysis of relations between forms of literary expression and socio-cultural developments of the kind previously indicated in his literary-cultural history of Britain from the medieval period to the present day in *The Country and the City*.[1] My reasons for beginning with this, probably even to many contemporary students of British literature, relatively familiar classic of literary and cultural criticism partly derive from the book's recognised status, not merely in the field of literary studies, but in that of the relevant aspects of social and cultural geography and environmental studies, not least, in the latter case, the fields of eco-criticism and environmental criticism, with their particular focus on relations between the natural environment and

[1] Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1973).

literature. What can be read as Williams's Marxist perspective on the writers he discusses perhaps also needs to be read in the broader context of the development of Marxism, as perhaps most extensively and notably surveyed at approximately the same time as Williams's book in Leszek Kołakowski's *Main Currents of Marxism*.[1]

In the opening stages of *The Country and the City* Williams briefly considers elements of older, ancient Greek and Roman pastoral literary traditions, and, as in the book as a whole, with a particular, polemical focus on the harsh social realities alluded to in both Hesiod's *Works and Days* and Virgil's *Georgics*, to take two of the more prominent examples provided. Emphasis is placed upon ways in which pastoral can be viewed as expressive and critical of harsh social realities and forms of injustice, not merely an idealised escape from their inevitability. This stance is taken further in the strikingly dramatized connection, verging in some respects on the Dickensian, that Williams seeks to make between Arthur Young's imagined, if also very real, impoverished rural worker of the eighteenth century, whose lament 'All I know is, I had a cow and Parliament took it from me' and a series of observations on developments in the later medieval and Renaissance periods which can be viewed retrospectively as leading to that worker's plight. [2] An example of the extent and detail of Williams's approach to socio-historical observation is perhaps worth exemplifying by means of a relatively lengthy extract from his book at this point:

> An upper peasantry, which had established itself in the break-up of the strict feudal order, and which had ideas and illusions about freedom and independence from the experience of a few generations, was being pressed and expropriated by the great landowners, the most successful of just these new men, in the changes of the market and of agricultural techniques brought about by the growth of the wool trade. A moral protest was then based on a temporary stability: as again and again in the history of rural complaint. It is authentic and moving yet in other ways it is unreal. Its idea of local paternal care, and of national legislation, seems to draw equally on a rejection of the arbitrariness of feudalism, a deeply felt rejection of the new arbitrariness of money, and an attempted stabilisation of a transitory order, in which small men are to be protected against enclosures but also against the idleness of their labourers. Thus a moral order is abstracted from the feudal inheritance and break-up, and seeks to impose itself ideally on conditions which are inherently unstable. A sanctity of property has to co-exist with violently changing property relations, and an ideal of charity with the harshness of labour relations in both the new and the old modes. This is then the third source of an ordered and happier past set against the disorder and disturbance of the present. An idealisation, based on a temporary situation and on a deep desire for stability, served to cover and evade the bitter conditions of the time.[3]

The extended observation provided here brings into play a number of elements, including longer and more temporary orders of social dispensation, the factors of social class, labour, property, and money and their relation to the development of idealisations and moral orders, which can themselves be expressive of the yearning for a better world

[1] Leszek Kołakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, translated by P.S. Falla (New York: W.W. Norton, 2004; originally published in 1976-1988, but, as Kołakowski indicates in his preface to the edition cited here, essentially conceived and written between 1968 and 1976).
[2] Williams, *The Country and the City*, p. 99.
[3] Ibid., pp. 44-45.

in forms as often consciously or unconsciously deceiving or self-deceiving in the fictional worlds they present and dramatize. The history of a new social order, replete with new forms of embedded social injustice, emerging from the reductive catastrophe of the ravages of the Black Death is portrayed by Williams as eventually developing into the cynical forms of so-called 'improvement' imposed upon later generations and the land they inhabited. In relation to such trends a shift in poetic expression is observed, from Jonson's idealised portrayal of a Penshurst magically as well as ironically transcending the actualities of social exploitation and imposition in addition to natural exigency, to a state close to complete breakdown whose expression Williams finds especially intriguing and distressing in his subsequent analysis of Goldsmith's 'The Deserted Village'. This analysis is itself preceded by a survey of 'the long process of choice between economic advantage and other forms of value' viewed by Williams as most graphically illustrated in the fate of the eponymous heroine of Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa*.[1]

While acknowledging the positive elements in the new Romantic view of nature which fully emerges in the more radically philosophical view of nature to be found in the work of poets such as Wordsworth, Williams, despite his own personal interest in and insistence upon the significance of rural experience, looks to the essential breakdown of community, or at the very least traditional forms of it, to be found in the primary appeal to the creative but also substantially isolated power of the individual, poetic imagination. This form of imagination is often focused on the actual experience of the outcast individual, as in that of the old Cumberland beggar in Wordsworth's 'Resolution and Independence' and played out both in the poetry and actual life and death of another closely contemporaneous English poet, John Clare, the significance of whose work was more precisely depicted in another classic work of the mid-1970s, published a year prior to *The Country and the City*, John Barrell's *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place 1730-1840*.[2]

Modern urban experience and its early literary expression in the work of William Blake and Charles Dickens are subsequently characterised by Williams as a parallel development in this increasingly atomised and organisationally refigured form of social life with the two authors in question seen as sharing a particular ability pertaining to 'a forcing into consciousness of the suppressed connections'.[3] Dickens is presented by Williams as the inheritor and developer of William Blake's remarkable powers of penetratingly original critical caricature. Another relatively lengthy citation from Williams's own characterisation of Dickens's ability is included at this point in order to evidence adequately Williams's own dramatically concise and precise evocation of the nature of that ability and that society, an evocation which is, in certain respects, as decisive and resonant in its acuity of essential generalisation as aspects of Blake or Dickens themselves, if articulated in a different, distinctive modality of expression:

> As we stand back and look at a Dickens novel the general movement we remember – the characteristic movement is a hurrying seemingly random passing of men and women, each heard in some fixed phrase, seen in some fixed expression: a

[1] Williams, *The Country and the City*, p. 61.
[2] John Barrell, *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place 1730-1840: An Approach to the Poetry of John Clare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972).
[3] Williams, *The Country and the City*, p. 149.

> way of seeing men and women that belongs to the street. There is at first an absence of ordinary connection and development. These men and women do not so much relate as pass each other and then sometimes collide. They speak at or past each other intent above all on defining through his own words his own identity and reality; in fixed self-descriptions, in voices raised emphatically to be heard through and past similar voices. But then as the action develops, unknown and acknowledged relationships, profound and decisive connections, definite committing recognitions and avowals are as it were forced into consciousness. These are the real and inevitable relationships and connections, the necessary recognitions and avowals of any human society. But they are of a kind that are obscured, complicated, mystified, by the sheer rush and noise and miscellaneity of this new and complex social order. [1]

This characterisation develops its own form of forcing to get to the essence of Dickens's uncanny ability to effectively dramatize both the rush and bustle but also the isolating pathos of modern urban experience and, through it, the precise, complex and unprecedentedly manipulative nature of that experience and the forces which are shaped to produce it. Williams articulates, with particular forcefulness, some of the ways in which there are profound elements of perceived social and emotional connection in Dickens's intuitive capacity to connect surface movement, momentary and individual expression, and the sheer noise and apparent chaos of modern urban experience to a form of narrative which can organise them into a recognisable social whole, one capable of affecting the emotional and cognitive social sensibilities of an unprecedentedly broad readership. The essential trajectory of Williams's analytical narrative in *The Country and the City* is the precise nature of a general, although as Williams himself indicates, complex, uneven, and varied movement, from predominantly rural to predominantly urban structures of experience. In some senses, as the evocation of the significance of Dickens's approach to the characterisation and expression of that experience indicates, the process reaches a particularly significant peak in the first part of the nineteenth century.

At the same time, one of Williams's central preoccupations in *The Country and the City* is with the specific developments of originally rural-based notions of community. This is also true of his own fictional work, from *Border Country* to the unfinished *People of the Black Mountains.* The latter is a fictionalised history for which Williams chooses to set the opening episode some 25,000 years earlier than the present day, an approach to chronological, and related socio-cultural considerations which provides a notable example of the deployment of a form of 'glacial time' as characterised by Scott Lash and John Urry and, soon after, by Manuel Castells. Earlier in *The Country and the City* Williams broaches the notion of the precisely delineated character of a thoroughly knowable community with its parallel, confident, but also precisely defined and circumscribed sense of moral judgement, as notably exemplified in the work of Jane Austen. The notion of the unknowable community and the strains on the reach of such judgement that it imposes are introduced in close relation to the work of Blake and Dickens and then examined further, partly through a comparison of the work of George Eliot and Thomas Hardy and its relevance to more contemporary attitudes to notions of community and social class, in connection with questions of judgement pertaining to the analysis of literature and its broader social and cultural significance.

[1] Williams, *The Country and the City*, p. 155.

The strains and limitations as much as the perceptions of George Eliot's depiction of rural and provincial urban life are focused upon by Williams to an even greater degree than in his reading of the relation of Jane Austen's fictions to the problems and limitations of notions of improvement. Eliot's attempts to make available characters and forms of social organisation with which her readers were unfamiliar are characterised as "knowable' in a deeply inauthentic but socially successful way'.[1] A partial contrast in this respect is made with Thomas Hardy, who is characterised as very far from being the type of educated peasant to which caricatured forms both his social and even intellectual status and abilities have often been reduced. By way of response to what are, in Williams's view, far from disinterested generalisations of this kind, Hardy's precise social station and development is carefully delineated and assessed, as is his approach to social questions in his fiction. In this increasingly involved context of socially polarised debate Williams's argument then moves from those analyses previously illustrated to a direct attack on current forms of patronising, and, as diagnosed, underlyingly dismissive, social stereotyping typified by a particular moment when 'a British Council critic described George Eliot, Hardy and Lawrence as our "three great autodidacts"'.[2]

This particular point in Williams's book is developed in relation to a critique of the socially exclusive notion of what counts as education in such a 'flat act of patronage'.[3] This amounts, in Williams's view to the fact that 'none of the three was in the pattern of boarding school and Oxbridge which by the end of the century was being regarded not simply as a kind of education but as education itself; to have missed that circuit was to have missed being educated at all'. [4] The criticism is specifically extended to Williams's most prestigious and respected contemporary, F.R. Leavis and again connected to George Eliot, as well as another representative of *The Great Tradition* (1948), presented in Leavis's celebrated and still influential book of that name, published some twenty-five years prior to the publication of Williams's *The City and The Country*. The relation of an inauthentic 'country house', ultimately developing into the self-enclosed world of the cosy rural detective novel, is adumbrated in the following passage, commenting on aspects of Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* (1876) where what is presented, in Williams's view, is:

> a view from the box-seat; the recreation, after all the earlier emphasis of want, of a country-house England, a class England in which only certain histories matter. . . . She is able, conscientiously to narrow her range because the wide-ranging community, the daily emphasis of want, is supposed past and gone with old England. All that is left is a set of personal relationships and of intellectual and moral insights, in a history that for all valuing purposes has, disastrously, ended. We can then see why Mr Leavis, who is the most distinguished modern exponent of just this structure of feeling, should go on, in outlining the great tradition from George Eliot to Henry James. It is an obvious transition from that country-house England of *Daniel Deronda* (of course with Continental extensions and with ideas, like Deronda's Zionism, about everywhere) to the country–house England of James.[5]

[1] Williams, *The Country and the City*, p. 170.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid., pp. 180-181.

Essentially provided in this extract as cited is an evidenced argument that the forms of limited disinterestedness displayed in the work of writers like Jane Austen, George Eliot, and, later, Henry James, are forms of analysis firmly situated in the socio-cultural context of a comparatively limited and exclusive critical purview. In relation to this critique, the precise political, social significance of Hardy's work is elaborated upon with a substantially socio-political and polemical emphasis upon the way in which an essentially exclusive, insufficiently critical, and authentically realist tradition of literary representation has gradually developed, in close relation to actual processes of social change, to produce a misleading and divisive notion of 'country' in both of its senses. Williams's appeal in this respect is very much to his own, specifically and explicitly located, sense of place and community in the country of the Black Mountain region in which he was born and raised: 'The only landscape I ever see, in dreams, is the Black Mountain village in which I was born. When I go back to that country, I feel a recovery of a particular kind of life, which appears, at times, as an inescapable identity, a more positive connection than I have known elsewhere'.[1]

One of the problems encountered at this point, and one which Williams focuses upon throughout *The City and the Country*, is how to disentangle aspects of a well-intentioned but often nostalgically idealising conceptualisation of disappearing, or already lost, notions of community from actual pasts and practicable futures. The problem, as negotiated in Williams's approach to the developing organisational basis of relations between rural and urban settlements in terms of closely related connections and developments between money, property and social class, and further negotiated in Williams' fictional writing, is one which is itself directly related to the primary concerns and development of communism, in its various forms, and including some of the more catastrophic miscalculations and developments associated with some of those forms. The importance of Williams's book might be seen as lying not so much in the degree to which he attempts to provide a solution to the problems he raises as the manner in which they are raised, in terms of his analysis of relations between writing, social development, and questions of justice and community. Williams's contribution in this respect is to critically develop what he seeks to expose as the partly admirable but nonetheless socially parochial and, as indicated, consequently patronising, notion of society and culture analytically developed even by literary and cultural critics as hugely influential, perceptive and well-intentioned as F.R. Leavis.

Both Leavis and Williams seek to promote the virtues of kinds of writing that can truly engage with the precise conditions and complexities of the social environments they seek to express, invoke, dramatize and critically analyse, whether explicitly or implicitly. Williams, in this respect, seeks to indicate how even a cultural and literary analyst of Leavis's abilities and socio-political orientation is insufficiently aware of, insufficiently attentive to, and insufficiently capable of expressing an adequate range and precise degree of understanding of the kinds of socio-cultural engagements and conflicts involved in modes of social change which need to be interpreted with an appropriate combination of critically analytical historical understanding as well as relevant actual experience as well as applied in detail to processes of change over hundreds, and in the case of Williams's last fictional work, *People of the Black Mountains,* thousands of years.[2]

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[1] Williams, *The Country and the City*, p. 84.

[2] Raymond Williams, *People of the Black Mountains: 1: The Beginning* (London: Paladin Grafton Books, 1990; originally published in 1989); *2: Eggs of the Eagle* (London Paladin 1992; originally published in 1990).