CHAPTER 3

WILLIAMS’ CRITIQUE OF DRAMA

Williams’ literary theory is explicitly manifested in his study and analysis of drama. He wrote on drama for all his professional life. F.R Leavis and other critics of Scrutiny group influenced his early work on drama but gradually he disengaged himself from this influence and began to see drama as a cultural form. He tried to analyse the ways in which forms of drama changed in history. A significant portion of his work is devoted to the history and analysis of dramatic forms. Cambridge University recognised his talent and aptitude and celebrated his stature by appointing him Professor of Drama in 1974. His first four books are concerned with drama and naturalism and he retained a consistent interest in the history and dynamics of dramatic production whether on stage, in film or on television. Besides his early studies—Drama from Ibsen to Eliot (1952); Drama in Performance (1954); Drama from Ibsen to Brecht (1968) and Modern Tragedy (1966)—he wrote a regular column on Television for ‘The Listener’ between 1968 and 1972 and published his influential study, Television: Technology and Cultural Form in 1974. Chapter 6 of Culture (1961) deploys a ‘breathtaking chronological sweep’ of the history of drama in order to substantiate his claims for what ‘comparative form analysis’ of a cultural form can yield. All the essay collections—Problems in
Materialism and Culture (1980); Writing in Society (1984) and posthumous collections such as What I Came to Say (1989) and The Politics of Modernism (1989)—contain essays on film and drama and show his persistent interest in the history of dramatic forms.

Drama is certainly one of Williams’ persistent preoccupations, but some critics have expressed reservations about the genuineness of his interest in drama. According to John Higgins many commentators view his “considerable body of work as somehow peripheral to his main interests.”\(^1\) Terry Eagleton noted that a volume of dramatic criticism has regularly punctuated his production of ‘social texts’. He further observed: “The relation between the two bodies of work are not easy to decipher.”\(^2\) J.P Ward describes drama as the one area of Williams’ writing that is “insulated as though an interest that is sealed off and self-contained.”\(^3\) In the same vein, Jan Gorak says: “His dramatic interests remain difficult to place in the light of his work as a whole.”\(^4\) All these critics have a general view that Williams’ writing on drama is eccentric to the main body of his work and his interest in drama is peripheral. In fact these critics failed to evaluate Williams’ work in totality and passed a hasty judgement on his work. They never realised the fact that Williams attempts to provide “fully social theory of literature in which each element is part of a continuous and interrelational process.”\(^5\)

Anthony Barnett was the first critic to challenge Eagleton’s views regarding the relevance of drama to Williams’ work. Tony
Pinkney also understands Williams’ body of work in totality and argues against the tendency to trivialise Williams’ interest in drama as some kind of “quaint engaging, marginal hobby” with no real bearing on his “general social concerns.”

In fact, Williams’ work on drama and particularly the early writings is central to the formation of his whole intellectual project. The early work is hidden beneath layers of subsequent rewriting and revision. For instance, *Drama from Ibsen to Eliot* disappears beneath *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht*. The first version of *Drama in Performance* is lost beneath the second. But a closer look at these early writings enables the reader to understand the vital connections between various works of Williams. In *Drama from Ibsen to Eliot*, he tries to demystify the notion of ‘the tradition’ to analyse developments in drama through a reassessment and revaluation of received ideas. In his analysis of the drama of Ibsen, he attacks the orthodox interpretation of Ibsen’s work provided by the ‘Ibsenites’. G.B Shaw being a prominent voice in this group. Williams insists: “We should not let biography usurp the functions of criticism.” Instead, he attempts to examine Ibsen’s work as a totality, with new or previously unacknowledged connections being suggested between Ibsen’s later plays and his earlier work, connections arising from the continuity of theme, form, language and dramatic imagery.

The argument for criticism as opposed to biographical details is particularly crucial for Williams’ reading of Strindberg. His analysis is deliberately non-biographical in an attempt to
counter ‘orthodox’ accounts of Strindberg’s work. Williams focuses his attention on the variety of dramatic methods and purpose, and the range of technical experiments, found in Strindberg’s drama. He accepts the criticism that by intentionally abstracting Strindberg’s drama from the playwright’s non-dramatic writing on politics, sex, society and religion, he has undermined the substance of the drama itself. Williams, thus, counters the dominant biographical approach effectively and provides space for exploring the real conditions of dramatic practice.

The more developed critical perspective adopted by Williams in *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht* compared with *Drama from Ibsen to Eliot*, results in certain differences in conclusion of Strindberg’s *The Road to Damascus*. Williams initially writes that “the only limitation of the work as I see it; is a heritage of the nineteenth century divorce of drama and literature.” However the central problem later becomes “the practical integration of word and scene.” Williams suggests that Strindberg was attempting to achieve an integration which could not be contained within the available theatrical forms. It needed a new form i.e. film as a new form. In his earlier work, Williams argued that Strindberg never succeeded in establishing an appropriate dramatic form but in the later book Williams offers a more positive analysis. He regards the new conventions employed by Strindberg as directly related to a particular ‘structure of feeling’. He justifies the use of new conventions by the dramatist on the ground that dramatic conventions are a part of overall ‘structure of feeling’. And in a
period of change such as the 1890s, a new ‘structure of feeling’ demanded the creation of new conventions and new dramatic forms.

This altered response relating to Williams’ different critical perspective through his introduction of the concept of ‘structure of feeling’ as a critical tool, is also evident in his examination of Chekhov’s plays. In the first version Williams proceeds to explore the practice of self-dramatising qualities of Chekhov’s plays. He maintains that Chekhov’s drama remains completely characteristic of the naturalist theatre. The dramatist is unable to exceed the limits of naturalism and he fails to “explore the unexamined experience which is hinted at in his plays.” In the latter version Williams explores the same drama of Chekhov’s in a different way. Now he observes the emergence of a new ‘structure of feeling’.

John Eldridge and Lizzie Eldridge rightly observe: What was previously regarded (from a different or less developed critical perspective) as a weakness is later viewed as an achievement.” This change of outlook derives from his analysis of Chekhov’s drama in relation to the concept of ‘structure of feeling’ and the conventions available to Chekhov. Williams extols Chekhov’s dramatic method in the following words:

What Chekhov does then, in effect, is to invent a dramatic form which contradicts most of the available conventions of dramatic production.—It was a major development in the theatre, and is still, after seventy years, influential.—It is a significant moment, in the history of modern drama, for it shows a writer of genius beginning to create a new form—.
A significant change of outlook can be observed in Williams’ approach to the plays of O’Casey. In the first book, Williams reacts bitterly to the language of O’Casey’s drama and analysis of his plays is limited to a couple of pages. In the latter book Williams allocates O’Casey’s work to a separate chapter. He reverses his previous analysis and examines the various constituents of O’Casey’s plays in relation to the structure of the drama as a whole. Williams attaches great importance to the language spoken by O’Casey’s characters. This language is no longer dismissed as ‘the language of the novelette’ but is now understood as the voice of the “exposed and deprived who cannot understand what is happening to them.”

What is evident from this comparison of his books is that Williams is not only involved in a reassessment and revaluation of orthodox views on drama in *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht*, he is also engaged in a reassessment of his own previous critical outlook and methodological approach. With the passage of time his writing style and critical approach to drama matures and his analytical concepts acquire greater precision and meaning. This development shows Williams’ commitment throughout his work to the nature of process. He is a practising literary critic who does not look at the work of a specific dramatist as a settled, static, finished and given product; rather he examines literature (within it drama) in relation to ‘structure of feeling’ which is always changing in most subtle ways.

This critical development can be further observed in relation
to Williams’ use of language. In *Drama from Ibsen to Eliot* Williams describes Synge’s dramatic discourse as ‘a naturalist language’. In the revised edition the term naturalist is absent and instead Williams concentrates on the variations in Synge’s dramatic use of this language and thereby recognising the importance of the relationship between language and action. His emphasis and detailed attention to language radically changed his approach to O’Casey’s drama. Williams begins to view O’Casey’s plays in historical and national perspective. This development can be observed in Williams’ analysis of Irish dramatists i.e. Yeats, Synge, James Joyce etc.

In fact, Williams had written this book as an account of dramatic forms. He found it very difficult to revise this book because he had to include a good deal of new drama which he had not known when he wrote the original book. He had to change certain things and exclude others but essentially the book remains an account of dramatic forms. These dramatic forms change with the change of ‘structure of feeling’. The latter is not producing the former, there is, in fact, reciprocal production and creation of one by the other.

While writing *Drama from Ibsen to Eliot* Williams did not fully understand the nature of the historical movements of naturalism and realism. He examines the plays of Ibsen, Strindberg Chekhov and defends realism as an artistic method against naturalism. He identifies three definitional characteristics of realism. They are: one, as a conscious movement towards social
extension; two, as pertaining to actions taking place in the present, in the contemporary world; three, emphasis on secular action corresponding with the emergence of rationalism. However, in his analysis of the film *The Big Flame* which was made in late 1960s, Williams adds a fourth dimension—that of conscious interpretation in relation to a particular political viewpoint clarifying the link between his own adherence to both realism and socialism. The detailed discussion of it is given in the subsequent chapter.

Williams notices an important distinction between the modes of drama and the novel. In the plays which in the technical sense are naturalist—intent on reproducing real life on the stage—one can find again and again the fact that certain things which “can relatively easily be achieved in the novel can be accommodated in drama only awkwardly or weakly, if at all.” Williams makes a comparison of Lawrence’s work of a short story *Odour of Chrysanthemums* and a naturalist play *The Windowing of Mrs. Holroyd* which share so much material that one appears to be the fictional and the other the dramatic version. In the fictional mode, Lawrence could use ‘several voices’ and include the more general social experience which was crucial for understanding the particular family experience with which he was concerned. Williams says that this was not possible in the dramatic mode.

The whole basis of Williams’ developed analysis of the transition from naturalism into expressionism is that much of expressionism was an effort to reform the play itself and to capture a wider social and historical experience that the naturalist
limitation to the single playing space permitted. But the full inclusion of historical or social experience remains extremely difficult within the dramatic form even after the liberation achieved by social expressionism which can incorporate “a much wider movement of society and history within which particular actions were displayed.” 15 Williams says that these technical problems are much less accurate for the novelist. In a novel, a character can arrive with a social history which is directly presented often before the character begins to speak. It is very characteristic of nineteenth century realist novel where a character is introduced with lengthy description including a full definition of physical appearance and manner of speaking. Even before the character arrives, a whole setting will be described also invoking the particular society or economy within which the action will occur. Williams finds that none of this is possible on the stage. So the naturalist project in drama remains more problematic than the realist project in the novel. Williams traces two forms which replace naturalist project. One, the movement towards a subjective expressionism which reconstructed the site of the dramatic action as consciousness and not action or behaviour; the other movement towards social expressionism which reconstructed the site in society in a very generalised way.

An expressionistic play often features an autobiographical protagonist involved in a quest for his essential identity, the other characters are reduced to stereotypes or nameless designations. In Germany it was a drama of protest, young men rebelling against
the values of family life in the pre-war empire, boldly tackling taboo subjects like incest and parricide. Initially the term ‘expressionism’ was applied to the plays of Buchner, Strindberg and Wedekind. This movement did not remain confined to German only and soon its impact was felt in America and Britain also. Its most successful exponents in America are: Eugene O’Neill, Thornton Wilder, Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller. O’Neill’s The Hairy Ape and The Emperor Jones and Arthur Miller’s The Death of a Salesman are excellent examples of subjective expressionism. These plays dramatise the sense of isolation and despair as experienced by the protagonist. The second act of Sean O’Casey’s The Silver Tassie (1929) set at the front during World War 1, is overtly expressionist in style, while the rest of the play, set in Ireland, is realistic. This act of the play, which Williams describes as “still one of the most remarkably written in English in this century,” shows anonymous soldiers standing for humanity, protesting the horrors of war.

Social expressionism is an attempt to find ways of dramatically showing a future, a potential society. This is what Brecht calls ‘complex seeing’. It is a way of showing through actual action the ways in which that action could be different. In his discussion of Ernst Toller’s Hoppla! Such is Life (1927), Williams distinguishes individual expressionism from social expressionism. In individual expressionism the “modes of polarization, typification and distortion are related to the exploration of subjective and even isolated experience.” It was
what Strindberg had shown in *The Road to Damascus* and its emphasis continued in ‘symbolist’ plays also. The same modes are widely used for different dramatic purpose—“the characterisation, often critical and even revolutionary, of a social system.” And it is a point beyond doubt that the landmarks of the expressionist theatre are primarily social plays. For instance, Kaiser’s *From Morn Till Midnight*, Capek’s *R.U.R.*, Rice’s *The Adding Machine* and O’Casey’s *The Silver Tassie* effectively combine expressionism into the realistic plays. Auden and Isherwood united the personal and social modes of analysis in plays like *The Ascent F6* which shows the direct influence of Toller. Williams shows his special liking for the mode of drama which takes into account the society and within it political and economic forces which play an important role in the production and creation of literature. Williams does not approve the work of Toller who in his play *Hoppla!* does not go far enough in making the society knowable. The dramatic method of Brecht is a gain in expressing emotion and presenting social structures. It is a way of getting beyond external observation of a known world. His major plays—*Mother Courage, The good Woman of Sezaun, The Life of Galileo* and *The Caucasian Chalk*—were written during the remarkable period between 1937 and 1945.

His dramatic techniques which are known as ‘epic theatre’ or ‘open theatre’ are diametrically opposed to conventional drama or Aristotelian drama or the dominant naturalism of the European drama after Ibsen. According to Williams, drama which Brecht recommends makes the spectators an observer and awakens their
capacity to act. In drama he opposes, the viewer is a silent spectator whose critical faculties are rendered useless by the stage action. Brechtian drama presents a view of the world in which the spectator confronts something and is made to study what he sees. In the Aristotelian drama a viewer is made to identify with the character on the stage and in the process his capacity to act is consumed. This mode of drama shows man discovering himself in a given situation. In the epic theatre men are shown in the process of producing themselves and their situations. This is a dialectical form drawing directly on a Marxist theory of history in which man makes himself in the given situation. Brecht developed methods of writing which produced ‘alienation effect’ on the stage. This distancing effect makes the audience participate on the stage without being overwhelmed by the feelings of pity and fear. They are not merely silent spectators but actors who can understand and react to the action on the stage. This method is called ‘complex seeing’ which boldly challenges the central naturalist thesis of the ‘illusion of reality’ in which an action is created that is so life-like that the verisimilitude absorbs the whole attention of both dramatist and audience. Williams says that this is an extremely valuable extension of the method of expressionist theatre. Brecht’s *The Good Woman of Sezuan* is a brilliant example to show how the idea of acting out alternative roles is developed into an action. The story of this play deals with the problems of a good woman in a bad society. Here the society can destroy this isolated woman morally if not physically. Brecht could easily have substituted for this the
anti-romantic version—the woman realizing that her society was like this, adopted "a cheerful, tough amoralism (eats first, morals after) and kept alive."  

According to Williams each of these versions is 'simple seeing' from different alternative points of view. But Brecht, Williams adds, embodies both versions in this play. Shen Te, the good woman, 'invents' her tough cousin, Shui Ta first as an alternative and then as an independent person who exists with her. It is not a case of 'fixed goodness' against 'fixed badness'; rather it is an instance of goodness and badness in the act of being produced. This, according to Williams, is genuinely complex seeing and "it is deeply integrated with the dramatic form." The play does not end with a definite resolution, rather it invites the viewers to see and examine this play from different viewpoints. Williams is right when he observes:

The methods of expressionist drama, which had normally been used to show an intolerable tension within a single consciousness, are extended to show the tension of a common experience: a method of critical examination rather than sensational exposure. The play does not show the world through the actions and tensions of a single mind, but through an objective action in which ---, reveal the process by which they have produced themselves.

An important feature which Williams notices in the drama of Brecht is that he was seriously concerned with the contemporary political world yet he turns frequently to fable and history to write his plays. For instance *The Life of Galileo* and *The Mother Courage* are based on history. It is mainly because Brecht is interested in the whole range of historical development and within
it he is concerned with most of the forms of contemporary social crisis. The use of fable and of history is connected with this as well as being a device of distancing i.e. ‘defamiliarisation’.

In *Mother Courage* where the woman character who is identified as Mother Courage moves through a war with an enormous physical determination which at the same time also destroys her family, the complexity lies primarily in external action. In *Galileo* the complexity is of consciousness, Galileo is able to continue his scientific work but in isolation from those he might have taught. The one play creates a complex action, the other dramatises a complex consciousness. Williams, however, argues that Brecht retains the ‘structure of feeling’ of expressionist drama: an isolated individual in the face of a total world. According to Williams, Brecht’s originality lies in his concept of ‘complex seeing’ which is concretely manifested in the best of his plays. He does his best to create ‘complex seeing’ on the stage. In other words, it is the discovery of forms of drama which allow expression for what is ordinarily overlooked or silenced in everyday life. Alan O’Connor justifies Williams’ assessment of Brecht in the following words: “In his drama the isolated individual is only a symptom and not the center: the total world is now the source of values and explanation.”

Initially Williams saw some hope in T.S Eliot’s revival of verse drama which developed as a sharp reaction to naturalist drama which only showed surface reality. The underlying experience had always remained unvoiced. With the help of new
kind of dramatic effects, verse drama intended to bring to surface what was underlying or below surface. T.S Eliot and W.B. Yeats made serious attempts to search new kinds of dramatic actions which could show the full range of human experience. Yeats’ *Four Plays for Dancers* (1920), Eliot’s unfinished *Sweeney Agonistes* (1932) show an experiment being made in this regard. Williams describes this dramatic mode as a “discovery of a dramatic method which should have the status of poetry.”

Though T.S. Eliot achieved one major success in *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935) with a spiritual theme, he failed when he turned to contemporary action. Williams noticed that there was steady abandonment of any attempt to use dramatic verse for its original purpose—to express the full range of experience rather than the version of experience that could be reasonably put into the mouths of probable characters. According to Williams, verse form could not be used for ordinary action like answering the telephone, returning an umbrella etc. Another reason which Williams ascribes to the failure of verse drama was that there was not permanent theatre in which these experiments could be followed through. For instance Christopher Fry also made an unsuccessful attempt in verse drama but failed to deliver the goods. John Higgins rightly observes: “For a time, the appearance of verse-dramas such as Eliot’s *The Cocktail Party* seemed to promise a new vitality, but this was not to last.”

Williams seems to suggest that a dramatic form without substantial social basis cannot be successful for long. Verse drama, with its limited range, lacked in social basis and was inadequate to
express the contemporary mood. The serious verse drama, According to Williams, was gone before the two major influences which go a long way in the making of new drama had appeared. Now the English theatre was fully opened to the full range of European practice and this proved to be a fruitful encounter. The works of Satre, Brecht, Becket and Ionesco were a powerful influence on the subsequent drama. The new drama intended to capture both through dramatic action and dramatic speech, the more vital and more extended range of human experience. Slowly a large number of dramatists absorbed these varied influences and this gave rise to an important trend in drama. The majority drama was challenged not so much because of its form as of its content and it was widely felt that “the speech and action of the typical majority theatre were miles away from contemporary life.”

The revolt brought new content which was received with excitement and vitality. John Osborne’s Look Back in Anger (1956) is a powerful play of this trend. It is a distinctively working class drama showing disenchantment of the working-class with the then Government (Labour Party). The play broke new ground and there was a general release of energy. Williams looked upon this play as “uncontrolled, unresolved but directly powerful.” Deloney’s A taste of Honey was also a revolt against the prevailing middle-class drama. The new drama made its way through an independent theatre and within no time it became a great dramatic movement. It has been described as the emergence of working class drama. But this description is too general and oversimplified. These plays—
John Osborne’s *Look Back in Anger*, *The Entertainer* and *John Ardene’s Live Like Pigs*—are more about ‘people’ who are disorganized and restless than about the working class people. Though the factors of youth and poverty are present in these plays, Williams is right when he observes:

> A good deal of social experience was expressed through these plays, but not much of it was that of the actual working class---. The true social experience that was coming through was that of general restlessness, disorganisation and through the selection of especially restless and disorganised people.27

These plays are an expression of a ‘structure of feeling’ which was operative at that time. These plays are well received by the young and by a majority of middle-class audience where the ‘structure of feeling’ was most explicit. After these plays ‘low life’ drama came on the scene in which crooks and prostitutes were the central characters. The plays of Arnold Wesker, Bernard Kops and Jean Genet are fine examples of this drama. T.S Eliot and Christopher Fry too had dwelt on similar themes but the subtle difference is that similar themes are now expressed in “new voices, and with a different edge.”28 There is a new sound in these plays: that of the ordinary human voices trying to live through the despair. This is best expressed in *A taste of Honey*. In his analysis of different dramatic forms, Williams seems to suggest that there are clear social and historical relations between particular literary forms and the societies in which they were produced or created. A transitional period is usually marked by the emergence of new experimental forms. But it is also very common to find apparent
continuation or even conscious revival of older forms. For instance Greek choral tragic drama has at different times been widely imitated or consciously revived. As a matter of fact, as Williams rightly points out, once new forms are created some of their elements are also likely to be appropriated in later period to bring forth new experience. The radically new form of contemporary prose drama despite bold experiments and innovation has also appropriated many important elements from the seventeenth century dramatic techniques.

English drama reaches the curious point of revival of naturalist drama which, when its ‘structure of feeling’ is analysed, is only intermittently consistent with naturalism. The new drama is less the drama of social description and probability than the drama of a state of mind. This mode of drama uses naturalism as a means of expressing the state of mind. These plays are about “a number of intensely personal cries in the dark: a lyrical and romantic drama turned bitter and almost hopeless; a set of blues rhythms rather than a set of social problem plays.”

The dramatic trends of the 1950s are very close to the European drama. The European plays of this period express the contemporary mood in a remarkable way. Becket’s *Waiting for Godot* (1952) is a notable example of this trend. The new type of drama relies on fantasy, nightmares and hallucinations and there is no apparent pattern. The words do not seem to convey any thing which can be fitted into the obvious pattern of common sense. Martin Esslin aptly remarks: “There are poetic images which
eventually make a longer poetic image."30 Language in these plays is devalued and disintegrated. One has to understand the pattern of images for understanding the play. Since the older dramatic forms failed to give expression to the contemporary mood, these new dramatic forms which the ordinary audience sometimes found rather puzzling, had to be experimented with in order to give expression to the new ‘structure of feeling’.

In the plays of Ionesco, absurdist action had been developed into a distinctively anti-realistic convention. Pinter’s *The Dumb Waiter* (1960) falls into this category and reflects the method and the rhythm of Beckett and Ionesco. This play is not very far in texture from the new naturalism characteristic of the young dramatists, who through the development of this form, were really able to make a breakthrough in the expression of some vital aspects of contemporary human experience. In forty years of experiment the formal verse drama had reached a high level of technical skill but it could never solve the problem of action. Another weakness of verse drama was that, the values ordinarily appealed to have been based not on contemporary experience but on the preserved values of other societies. The new drama of recent years after rejecting that particular tradition has had to start afresh. So it is crude and unfinished in its actual writing. But it can still progress further by having interaction with the wider European tradition. The new dramatic forms are capable of “reaching certain kinds of experience which dissolve the fixed categories of the individual and society as these have been ordinarily expressed.”31
Of late, there has been a turn to historical themes. In these plays the problem of the sources of speech is less pressing because the action is not contemporary. Different dramatists make different uses of history in their plays. There is a kind of historical play exemplified by Bolt’s *A Man for All Seasons* (1960). The play has a kind of antedated naturalism: the characters talk and feel in the twentieth century but the action is located in the sixteenth century. Then there are plays of romantic intrigue well exemplified by Whiting’s *The Devils* (1961). Here the opportunity is taken to create new kinds of theatrical effect: “The colour and excitement of costume, the pattern of old rituals, the exhibition of torture and possession.” Fry makes romantic comedies out of this kind of material and Whiting has made a psychological drama out of it. Because of its colour and movement, it can be effectively produced and played. It can draw directly on the methods of acting and producing Shakespeare as distinct from Shakespeare’s own dramatic methods.

Though Williams attaches great importance to the new dramatic method i.e. epic theatre or open theatre innovated by Brecht, but he has some reservations about his dramatic method. According to Williams, his notion of ‘complex seeing’ does not always create revolutionary drama which might become a means for transformation of society. Rather it becomes “a mode of evasion, necessary to protect yourself against an oppressive society.” In Williams’ opinion, Brecht is not interested in intermediate relationships—between the poles of the separated
individual and the totally realised society. The dimension of social realism is absent in his work both in substance and in any continuing experience. Though he retains the characteristic poles of expressionism—the isolated suffering individual and the totality of the world in which he suffers, he reverses the poles. The previously positive reference—the isolated individual becomes negative and he is not seen subjectively as a characteristic and even symptomatic figure. According to Williams this drama is retrospective in a deep sense. It is not oriented towards growth. The experiences of transforming relationship and of social changes are not included.

According to Williams Brecht’s thinking in this regard is akin to that of Scrutiny group of critics, who view individual and society as two opposing and antithetical forces, one inimical to the growth and progress of the other. The individual is seen pitted against a powerful social system. Society is seen as a potential enemy of the individual which constantly thwarts his hopes and aspirations. Williams finds this way of thinking about the society and individual most “inadequate, confusing, and at times sterile.” In *The Long Revolution* he says that we need to see individual and society in terms of interrelationship not as separate entities. He recognizes the dialectical relationship between the two. Man forms and is formed by the society of which he is a member. The individual can help to change or modify the social process that has influenced and is influencing him. Williams emphasizes the fact that the individual cannot survive and grow except within a social process of some kind. Thus Williams disapproves of Brecht’s
dramatic world or his ‘dramatic negative’ which shows isolated individual versus total system. There is a need “to struggle to enter, as Brecht himself insisted, a new kind of world”\textsuperscript{35} in which the distinction between individual and society will be overcome. Williams looks forward to the media of film and television for his hope for change.

From the above discussion it is evident that Williams sees a close relation and connection between the art forms and social change. There are no sudden changes in a society and likewise dramatic forms are also evolved gradually. The old forms are broken and rejected and are replaced by new dramatic forms. But there is no sudden rejection of older forms. In a new dramatic form elements of old forms are always retained because a new society takes some time to reach full consciousness and survival of old forms of consciousness makes it useful for the dramatist to use some elements of the old dramatic forms to express new issues and problems which have occupied the center-stage. Industrial revolution brought about many changes in society and art forms and dramatic forms were also changed to give expression to the rapidly changing ‘structure of feeling’. The anger and anguish of an individual in an industrialised society could not be expressed in conventional dramatic forms. New dramatic forms were experimented with and expressionistic mode of drama came to give expression to the repressed voice of an individual. O’Neill’s \textit{Hairy Ape} is a notable example of an expressionistic play. Twentieth century witnessed many social changes and these changes had a
direct impact on the development of different dramatic forms, expressionistic form being only one of them. Dramatic forms are constantly and continually changed, modified and rejected in favour of some other dramatic forms which can adequately express the ‘objective reality’ which is ever changing. Williams argues that dramatic forms are never created in a vacuum. On the other hand, they are closely related to the historical context of a society. In other words, drama does not belong merely to an isolated aesthetic domain; rather it is deeply connected with the changes taking place in the society. In fact, Williams is arguing against the notion of ‘pure’ art. He views literature in the social and historical context and puts strong emphasis on its complex relationship with the latter.

Williams stresses the need of a fully social theory of literature in which the overemphasis of both expressionism and formalism are “refused, rejected and redefined.” Literary concepts such as ‘convention’, ‘genre’, ‘form’ and ‘author’ are to be seen and studied in a social context of which they are an inseparable part. Drawing on the arguments and evidence gathered in The Country and the City Williams argues that the presentation of place depends on variable conventions. To quote Williams:

Description of great houses, of rural landscapes, of cities, or of factories are evident examples of these variable conventions, where the ‘point of view’ may be experienced as an ‘aesthetic’ choice but where any point of view, including that which excludes persons or converts them into landscape, is social.

Similarly genre is described as “neither an ideal type nor a
traditional order nor a set of technical rules” but a social relationship. The orthodox literary theory shows ‘the figure of the individual author’ completely cut off from the society. Williams emphasises the need for “a reciprocal discovery of the truly social in the individual, and the truly individual in the social.” This is an important formulation of Williams’ literary theory which is quite evident from his analysis of the works by various dramatists such as T.S.Eliot, O’Casey, Becket, Chekhov and Arthur Miller.
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