

KNOWING HIS PLACE:
How Welsh are the 'Border' trilogy of novels
by Raymond Williams?

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of requirements
for the degree of MA Celtic Studies
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ABSTRACT

Published in the years from 1960 to 1979, the novels of Raymond Williams' 'Border' or 'Welsh' trilogy explore and reveal his changing feelings for, and responses to, his Welsh border background, both the physical landscape and the community. This dissertation examines how, for Williams, the novels were a crucial part of his life-long discussion of community and culture from a socialist perspective. His books of literary and cultural history like *Culture and Society* (1958), *The Long Revolution* (1961) and *The Country and the City* (1973) are justly well-known, and Williams sometimes uses his own personal Welsh border background in these texts. This thesis proposes that the trilogy novels, particularly *Border Country*, present experiences and attitudes closely related to Williams' own life and reflect issues he examined in his non-fiction writing, especially his increasing focus on Welsh culture from the late 1960s. The study focuses closely on textual detail and discusses: (a) the problematic 'Welshness' of the border region where Williams grew up; (b) responses to the border landscape; (c) the nature and emotional significance of community, in the Welsh border farming region and in the English city where two related border-origin families live; and (d) the sense of Welsh identity. Through this discussion two other themes emerge: the struggle of academics of working-class origins to find or know their place in relation to their background, and the power and influence of England in Welsh culture.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

At the beginning of the process of deciding on a topic and a way of approaching it, a meeting and some email exchanges with Matthew Jarvis were very helpful, particularly on how to limit the scope of the study, and he gave me some useful suggestions of related reading. I am also very grateful to the staff of the Richard Burton Archive at Swansea University Library who readily made available a variety of materials from the Raymond Williams Papers stored there. All questions and requests were dealt with promptly and with good humour. Steve Gullick alerted me to Christopher Meredith's novel *Griffri* which was a useful reference. I am grateful for the time and engagement of Judith and Tony Morgan who assisted me in finding and photographing places associated with Raymond Williams in the Pandy area. My wife has played a crucial role in this study, constantly supporting me and giving me the confidence to work through the inevitable difficulties and wavering of will that occur in such extended work. A similar role was played by my supervisor Dr Jane Cartwright, particularly at times when I doubted whether I could complete the dissertation. Several important meetings and email exchanges encouraged me to be more focused and see the whole process as manageable and achievable. I am very grateful for all the assistance I have received, and of course I recognize that all flaws in the dissertation are entirely my responsibility.

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INTRODUCTION

.... "Tell me a story," he asks.

"Tell it in Welsh or English, which we are."¹

The primary aim of this dissertation is to answer the question: How Welsh are the novels in Raymond Williams' 'Border' or 'Welsh' trilogy, namely *Border Country*, *Second Generation* and *The Fight for Manod*?² The title of the study is 'Knowing His Place', and I explore Williams'³ sense of the physical home place – the landscape and how people live in that landscape – and the sense of community and identity, the way one 'places' oneself in terms of belonging to a region, class or culture, particularly when, like Williams, one has been displaced by education and career. The focus cannot be wholly on one specific landscape, since, though *Border Country* and *The Fight for Manod* are set in similar and not far-distant areas on the Welsh border with England and are both farming areas, *Second Generation* is set in an English city probably based on Oxford, though possibly transposed imaginatively further west. Here live two related families of Welsh exiles, who have connections to the border region of *Border Country*. The 'borders' being tested and crossed in these novel are rarely just national but as much to do with social, political and sexual

¹ Bryan Aspden, 'Which We Are' in Meic Stephens (ed.) *The Bright Field: An Anthology of Contemporary Poetry from Wales* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1991) pp.23-24

² *Border Country* was originally published in 1960: all references are to the edition published in the 'Library of Wales' series (Cardigan: Parthian Books, 2006); *Second Generation* was originally published in 1964: all references are to the edition published by The Hogarth Press in 1988; *The Fight for Manod* was originally published in 1979: all references are to the edition published by The Hogarth Press in 1988.

³ I prefer the possessive form Williams' but where a source I quote uses Williams's I have kept that form.

attitudes and conventions, and with the distances between the world of academic study and careers and the actualities of working-class struggles. This theme is focused on the central characters of the first two novels, Matthew Price⁴ and Peter Owen, who come to work together in *The Fight for Manod*. They both have their careers in England, just as Williams did, and the presence of England, its language and its power, especially in London, is evident through all three novels. One aim of this study is to show how the novels locate any sense of Welshness in the wider context of English – and indeed European - power and influence.

The vast majority of the critical commentary on the work of Raymond Williams is devoted to his many publications on literature, drama, culture, communications and media, adult education, politics, and social history. Although he gave a great deal of time and energy to his fiction (and occasional plays) – for example, *Border Country* is the result of at least a dozen years working on various versions – the novels have received relatively scant attention. The only book-length study of the novels of which I am aware is Tony Pinkney's *Raymond Williams*, a relatively brief discussion published in the Seren 'Border Lines' series.⁵ This is a challenging view of Williams' fiction, though I accept his assertion that the fiction and non-fiction are closely interrelated in Williams' overall oeuvre. Pinkney presents Williams as a 'Postmodern Novelist' and his study is a useful corrective to the

⁴ Because Matthew Price in *Border Country* is also called Will I have generally tried to use the name appropriate to the situation e.g. referring to him as Will when a child; occasionally I have used Will/Matthew or Matthew/Will.

⁵ Tony Pinkney, *Raymond Williams* (Bridgend: Seren Books/Poetry Wales Press, 1991)

established views of Williams' fiction which have, as he says, led to the novels being seen as

... little more than illustrations of issues within the political or cultural writings, as being important only to the degree that a recognisable social kernel of meaning can be extracted from them.⁶

More conventional discussions of the novels are found in the work of critics like J. P. Ward, Stephen Knight, James A. Davies and Katie Gramich, most of them in pieces in books devoted to various aspects of Williams' work or in literary journals. Gramich discusses Williams' distrust of psychoanalytic theory and the way his novels fail to fully examine the pressure on the individual of the 'more suffocating aspects of the nuclear family and rigid community', focusing particularly on Kate Owen in *Second Generation*.⁷ Stephen Knight examines how each of the novels is related to, and was being written alongside, Williams' major studies of literary and cultural studies; he also considers criticisms of the novels' failure to examine the 'real politics of exploitation'.⁸ Davies examines all the novels published in Williams' lifetime, showing how they all have connections with Williams' own life experiences and all demonstrate the potency of working class upbringings in communities with

⁶ Ibid, p.14

⁷ See Katie Gramich, 'The Fiction of Raymond Williams in the 1960s' in Tony Brown (ed.), *Welsh Writing in English: A Yearbook of Critical Essays* Vol. 1/1995. pp.62-74

⁸ See Stephen Knight, 'Personal Substance: The Novels of Raymond Williams' in Belinda Humfrey (ed.), *The New Welsh Review* Vol. 1 No.2 (Autumn 1988) pp.28-32

Welsh roots: 'The idea of Wales, then, is crucial to Raymond Williams's fiction'.⁹

Davies, does, however, point out the limited social and geographical range of Williams' Wales.

Ward wrote the volume on Williams in the 'Writers of Wales' series but this short book devotes just 11 of its 76 pages to the trilogy, linking these novels particularly to his literary/cultural study, *The Country and the City*(1973), a connection I refer to in Chapter 3 and 4 below. Ward comments on 'the autobiographical components the trilogy unquestionably has',¹⁰ an assertion which I consider by examining particularly the way that Matthew Price parallels the life of Williams himself in significant ways. Despite Dai Smith's rather puzzling comment about *Border Country* that it 'is not autobiographical except through its place and its time',¹¹ the evidence of Williams' own discussion of his novels, particularly in the interviews with the editors of *New Left Review*, is that he saw clear links between the novels and his own life or experiences. For example, in *Politics and Letters*, he comments that Matthew Price was 'quite close to me' but in *The Fight for Manod* has 'become very unlike me; indeed I feel a coarse hard bastard beside him'.¹² In the same interviews,

⁹ James A. Davies, "'Not going back, but ... exile ending": Raymond Williams's Fictional Wales' in W. John Morgan & Peter Preston (eds.), *Raymond Williams: Politics, Education, Letters* (Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press, 1993) pp.189-210

¹⁰ J. P. Ward, *Raymond Williams* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991) p.36

¹¹ Dai Smith, *Raymond Williams: A Warrior's Tale* (Cardigan: Parthian Books, 2008) p.14

¹² Editors, *New Left Review*, *Raymond Williams: Politics and Letters: Interviews with New Left Review* (London: Verso Editions, 1981) p.295. James A. Davies also comments that 'What is also evident is that Williams constantly draws from his own early experiences..' ('Raymond Williams's Fictional Worlds' p.192)

Williams explains at some length how his own father is presented in two characters in *Border Country*, namely Harry Price and Morgan Rosser.¹³

Smith has done some detailed work using Williams' archive of papers, charting the development of the novels, especially *Border Country*, through a range of versions and drafts.¹⁴ In this study I draw on material from the Williams' unpublished papers in the Richard Burton Archive, Swansea University Library, particularly his notebooks and autograph and typescript drafts of the novels.

This study presumes that Williams was writing, as he himself claimed, in the 'realist' tradition¹⁵ and that there are clear connections between on the one hand his own life and experiences, and the community he grew up in, and on the other the characters and settings of the novels. Williams also frequently referred to his own home area and the culture in which he was nurtured when discussing his fiction: for him the critical and social analysis and the fiction were part of an integrated project.¹⁶ This study will focus closely on the textual detail of the three novels, discussing the presentation of 'place' – the landscape and the lives lived – and the

¹³ See *ibid.* p.282

¹⁴ This material appears in *Raymond Williams: A Warrior's Tale* and an essay, 'From "Black Water" to *Border Country*: Sourcing the Textual Odyssey of Raymond Williams' in Dr K. Gramich (ed.), *almanac: a yearbook of Welsh writing in English: critical essays* Vol. 12/2007-8. pp.169-191

¹⁵ See, for example, his discussion of form in his lecture 'The Welsh Industrial Novel' in which he writes of the commercially imposed length limits for novels which are particularly restrictive for writers of the 'extending realist novel': 'But for Welsh writers, less willing than those English to restrict or cancel their sense of community and of history, it is a special kind of obstacle'. Williams, 'The Welsh Industrial Novel' reprinted in Daniel Williams (ed.), *Who Speaks for Wales?* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003) p.107. Even Tony Pinkney acknowledges Williams' 'debt to that tradition of novelistic realism.' *Raymond Williams* p.20

¹⁶ Stephen Knight makes this point in his essay, 'Personal Substance: The Novels of Raymond Williams' in *The New Welsh Review* No. 2 (Autumn 1988) where he argues that the novels were not a 'hobbyish aside' or 'occasional gloss' to Williams' critical, social, cultural analysis: instead the novels are 'a modally different, internally consistent and – most crucially – a humanly realised version of the interpretative life's work of Raymond Williams ... ' p.28

presentation of the sense of community and the tensions within it. Running through all this is the question of identity, and whether the novels present any consistent sense of a Welsh identity or perhaps a distinctive 'border' identity. After an initial outline of the peculiarly contested history of the region where Williams grew up – and to which he returned for at least part of each year in his later life – the study will move on to examine: the landscape itself; the way people work and make a living in the border landscape and the English city; the sense of community; and finally, the consideration of how Welsh the world the novels present seems to be. Throughout, there will be awareness of the way the novels show how the 'Welsh' culture relates to the power and pressure of England: how far is the Welsh identity bound up with not being English?

CHAPTER 1: A BORDER LAND

There was a curious sense in which we could speak of both Welsh and English as foreigners, as 'not us'.¹

1.1 Raymond Williams spent his childhood and youth living in Pandy in Monmouthshire,² a village just a few miles from the border with Herefordshire and England. The son of a railway signalman,³ Williams gained a place at King Henry VIII Grammar School in Abergavenny⁴ and subsequently went to Cambridge. After a war spent in an anti-tank unit, he became an adult education teacher and then a distinguished academic and influential socialist thinker. This progression from a working-class background to academic professional status, and the personal, cultural and social tensions it produces, has become a theme in cultural and sociological studies and in fiction, poetry and drama, often expressing a defiant or hostile assertion of working-class values.⁵ Richard Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy*, an influential cultural and sociological study published in 1957, might seem, in its

¹ Raymond Williams, quoted in *Politics and Letters: Interviews with New Left Review* (London: NLB and Verso Editions, 1981) p.26

² Indeed, his first words in *Politics and Letters* are: 'I come from Pandy, which is a predominantly farming village with a characteristic Welsh rural structure ...' p.21. Photographs of the cottages where Williams lived can be found in Appendix 4: Pictures, Figures 3, 4 and 5: these are the originals of the homes of the fictional Will/Matthew Price at 'the patch'.

³ This is memorably captured in the original hardback dust-jacket of *Border Country*, showing Harry Price in the box with mountains behind him. It is an imaginative and slightly romanticised vision of the real Pandy signal-box where Raymond Williams' father worked – see Appendix 4: Pictures, Figure 1.

⁴ A photograph of the front of the old Grammar School at Penypound, Abergavenny, can be found in Appendix 4: Pictures, Figure 6.

⁵ Literary examples might include poems by Tony Harrison, especially the sequence of 'sonnets' called 'The School of Eloquence' addressed to his parents - see *Selected Poems* (London: Penguin Books, second edition 1987) pp.112-89; novels by Alan Sillitoe, especially *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (London: W. H. Allen, 1958) and *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner* (London: W. H. Allen, 1959); John Osborne's play *Look Back in Anger* (first performed at the Royal Court Theatre in 1956).

autobiographical elements, to present a childhood similar to Williams' own experience. But Williams points out that there were crucial differences in the cultures in which they grew up:

Years later I talked to Hoggart about his sense in childhood of being described as 'bright', with the implication of something odd. My experience was quite the opposite. There was absolutely nothing wrong with being bright, winning a scholarship or writing a book. I think that this has something to do with what was still a Welsh cultural tradition within an Anglicized border area. Historically, Welsh intellectuals have come in very much larger numbers from poor families than have English intellectuals, so the movement is not regarded as abnormal or eccentric. The typical Welsh intellectual is – as we say – only one generation away from shirt sleeves.⁶

Williams here seems to be placing his background in a distinctively Welsh working-class culture, though he recognizes that it is 'Anglicized'. The tradition of support for education by the Welsh working man is amply demonstrated by the work of the farmer's son Griffith Jones (1683–1771) whose circulating schools taught children and adults to read Welsh,⁷ and the fact that the early academies and universities in

⁶ Raymond Williams, quoted in *Politics and Letters* p.29

⁷ See John Davies, *A History of Wales* (London: Penguin Books, revised edition 2007) pp.297 – 8, and Gwyn A. Williams, *When Was Wales?* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985) pp 154 - 5

Wales were funded by public subscription, the donations of men like miners, quarrymen and farm workers who saw a value in learning.⁸

*

1.2 However, as Williams acknowledges, his background is an ‘Anglicized’ Wales. The area he was brought up in, and which forms the landscape of several of his novels – *Border Country*, *People of the Black Mountains 1: The Beginning*, *People of the Black Mountains 2: The Eggs of the Eagle*, – is the Black Mountain range of north-east Monmouthshire, straddling the Herefordshire border and containing part of Offa’s Dyke. In ancient times, much of this region, bounded by Pandy and the Olchon valley, Abergavenny, Talgarth and Hay-on-Wye, and including parts of what is now Herefordshire, was a Welsh kingdom called Ergyng (including Ewias), and place names in the present English county clearly show their Welsh origins. Clodock, a village in the Olchon valley where Williams and his wife are buried,⁹ has a name derived from the Welsh saint Clydawg:

The village which grew up around it [the church] would be called a Llan (enclosure) and so Llan Y Merthyr Clydawg, now contracted to Clodock, for the name of the village ... the parish continued under the jurisdiction of the

⁸ The University College of Wales (later Aberystwyth University) in 1872; The University College of North Wales (Bangor) and The University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire (Cardiff), both in 1881.

⁹ In Appendix 4: Pictures, Figure 2 shows the gravestone of Raymond Williams and his wife Joy in the graveyard of Clodock Church – in fact, it is across the road from the church in a field now used for burials.

Welsh Church until 1858 when it became included in the Diocese of Hereford.

The people of the area spoke Welsh until the beginning of the 19th century.¹⁰

Other hamlets and farms have names like Llanveynoe, Gilfach, Trewern, Pontrilas and Pentwyn. This was the region known as Ewias and Ergyng, a Welsh kingdom, mentioned in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *The History of the Kings of Britain*.¹¹ Ergyng later became a mere cantref, and eventually Ewyas became a Marcher lordship. It is revealing that the great nationalist Owain Glyn Dŵr, who was himself connected by marriage to the marcher lords, the Mortimers, in the so-called Tripartite Indenture of 1405 with the Percy family and the Mortimers, laid claim to a kind of greater Wales, annexing most of present day Cheshire and parts of Shropshire, Worcestershire and Herefordshire, areas with significant Welsh-speaking populations.¹² Nothing came of this plan but the aspiration to establish a Welsh nation including some of these border areas remained. It was only in the Acts of Union in Henry VIII's reign¹³ that the borders of Monmouthshire and Herefordshire were established more or less as they are today. In effect, the old Welsh kingdom or cantref, Ergyng or Ewyas, was now divided between English and Welsh shires, though the status of Monmouthshire itself remained problematic for centuries.

¹⁰ Gwen Moore, *The Parish Church of St Clydawg: a guidebook* (Longtown Outdoor Education Centre, no date) p.2. See also Ruth Bidgood's poem about the legend of St Clydawg, in Appendix 3: Black Mountain Poems.

¹¹ Lewis Thorpe (ed. and trans.), *Geoffrey of Monmouth: The History of the Kings of Britain* (London: Penguin Books, 1966, 36th reprint) p.187; in Part Six, he describes the British king Aurelius hunting down Vortigern; he 'marched his army into Kambria' to find Vortigern's refuge, the 'castle of Genoreu', which 'belonged to Erging country [...] beside the River Wye.'

¹² See, for example, Williams, *When Was Wales?* p.111; Davies, *A History of Wales* 195-6; R. R. Davies (trans. Gerald Morgan), *Owain Glyn Dŵr: Prince of Wales* (Talybont: Y Lolfa Cyf) pp.106-7

¹³ The first Act of Union is usually dated 1536, but the actual document seems to be dated 1535.

In the act *AD 1535 Anno vicesimo septimo Henrici VIII c. 26: Concerning the Laws to be used in Wales*, one of the Acts of Union, areas previously part of Wales were placed in Herefordshire and Shropshire:

Thus was created the border between Wales and England, a border which has survived until today ... it excluded districts such as Oswestry and Ewias, where the Welsh language would continue to be spoken for centuries ... Yet as the purpose of the statute was to incorporate Wales into England, the location of the Welsh border was irrelevant to the purposes of its framers.¹⁴

But the new county of Monmouth was not as other Welsh shires, as Gwyn A Williams explains:

Monmouth became an anomaly. Nearer to London and relatively wealthy, it was saddled with the full parliamentary quota and subjected to the courts of the capital. Always reckoned a part of the Welsh Church, its exclusion from the Great Sessions and the Welsh parliamentary system bred that curious lawyers' hybrid 'Wales and Monmouthshire' as a standard secular description, which English settlement in the eastern lowlands reinforced.¹⁵

The hybrid term was only abandoned in the local government reorganization in 1974.

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¹⁴ Davies, *A History of Wales* p.226

¹⁵ Williams, *When Was Wales?* pp.119 & 121

1.3 For someone like Raymond Williams living in the Abergavenny area in the east of the county it might be easy to see yourself as not-quite Welsh. Indeed, the comments in 1911 of the topographical writer A. G. Bradley probably represent a fairly widely-held view of Abergavenny itself among English people: 'It is now an English and not a Welsh town both in habit and appearance.'¹⁶

But the town had witnessed violence between Welsh and English. Abergavenny castle had been the scene of a brutal incident in 1175, evidence of the conflict between the Welsh and the Norman English lords who were coming to dominate the region.¹⁷ This 'massacre' of Welsh chieftains by William de Braose's men was notorious and has been described in a wide variety of academic and literary texts.¹⁸ There seems little doubt of the 'Welshness' of the people of the area then and Welsh was the language of the local population.

Things were very different in the 1930s to 1950s when Williams was growing up in Pandy and, as an adult, was working through various drafts of *Border Country*, his largely autobiographical novel, published in 1960. The evidence from census

¹⁶ A. G. Bradley, *In the March and Borderline of Wales: Shropshire, Herefordshire, Monmouth* (originally published London: Constable & Co Ltd, 1911; facsimile reproduction Hereford: Lapridge Publications, 1994) p.118

¹⁷ William de Braose invited Welsh chieftains to a celebration at the castle, insisting that weapons were left outside the chamber; a dispute arose and at a signal de Braose's retainers fell upon the Welshmen, slaughtering them.

¹⁸ Such as Lewis Thorpe (ed. and trans.), *Gerald of Wales: The Journey Through Wales* (London: Penguin Books, 1978, 2004 reissue) – Gerald makes an unspecific reference to the relatively recent outrages but 'I have thought it better not to relate them in detail..' p.109; A. G. Bradley, *In the March and Borderland of Wales*, pp.118 – 120; anon, 14th century, English translation of Welsh text, ed Jones, *Brut y Tywysogion*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1941); Brock W. Holden "King John, the Braoses, and the Celtic Fringe, 1207 – 1216" in *Albion* 33, 1 (Spring 2001), pp. 1 – 23; Christopher Meredith, *Griffri* (Bridgend: Seren/Poetry Wales Press, 1991) pp.214 – 221; Raymond Williams, *People of the Black Mountains 2: The Eggs of the Eagle* (London: Paladin/Grafton Books, 1990) pp.200 – 226 'The Abergavenny Murders'

returns clearly shows that Welsh speakers were a very small minority in Monmouthshire. The 'Report on Welsh Speaking Population', based on the 1951 Census and published by the General Register Office in 1955, analyses the information from the 1951 Census and compares the figures with the returns from earlier censuses, particularly 1931 when Williams was living in Pandy. The story is predictably one of decline: In 'Wales (including Monmouthshire)' as a whole, 36.8% speak Welsh in 1931 but by 1951 the figure has dropped to 28.9% who speak Welsh. The figures for Monmouthshire are stark: in 1931 6.0% speak Welsh; in 1951 a mere 3.5% speak Welsh.¹⁹

The sense of Monmouthshire, especially in its latest boundaries, being different is still evident now, despite the disappearance of the legalistic 'and Monmouthshire' phrase. In line with increases since at least 1981, the 2001 Census showed that 20.8% of the population of Wales were able to speak Welsh and even in Monmouthshire there had been a rise to 9.3%, an increase of 7.2% from the 1991 figure. Much of the increase is owing to the number of children being taught Welsh at school.²⁰ The recently released initial data from the 2011 Census has shown that, contrary to government targets, the overall percentage of those aged 3 and over who can speak Welsh has dropped to just 19%. The only two areas which showed an

¹⁹ Data taken from General Register Office, *Census 1951: Wales (including Monmouthshire): Report on Welsh Speaking Population*, (London: HM Stationery Office, 1955)

²⁰ 'Census 2001: Main Statistics About Welsh' from the website of Bwrdd Yr Iaith Cymraeg (Welsh Language Board) issued 23 September 2003 (no longer available – the Board was closed, April 2012)

increased percentage were Cardiff and Monmouthshire (from 9.3% in 2001 to 9.9% in 2011).²¹

This might suggest that Monmouthshire is becoming more 'Welsh' but two studies of national identity in 2001 are not so encouraging. The Annual Local Area Labour Force Survey found that of the respondents in Wales, when asked to indicate national identity from a list (Welsh, English, Scottish, Irish, British, Other), 60% put Welsh and 7% chose Welsh *and* (usually) British. However, Monmouthshire was in the lowest band of 'Welsh' choices. People in Monmouthshire had also shown little enthusiasm for a Welsh Assembly from the start and this attitude was demonstrated once again in the 2011 Referendum on extending the law-making powers of the Assembly. In a low turnout across Wales (just over 35%), the overall 'Yes' vote was 63.49% but Monmouthshire was the *only* unitary authority to have a 'No' majority (50.64%), though it was close enough to have a recount and the eventual majority was a mere 320 votes.²² So, even after so many years of being legally and unequivocally part of Wales, the people of Monmouthshire still seem rather equivocal in their sense of 'Welshness'.

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1.4 Given the history of this border region and the census evidence on the use of the Welsh language, it is not surprising that Williams reflects on national identity. In

²¹ Information taken from BBC News website 'Census 2011: Number of Welsh speakers falling', 11 December 2012: accessed on 11 December 2012 at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-20677528>

²² Data taken from 'Wales says Yes in Referendum' on BBC News: Wales website at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-12482561> (accessed 10/10/2012)

their interview with him, the editors of the *New Left Review* posed the question, 'Did you speak Welsh?' (The past tense is interesting in itself!) Williams' response was:

We were not Welsh speaking. Ours was an area that had been Anglicized in the 1840s ... the result was to leave a minority of families who were bilingual and a majority who spoke only English. However, a certain number of Welsh expressions survived and also affected the speaking of English. Characteristically, these were everyday greetings and swearing. But for the majority of the population Welsh was now an unknown language.²³

Yet, as Williams points out, Welsh poems and songs were learnt by heart and this area was one of the centres of the 'Welsh cultural revival' in the early nineteenth century; as Williams explains, 'This often happens in border districts, which produce a conscious nationalism.'²⁴ Williams comments in the interview on the sense of national identity of his family and people in the Pandy/Abergavenny area. His parents found it difficult to describe themselves as Welsh (and 'British' was unacceptable because of its association with Empire), so 'the sense of a specific local identity was much stronger':

For Wales had never been a nation: it had always had a cultural rather than a national existence ... so people would always ask what Wales actually was ... I found that virtually all Welshmen ask themselves what it is to be Welsh. The

²³ Raymond Williams, quoted in *Politics and Letters: Interviews with New Left Review* p.25

²⁴ *Ibid*, p.25. Indeed Abergavenny hosted the National Eisteddfod in 1913.

problematic element is characteristic. Of course on the border, it was more problematic than in North and West Wales, in the still Welsh-speaking communities. They are much further away from England ... this was a frontier zone which had been the location of fighting for centuries.²⁵

The hold that this border region had on Williams' imagination is evident from his frequent visits to his home area, his enjoyment of walking in the mountains, and the fact that later in his life he and his wife had a home in Craswall,²⁶ at the upper end of the Olchon valley, and that they were both buried in Clodock. Near the end of his life, Williams was working on a three volume novel series, *People of the Black Mountains*, telling the story of human settlement in the Black Mountains from ancient times to the modern era. Two volumes, the first covering the period from c.23,000 BC to 51 AD, and the second from 82 AD to 1415 AD, were published posthumously in 1989 and 1990 respectively; the third volume was not completed. In both published books, there is a rather lyrical opening passage, creating a vivid sense of the landscape and the 'presence' of its human past which can be felt or sensed in the land itself:

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

²⁵ Ibid, p.26

²⁶ Roland Mathias wrote a short poem, 'Craswall', reprinted in (eds.) Don Dale-Jones & Randal Jenkins, *Twelve Modern Anglo-Welsh Poets* (London: University of London Press, 1975) pp.94-5, describing a shepherd on horseback surveying the border countryside: 'This is the boundary ... the gate of Wales'. The full text of the poem appears in Appendix 3: Black Mountain Poems.

at noon. Direct your index finger midway between them. Spread your fingers, not widely. You now hold this place in your hand.²⁷

The 'hand' image is used to visualize the landscape: the back of the hand is the plateau at the top of the range and the fingers are the ridges separating the various river valleys running down from the range. It is a tactile and visual image:

This is the hand of the Black Mountains, the shape you first learned. Your thumb is Crib y Gath. Your first finger is Curum and Hateral. Your second finger is Ffawyddog, with Tal y Cefn and Bal Mawr at its knuckles. Your third finger is Gadair Fawr. Your outside finger is Allt Mawr, from Llyisiau to Cerrig Calch, and its nail is Crug Hywel. On the high plateau of the back of your hand are Twyn y Llech and Twmpa, Rhos Dirion, Waun Fach and Y Das. You hold their shapes and their names.²⁸

By placing a hand on the grass and sandstone the figure addressed by the narrator – the reader in effect – comes into intimate contact with the story of this place:

Place your fingers close on this lichened sandstone. With this stone and this grass, with this red earth, this place was received and made and remade. Its generations are distinct but all suddenly present.²⁹

²⁷ Raymond Williams, *People of the Black Mountains 1: The Beginning* (London: Paladin/Grafton Books, 1990)

p.1

²⁸ *Ibid*, p.1

²⁹ *Ibid*, p.2

This landscape is the setting for the narrative 'frame' in the two *People of the Black Mountains* books, namely Glyn's search for his father-in-law Elis who has not returned from an evening walk. As Glyn traverses the hills, the histories of the peoples who have inhabited, invaded and journeyed through the region are told in dramatic episodes,³⁰ which reveal the creation of a culture and the attempts of the British or Welsh to assimilate or resist incursions by other peoples, such as Romans, Saxons, and Normans.

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1.5 But Williams' 'Border Country' trilogy is set entirely in the twentieth century: the first, the highly autobiographical *Border Country* (1960), is set precisely in the Pandy and Abergavenny area of Williams' own upbringing, though fictional place names are used; the second, *Second Generation* (1964), deals with two Welsh families living in an unnamed English city with car-works and a university (obviously Oxford, where Williams lived and worked for some years); the third, *The Fight for Manod* (1979), is once again set in the Welsh borders though it seems to be in Powys rather than Monmouthshire. In this novel, the central character from each of the preceding books visits the area to explore local reactions to a proposal to build a new city along the valley, and they have to resolve their own feelings for Wales, the people and the land.

³⁰ Examples include 'The Death of Clydawg', 'The Abergavenny Murders', and 'The Abergavenny Rising'

This border region has been the setting for novels by writers like Margiad Evans, Bruce Chatwin, Christopher Meredith and Owen Sheers.³¹ The publishers Seren Books have recognized 'border' writing as a distinctive genre and issue studies of writers associated with the Welsh/English border in their 'Border Lines' series. In a common preface or afterword to these books, J. P. Ward quotes Raymond Williams' comment that 'We talked of "The English" who were not us, and "The Welsh" who were not us.'³² Ward recognizes the difficulty of defining the border precisely in geographical terms, noting that Welsh was spoken in Hereford in the nineteenth century, but he

... can only say that as you approach the border you feel it. Suddenly you are in that finally elusive terrain, looking from a bare height down on to a plain, or from the lower land up to a gap in the hills, and you want to explore it, maybe not to return.³³

This may be deemed rather fanciful, but the depth of Williams' own attachment to the region and its history is amply demonstrated in his novels. But, Williams' novels are not merely about love of landscape. There is a powerful political impulse in the books: England is usually associated with bourgeois values and a capitalist society. From the mid-sixties, he developed more links with 'Welsh writers and intellectuals'

³¹ Relevant works include Margiad Evans, *Country Dance* (Cardigan: Parthian/Library of Wales, 2006) originally published 1932; Christopher Meredith, *Griffri* (Bridgend: Seren/Poetry Wales Press, revised edition 1994); Bruce Chatwin, *On the Black Hill* (London: Picador/Pan Books, 1983) originally published 1982; Owen Sheers, *Resistance* (London: Faber & Faber, 2007).

³² J P Ward, Preface to Tony Pinkney, *Raymond Williams* (Bridgend: Seren/Poetry Wales Press, 1991) p.vii

³³ *Ibid*, p.viii

and came to see himself as 'a Welsh European',³⁴ he saw the Welsh political culture as being related to socialist movements in Europe which could provide the impetus for 'the Welsh people – still a radical and cultured people – to defeat, override and bypass bourgeois England.'³⁵ He developed a more conscious Welshness, as a result of, for example, Welsh-speaking nationalists telling him 'how thoroughly Welsh *Border Country* and the social thinking are – which I used not to realize.'³⁶ This Welshness is, though, combative in nature:

... I am in a culture where I can breathe. Or at least take breaths to go back and contend with capitalist Europe, capitalist England and – blast it, but it was there and had to be shown in *Manod* – capitalist Wales.³⁷

*

1.6 Williams claimed that he had always thought of the 'Border Country' books in terms of a trilogy, presenting 'interconnecting versions of a specific kind of change, across borders.'³⁸ The first novel is set in the present (late 1950s) but takes us into the past, particularly to the 1926 General Strike; the second is almost entirely in the present (1964); while the third is set in the present (1979) but focuses on a possible future for the rural border area. But a crucial linking theme was 'the decisive problem of the relation of learning to labour, taking different class and

³⁴ Both comments from *Politics and Letters: Interviews with Raymond Williams* p.295, 296

³⁵ *Ibid*, p.296

³⁶ *Ibid*, p.296

³⁷ *Ibid*, p.296

³⁸ *Ibid*, p.292

political aspects,'³⁹ a concern which had obvious personal resonances as the academic son of a working-class man, and a prominent figure in left wing political thinking in times of social and industrial strife, and the international struggle for socialist principles. The Welshness is associated with commitment to a radical political tradition. Williams felt that novels in the past often presented working class life – including the actual *work* of such people – from a detached perspective: the working-class experience was not known from the inside. Even after 1945, when it could be said that recognizably working-class writers came into prominence, the stance was often one which derived in part from D H Lawrence:

Their theme was escape from the working class – moving to the room at the top,⁴⁰ or the experience of flight.⁴¹

What interested Williams was 'a continuing tension ... between two worlds that needed to be rejoined.'⁴² There is the working class world from which the protagonist in the novel comes and the different world – academic, professional, middle-class - in which he now lives.

The 'Border Country' trilogy is Williams' attempt to solve a problem for modern writers. In the expansive nineteenth-century realist novel, free of the constraints of modern publishing economics, the social context and history of a

³⁹ Ibid, p.293

⁴⁰ An allusion to John Braine's novel *Room at the Top* (1957), about a ruthlessly ambitious working class man who makes his way up in the world

⁴¹ *Politics and Letters: Interviews with Raymond Williams* p.272

⁴² Ibid, p.272

character could be developed fully, but there is no room today for such 'materialization of a history which is often extensively retraced'⁴³:

In the dominant pattern today, there is no longer any effective history. At any moment a person is a free-floating individual who makes his life through a series of encounters, which are really quite undetermined by any larger forces. If you're interested in those, they say, you should write sociology or history, not novels.⁴⁴

This kind of novel is, Williams asserts, 'a late bourgeois fictional form',⁴⁵ which needs to be challenged, and the space the trilogy affords is one way of approaching that difficulty, though he recognized that readers might not read all three books, nor in the intended sequence.⁴⁶ He was intent, nevertheless, on trying to move beyond the convention of working class novels being 'in effect regional novels' set in a 'knowable community',⁴⁷ which does not reflect the complex realities of modern life.

Since the 1980s English language publishers in Wales such as Seren, Gomer, Parthian and Honno have encouraged a more self confident Welsh fiction, not subject to the tastes of London publishers, a point made by Owen Sheers in an article

⁴³ Ibid, p.275

⁴⁴ Ibid, p.275

⁴⁵ Ibid, p.275

⁴⁶ Ibid, p.275, where Williams comments that: 'The nearest I've come to the serial form are certain character continuities between *Border Country/Second Generation* and *The Fight for Manod*. ... I think the series is the only technical solution which is open to a contemporary novelist who is interested in a broad band of experience'.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p.275

in *The Guardian* about the launch of the first titles in the 'Library of Wales'⁴⁸ series. One of the first books reissued was *Border Country* but the neglect of some Welsh writers for many years is revealed in Sheers' comment that:

... although I went to the same school as Williams and the landscape of his novel was the landscape of my childhood, it was Bruce Chatwin's *On the Black Hill*, not *Border Country*, that we studied at school.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ The 'Library of Wales', funded by the Welsh Assembly and the Welsh Books Council, is published by Parthian/Library of Wales; the series editor is Dai Smith

⁴⁹ Owen Sheers, 'Border Crossing' in *The Guardian*, 25 March 2006, from the Guardian website at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2006/mar/25/heritage.shopping?INTCMP=SRCH> (accessed 20/10/2011)

CHAPTER 2: RESPONSES TO BORDER LANDSCAPES

“Mountains! What do mountains matter?”¹

2.1 In *Border Country* there are several passages in which Matthew Price reflects on the area where he grew up and what it means to him now; for example, in Part One, Chapter 3, he has been shopping in Gwenton, where he had felt like a stranger, and has got off the bus back in Glynmawr. He gazes at the landscape around him, and we see how easily someone so familiar with a place can lose a sense of its lived reality when his/her life is elsewhere:

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. 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. The valley as landscape had been taken away, but its work forgotten.²

Matthew is fortunate that his home area is ‘beautiful’ and that it provokes ‘excitement’; clearly even while pursuing his professional academic and family life in London, he has been consoled and comforted by the ‘still’ image of ‘his only landscape’. Williams wrote about his own attachment to this landscape: ‘The only

¹ Williams, *Border Country* p.304: spoken by Morgan Rosser

² *Ibid*, p89

landscape I ever see, in dreams, is the Black Mountain village in which I was born'.³ It is a landscape that seems to provoke profound emotional attachment but it is always associated with an understanding of man's impact on the country. In a 1977 interview, Williams develops this attitude to land:

I have a very strong sense of people making landscape, and this is even after growing up in an area in which an important part is clearly not man-made although man-affected. And I do find that when I think about this, tracing these old hollow roads for example or looking at old barrows or simply old fields, it feels like an experience or interest that other people can find mystical or religious ... But it is a very strong feeling, that's all I can say.⁴

But, as Matthew acknowledges in the passage above, it is all too easy to lapse into a kind of 'tourist' stance: earlier in the book, we see Matthew travelling by train from London, and looking at the map of Wales on the compartment wall with its attractive pictures of Welsh scenes, including a ruined abbey he knows well. He has also been reading a county history for the area. The point is that this is not just a 'landscape' with its hills, uplands and rivers, its castles, ruined abbeys and ancient sites; it is primarily a 'place' of work, where livings have to be made and a community has to thrive – or not, as we see in *The Fight for Manod*.

³ Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1973) p.84

⁴ Williams, 'Marxism, Poetry, Wales' in Daniel Williams (ed.), *Who Speaks for Wales?* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003) p.92: originally published in *Poetry Wales* 13.3 (Winter 1977)

And, of course, it is Williams' own home area which is being depicted in *Border Country*; he changes names of hills, towns and villages but it is quite easy to identify the real places in the Black Mountains. It is no surprise to find that, in this heavily autobiographical novel, Matthew embodies Williams' own feelings about his home land. In *The Country and the City*, he recounts how, when he was writing *Border Country*, he felt 'a sudden sadness' because he had accepted the common notion that 'the rural experience' in Britain was gone now, 'only a marginal thing'. But he realised that this was not true at all and characteristically he places his general observation beside his own direct experience. If we look at the reality, he says, we see that much of 'rural England' still survives:

Most of the natural and working experiences which have been so powerfully celebrated in our rural literature are still directly available. It is still in so many places a beautiful country, and many of us can work, in different ways, to keep and enhance it. I have had the luck to thin a wood and watch the cowslips and bluebells and foxgloves come back; to repair and rebuild old drystone walls; to hedge and ditch...⁵

It is worth noting that Williams refers to 'rural *England*' [my italics] and then writes 'our land surface' and 'our rural literature'; the conscious Welshness that appears in

⁵ Williams, *The Country and the City*, pp.301-2. Through this book and much of *Culture and Society*, Williams refers to 'England' because of the focus of the texts he is considering; rarely is there a specific reference to Wales

his fiction has not yet become part of his frame of reference in his literary/cultural history studies.

During a teaching and academic career spent entirely in England, Williams bought a cottage at Craswall, well up the Olchon valley in Herefordshire, so that he was living for at least part of the year in the border farming community in which he had been nurtured. Here, he came to identify with hill sheep-farmers. Indeed, in *Politics and Letters* he relates an anecdote which reveals that identification with his neighbours:

In Wales I have friends and neighbours who are being forced out by a whole alliance of forces, from large-scale capital to the left of the Labour Party, because they are 'antique' – meaning they are food-producers. Even a Keynesian economist could tell me – ironically in a country pub, since it is part of the ideology that the country is where you go on Sundays – that 'the sheep is an uneconomical animal and that the sooner the sheep farmers of Wales give up or get engrossed the better'; leaving those hills, presumably, as an empty recreation area, for the discovery of nature.⁶

In another account of this incident, Williams says he was told that rural mid-Wales should become 'a "wilderness area" for the outdoor relief of the English cities'.⁷ A similar attitude is presented in a barbed encounter in *The Fight for Manod* when the

⁶ Williams, quoted in *Politics and Letters* p.314

⁷ Williams, 'Welsh Culture' in Daniel Williams (ed.), *Who Speaks for Wales?*, p.6; originally a talk on BBC Radio 3, September, 1975

Welsh leftist nationalist Tom Meurig is offended because he believes Matthew Price thinks that all Meurig has to offer is a 'Fortress Gwynedd' stance, a return to 'traditional rural Wales'. Meurig responds bitingly:

You're from the border, you live in both worlds, or in neither. And the strongest desire you may have is that it should stay that way, in an unspoiled mid-Wales, carrying the recreational traffic from England.⁸

This is, of course, a travesty of Price's position, but Williams was quite prepared to defend traditional sheep farming as the bedrock of the landscape that people come to experience. In an essay first published in 1984, he demonstrates his support for sheep farmers, even if only to ensure that the 'wild' hills and uplands that visitors seem to love – and Williams and his family were themselves keen hill walkers⁹ – can survive:

It is indeed important that some 'wild' places should be kept open and within the forms of natural growth ... Yet these, as I have seen them over many years, are entirely compatible with extensive sheep farming. Some of them would be more inaccessible without it ... If there were not farmers on these uplands,

⁸ Raymond Williams, *The Fight for Manod* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1988: originally published 1979) p.136

⁹ See Appendix 3: Black Mountain Poems to find a poem 'Black Mountain Cairns' by Raymond Williams' daughter Dr. Merryn Williams, which clearly evokes walking in the Black Mountains.

with the hill-sheep subsidy and guaranteed prices, there would have to be paid wardens if much accessible country were to be left.¹⁰

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2.2 The *Border Country* novel has sometimes given its title to the whole trilogy, though some prefer to call it the Welsh trilogy. As we have seen, *Border Country* itself is set in the Abergavenny, Pandy and Black Mountain area in the 1920s and 1930s, and in the late 1950s (with a few episodes in London). The third book is also set largely in the fictional village of Manod situated, as Robert Lane says, 'In the Afren valley. Welsh border country'.¹¹ He is speaking to Matthew Price, older now and already the recovered victim of a heart attack some years earlier, who is being employed to carry out a 'lived inquiry' into local reactions to a proposed new city development in the valley. As Price says, Manod is 'about forty miles from where I grew up' in Glynmawr (Pandy). In his controversial biography of Williams, Fred Inglis asserts that 'Manod's original is at Caersws in the Severn Valley, here moved thirty miles south'.¹²

¹⁰ Raymond Williams, 'Between Country and City' in ed. Robin Gable, *Resources of Hope* (London: Verso, 1989) p.236; reprint of piece first published in eds. Richard Mabey et al, *Second Nature* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1984)

¹¹ *The Fight for Manod* p.8

¹² Fred Inglis, *Raymond Williams* (London: Routledge, 1995; paperback edition 1998) p.253. Inglis gives no source for this but it is confirmed in one of the files among the Raymond Williams Papers at Swansea University, which contains a *Guardian* newspaper report about a proposed new town strung along the river from Newtown to Llanidloes, centred on Caersws (Ref: WWE/2/1/1/10/1): see Appendix 1

This kind of shifting around of actual locations in fiction is quite common,¹³ but the unifying element of the trilogy cannot be merely geographical, because *Second Generation* is predominantly set in an un-named English midlands city with a large car factory and an ancient university; it is clearly based on Oxford, though J. P. Ward suggests that the physical location of the city is ‘imagined as closer to Worcester or Birmingham than Oxford’.¹⁴ The central characters are Welsh or of Welsh background: two brothers Harold and Gwyn Owen, who moved to the city for work in the 1930s, and their wives Kate and Myra respectively. Gwyn and Myra have a daughter Beth, who was born in Wales, the child of Myra’s first marriage, but Harold and Kate’s son Peter was born in England. These characters are connected with the same area as Matthew Price comes from. The Owen brothers were born in what Williams calls Brynllwyd, not far from Gwenton up the Black Rock, where their father worked in the ironworks. The connection goes further: Myra was brought up in Glynmawr, and met Gwyn when he was a policeman in the area. The Welsh background is important for these families, but the vast majority of the action – industrial disputes, protest marches, marital difficulties, adultery, thwarted ambition, conflict between academic study and conventions and the desire for a more politically ‘committed’ stance – takes place in the English city.

¹³ Indeed, the station and signal-box at Glynmawr has physical features – platforms not opposite each other, a zig-zag path and trains passing *under* a bridge – which are not found at Pandy Station where Williams’ father worked but at Llanfihangel, a couple of miles towards Abergavenny: see Appendix 4: Pictures, Figures 10 & 11.

¹⁴ J. P. Ward, ‘Raymond Williams as Inhabitant: The Border Trilogy’ in *New Welsh Review* No. 2 (Autumn 1988) p.23

It is, though, significant that following a dramatic moment when Harold confronts Kate over her adultery, Peter, disturbed by witnessing the event and desperate to escape, takes his father's car and drives to Trawsfynydd, where Wyndham Evans, the father of Myra's first husband, has a house, a garage and petrol station and some land. It is not far from Glynmawr. This is not a novel which directly explores responses to Wales or the Welsh border land, but Peter, who seems an essentially urban figure, has a crucial experience in the hills. After a stern talk from Wyndham, Peter, as he drives up over the mountain, feels the emptiness of the scene, and ponders committing suicide by driving off the unfenced road down into a gully. He imagines the experience of driving over, but he suddenly brakes to inspect a cattle grid. This seems to be a turning point; he is taken by a 'rush of feeling, of shame and of love ... It was harsh and tearing and inarticulate'.¹⁵ He drives back to Trawsfynydd, through Glynmawr. 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, but of course that life is lived in England.

The wind is a repeated motif in this novel, often evoking the border country. In Chapter 10, Myra is waiting for Gwyn to return from work. It is windy outside and she likes its sound:

It was like back home, in Glynmawr, the only thing still the same. The wind from the mountain, round the house, or the wind in the trees and the wires,

¹⁵ Raymond Williams, *Second Generation* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1988 edition) p.222

the singing in the wind, walking the dark road. Myra remembered walking with Jack, down the Sun pitch, the night the ash was blown on to the Pritchards' cottage ... It would have been different, with Jack, staying out there in the valley and the more people to be with. Like you knew, listening to the wind, how everybody was listening, and you could feel you were with them.¹⁶

There is a yearning quality to this: it is not just a recollection of her first love, but a charged memory of a place and a desire for a closeness of community which she clearly lacks in the English city. At the end of the novel, Williams has another extraordinary, almost visionary, passage describing the wind seeming to come from Wales, bearing rain, almost like a blessing after the parents have toasted Beth and Peter and are themselves reconciled to new futures. Williams tracks the wind moving through Trawsfynydd, Brynllwyd, Black Rock, 'over the hills into England', making its way through the environs of the city, culminating in a characteristically elevated view:

... the whole city could be seen, the lines of light marking the settlement by the river: the cathedral, the colleges, the yards and sheds of the works, the lighted windows of the house. The wind blew through the city, bringing the spring rain.¹⁷

¹⁶ Ibid, p.118

¹⁷ Ibid, p.347

Considering the political, industrial, social, cultural and personal tensions which have driven the novel, this seems remarkably lyrical and hopeful.

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2.3 Obviously the direct experience of the Welsh border landscape features - mountains, rivers and valleys - is more prominent in the other two novels. There are a number of scenes in *Border Country* when Harry Price and his son Will/Matthew survey the countryside, but they see it as the place they inhabit or, in Matthew's case, with which he is trying to re-connect. There is usually no sentiment about the mountains: in Part One, Chapter 6, Morgan Rosser takes Harry, Ellen, the 17 year old Will and his own 18 year daughter Eira to see his new factory. He is extolling the need for change, but when someone says the Holy Mountain won't change, he dismisses it: "'Mountains! What do mountains matter?'" This prompts Will's exchange with his father:

"You've lived under these mountains all your life and you can say they don't matter," Will protested.

"It's a feeling about things, that's all. The mountains are just there, that's all about it."

"You wouldn't talk like that if you went up there more often. All you ever go up for is your bees. If you went up there and looked, really looked, you'd see it."

"See what, Will?" Morgan asked.

“Well, a different view of things, that’s all...”¹⁸

For Morgan and Harry, Will’s ideas have no connection with the business of living ‘down here’; the young people might respond to ‘Mountains, stars, seas, distances. A sort of longsightedness’, but ‘The things close to are all too difficult’.¹⁹ For Will and Eira the landscape and mountains have a personal significance: each weekend, they visit places together, places ‘that were written about in the county history but in ordinary life only rarely visited’²⁰ like castles, churches, the ruined abbey in Trawsfynydd, and up to the Kestrel. Clearly these places are the backdrop to their developing relationship, such as the incident in Chapter Eight, part 5, when they are up on Darren looking down on Glynmawr and as Eira drinks from a stream there is a moment of sexual frisson:

Will felt the movement of her shoulders under his hands, and his fingers tightened as he drew her up.²¹

Later, in Chapter Ten, part 1, Williams describes Will’s reflections when he goes up the Kestrel hill not long before he leaves for Cambridge in 1938. He is acutely aware that

The people he had lived with, the voices he had listened to, were all there under his eyes, in the valley.²²

¹⁸ *Border Country*, p.304

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p.304

²⁰ *Ibid*, p.281

²¹ *Ibid*, p.283

He has gone up on to the open mountain, and turns to look down on this 'familiar country' which from here seems strange: still, silent, uninhabited; even the trains 'moved now like toys through an imaginary country'. Down there is his known life, his 'actual country', and he is able to take in the wider view, the history of this area, the 'disputed land', the string of Norman castles and the legend of the Holy Mountain; and the more recent history of mining and industrial development in the valleys to south and west.²³ It is almost as if Will is 'placing' himself in a landscape, a history, a culture, a family and childhood, something to carry with him into a future in a very different place:

The mountain had this power, to abstract and clarify, but in the end he could not stay here; he must go back down where he lived ... That was the sense of it: to watch, to interpret, to try to get clear. Only the wind narrowing your eyes, and so much living in you, deciding what you will see and how you will see it. Never above, watching. You'll find what you're watching is yourself.²⁴

*

2.4 Arrivals and departures are often occasions for taking stock, for forming impressions or memories. When Harry and Ellen Price arrive in Glynmawr after he has got a signalman's post at the station, there is detailed description of the country: to the east, the Holy Mountain and the Marcher castles; to the west the Black

²² Ibid, p.361

²³ See Ibid. pp.363-4

²⁴ Ibid, p.365

Mountains, the valley of Trawsfynydd with its ruined abbey, the Kestrel hill and its boulder. Glynmawr itself has no centre, but groups of houses strung along the road, each patch or settlement being named, for example Cefn, Penydre, Trefedw, Campstone, Glynnant, Cwmhonddu, The Bridge. This litany of place-names recurs in Part Two, when Matthew returns to Glynmawr six months after his initial return when Harry seems to be recovering, and is grateful and reassured that 'a sense of settlement came back' and 'the pattern was still there, over the broad valley, as the names came back: Penydre, Trefedw, Campstone to the east; Glynnant, Cwmhonddu, The Pandy, The Bridge, Panteg to the west'. This is 'the feel of a known country'²⁵ and the virtually complete echo of the passage when Harry arrived in the valley reinforces the sense of continuity and settlement in a specific landscape.

Near the end of *Border Country* Matthew is once again on a train returning to England after Harry's funeral. He looks out as he travels into England:

Here were the big farms, the country houses, the crowded English villages. It was all very different from the scattered white houses, the small farms straggling to the grey stone walls on the mountains, of his own place. This was the country between the two cathedrals, and beyond the cathedrals was the world he was going back to.²⁶

²⁵ Ibid, p.382

²⁶ Ibid, p.430

Already, as he travels beyond Oxford, 'Glynmawr, now, had gone back to a memory and an image', the very thing he had been concerned about when he had initially returned, carrying the 'image' of the valley, not the reality.

And that reality had included the awareness of the industrial and mining valleys just a few miles beyond Gwenton. As the miners' strike of 1926 is about to become a General Strike, affecting even the small rural station and signal-box at Glynmawr, Williams makes clear that even in Glynmawr there is a regular reminder of that world:

Up beyond the mountains, little more than ten miles from this farming valley, lay the different valleys, where the pits and colliers' houses were crowded. At dusk, above Darren, the glow of the steel furnace spread 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.²⁷

This is taken directly from Williams' own experience. In his BBC Radio 3 talk 'Welsh Culture', discussing the four centuries' 'gap' in Welsh history about the industrialising of the valleys,²⁸ he refers to a daily – or nightly – symbol of that gap:

²⁷ Ibid, p.102

²⁸ In grammar school, Williams claimed he was taught about the 'British Empire and Commonwealth history; more slaying and amassing, though now called the spread of civilization',²⁸ but he was conscious of a 'gap', of a lack of connection with the place and world he was living in: '... a gap in the Welsh history for the four centuries after the Acts of Union; a gap in the English history, or was it also Welsh, which had brought the tramroad and the railway through our valley ...' (Williams, 'Welsh Culture', in Daniel Williams (ed.) *Who Speaks for Wales?* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003) p.8)

... which was there visible every night, above Brynarw, when they cleared a blast furnace at Blaenavon and the glow hung in the sky.²⁹

In *The Fight for Manod* Matthew returns to this border region, though a little further north, and it is through his perceptions that we get a sense of the landscape there. Peter Owen enters the novel some time later and being the urban figure he is, his responses to the land, hills and rivers are not affected by any emotional attachment to that country. For Matthew it is very different. Soon after he and Susan have arrived in Manod, Matthew looks out of the window into the night darkness and can see only shapes, outlines like 'metal cutouts', and shadows of varying shades in 'the faint bleaching monochrome of this light before dawn'.³⁰ It's 'a world as yet without detail, without colour':

What he saw in this country, which he believed he knew, was very deeply unfamiliar, a waiting strangeness, as if it was not yet known what world would come out of these shadows, what new world, that begins every day.³¹

This troubling strangeness seems to deprive him of an expected familiarity with this country so like his home valley, but the very next section of the chapter is reassuring, presenting a topographical survey of the area: the plateau, the winding Dowy valley, several ridges, and farmland, and the road and disused railway line that cross and re-cross the river. A landscape with familiar features.

²⁹ Williams, 'Welsh Culture' p.8. A photograph of Bryn Arw (Darren in the novel) can be seen in Appendix 4: Pictures, Figure 9.

³⁰ *The Fight for Manod* p.20

³¹ *Ibid*, p.20

Early in the novel he drives over the ridge from Daren, and looks across the landscape to the south, to the Black Mountains and the plateau above the Kestrel beyond which, hidden, is Glynmawr. He recalls being up the Kestrel as a boy, looking down on his valley, where he now knows things have changed: the road through Glynmawr has been straightened and widened; the station itself demolished; and Morgan Rosser's jam factory is now a tyre depot. However, this is not nostalgia; something more profound occurs. Matthew is aware of his father's experience and presence:

Harry Price stood listening, reaching silently, obscurely, for his words ... In the car, in the wind, in the outcrop of rock under the scoured mountain ash. In this other valley.³²

As Matthew turns to look down at the Afren valley – St Dyfrog, Manod, Llanerch, Pontafren – he resolves that 'He must take this future seriously because the past was honoured and loved'.³³ Nearly all the scenes where Matthew is responding to landscape features in this book are marked by an emotional pressure.

When he and Peter gaze into the Afren river at Pontafren in Chapter VI, he tries to explain to an uncomprehending Peter that he feels 'Something different. Something other. Some altered physical state', and it's not just because, as Peter

³² Ibid, p.37

³³ Ibid, p.37

suggests, 'You grew up in this sort of country ... You're remembering that'. There is more to it:

It only comes occasionally. Some particular shape: the line of a hedge, the turn of a path round a wood, or in movement sometimes, the shadow of a cloud that bends in a watercourse, or then again a sound, the wind in wires, wind tearing at a chimney.³⁴

This is approaching a kind of mystical state, an impression reinforced when he says:

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.³⁵

This is Lane's 'lived inquiry' beyond anything he could have intended. But it is not some kind of pagan bonding with the earth. What prompts this deep response is at least partly of human origin: hedges, paths, wires and chimneys. In the ensuing conversation with Beth, Peter's heavily pregnant wife who has her own motives for 'settlement' after Peter's rather nomadic and maverick academic career, Matthew expresses his sense of mission or duty at least to create a new future for the *people* of this area. He feels committed to that future:

³⁴ All these quotations from *The Fight for Manod* p.97

³⁵ *Ibid*, p.98

It needn't be this city, but I keep thinking it has to be. That we have to make the leap, get on to new ground. And yet the old ground holds me. It holds us and holds us back.³⁶

There is sort of paradox here: the 'old ground' has an emotional grip and attachment, but it is also a barrier to change, preventing re-generation or beneficent development. There is more than a suggestion of idealisation here too, but it is the people and the community he is concerned with, not the landscape itself, though a dying farming community will inevitably have an impact on the landscape.

*

2.5 Near the end of *The Fight for Manod*, when Matthew is still in hospital, recovering from his second heart attack, and Susan is arranging the departure from Pentre cottage, he tells her that now it is Manod that stays with him:

I think about nothing else. I see the cottage and the lane. Stronger images, now, than Glynmawr even. ... And all the rest that Manod means I shall carry about with me anyway.³⁷

When we recall from early in *Border Country* how deeply Matthew had preserved images of Glynmawr, his 'only landscape', this is a remarkable transference, and Matthew acknowledges that this had made his work in Manod so problematic:

³⁶ Ibid. pp.98-9

³⁷ *The Fight for Manod*, p.196

Yes, that's what made it so difficult. I mean it disturbed the inquiry. Because when it comes to sustaining or changing, or put it harder, to growth or replacement, I can't only inquire, I'm at once involved and confused'.³⁸

The 'lived inquiry' positioned Matthew as a 'participant observer' and he has struggled to resolve his feelings; he has found detachment difficult.³⁹ Visiting Glynmawr, Matthew and Susan find that the station has been 'flattened', though the signalbox is still working; the school and schoolmaster's house have gone; the brook now runs through a concrete channel; and trucks rumble along the new road: it is merely a 'place they need to pass through'.⁴⁰ Matthew shows little direct emotional response to all this, though Susan observes him carefully. It is only when they have driven to Gwenton and gone up to a lay-by on the 'road to the valleys' that they can take a panoramic view (rather wider than the city-wide view in the passage that closes *Second Generation*) which embraces the physical landscapes 'far into Wales':

to the north Brynllwyd, the Holy Mountain, the Beacon, the high cleft of the Saint's Pass, to northwest the blue hills above the Afren, from east of Nantlais across to Manod; to the west the successive ranges, into a far distance, until

³⁸ Ibid. p.206

³⁹ Matthew started his work by asserting to Bryn Walters that his task was 'to learn. I've no commitment past that ... I shall try to be very serious at listening' (*The Fight for Manod* p.35)

⁴⁰ Ibid. p.204. In Appendix 4: Pictures, Figures 7 and 8 clearly show how the 'new' road cuts straight through Pandy (Glynmawr).

the last shapes of the mountains could not be easily distinguished from clouds'.⁴¹

But this is also a border of history: the 'great expanses of pastoral' country here comes up against the iron and coal valleys. Both ways of living are now passing, but the novel and the trilogy as a whole seem to offer no plan for the future and no specific response to the 'pressure for renewal'. Unable to resolve the problem, and 'released' in a way by his second heart attack, Matthew takes up the offer to become Director of the newly founded Institute and Library of Industrial Wales, a post that is offered partly so that 'Wales will complete the cure' of his illness. Nevertheless, Matthew intends to submit his report and make it available to the Welsh authorities and organizations, to hold public meetings and prepare for 'a long fight'.⁴²

⁴¹ Ibid. p.206

⁴² Ibid, p.203

CHAPTER 3: COMMUNITIES

... *this ceremony of identification and memory ...*¹

3.1 When James A. Davies surveys Williams' 'Fictional Wales', he comments on the 'limited geographical and social range' of the Wales presented in the novels, consisting, as he puts it:

... almost wholly, of four mainly-working class communities – a rural village, a hill-farming community on the mid-Wales border, the mining towns of Pontyrhiw and Danycapel – and one group of Welsh exiles in 'Oxford' retaining strong links with their homeland.²

J. P. Ward also mentions this perceived lack of social range in the novels, commenting on Williams' rural sense of place in *Border Country* and its 'near idyllic' 'placidity'.³ But, of course, novels are not sociological studies and rural farming communities are likely to be limited in their social range. In the two novels set in the Welsh borders, there are farmers, railwaymen, a local government officer, at least one solicitor, a doctor, a dealer in fresh produce and preserves, and a builder and

¹ *Border Country* p.251

² James A. Davies, "'Not going back, but exile ending': Raymond Williams's Fictional Wales' in W. John Morgan & Peter Preston (eds.) *Raymond Williams: Politics, Education, Letters* (Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press, 1993) p.197. Pontyrhiw and Danycapel are settings in *The Volunteers* and *Loyalties* respectively, and so outside the scope of this study.

³ J. P. Ward, 'Raymond Williams as Inhabitant: The Border Trilogy' in *New Welsh Review* No. 2 (Autumn 1988) p.26

speculator who acts as an agent for a large oil company and, through a series of intermediary companies, for an international development corporation.⁴ This is not some working-class, socialist or communitarian idyll; capitalism extends right into the countryside.

In his 1984 essay 'Between Country and City', Williams reports that, within five miles of Craswall, the 'first occupations' of the people were largely agriculture related but there were also signs of change in the community: incomers to the area who were artists, craftsmen, antiques dealers, restaurateurs; and farmers diversifying into pony-trekking, B & B, holiday cottage lets, farmshops and 'Pick-your-own.'⁵ The influx of 'outsiders' is evident in *The Fight for Manod*; when Matthew goes into Nantlais, he notices there were:

... more visitors, to judge from their voices as they passed, than inhabitants. It was especially in and around Nantlais that a new kind of settlement was happening ... a new kind of settler who saw in mid-Wales one of the last accessible places of calm: a place to work in new ways, to practise crafts, to experiment in life styles.'⁶

None of this provides any kind of answer to a dying rural community reliant on agriculture and its related trades and professions. And, as one would expect,

⁴ All the significant figures here are male, probably a reflection of the reality and attitudes of the time: women have more weight in *Second Generation*

⁵ Raymond Williams, 'Between Country and City' in Robin Gable (ed.), *Resources of Hope* (London: Verso, 1989) p.236; reprint of piece first published in Richard Mabey et al (eds.), *Second Nature* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1984)

⁶ *The Fight for Manod* pp.170-1

Williams is presenting in his fictional world, issues that were – and are still - urgent in the real border rural economy.

At the time when Williams was writing his trilogy, the south and mid-Wales borders were predominantly farming regions, and that is reflected in *Border Country* and especially in *The Fight for Manod*. Indeed, *The Fight for Manod* is partly the product of Williams' increasing concentration on Wales stemming from the late 1960s and partly inspired by two Guardian newspaper articles of the late 1960s about dams and new town developments in mid-Wales which are found in his papers.⁷ The first and third novels are the ones which deal most obviously with farming. And farming was still, then, largely a family matter. In the unpublished typescript of *Border Village*, an early version of *Border Country*, Morgan Rosser, trying to provide a bowling green for the village, finds out that the real power and influence in the valley lies with 'the closely related and intermarried families of the farmers'⁸ and the stress on family is particularly evident in *The Fight for Manod*. The history of the Vaughan family in Chapter III is revealing: tenant farmers for several generations, often moving from farm to farm, they had managed to come to Pentre Court:

Since then, unusually, there had been always a son to inherit, and many of the other sons had, through the generations, been set up in farms of their own, in

⁷ See Appendix 1 where I have provided extracts from the *Guardian* articles: source: Raymond Williams Papers, Ref.: WWE/2/1/1/10/1

⁸ Raymond Williams Papers: typescript Ref.: WWE/2/1/1/6/1, p.53

different parts of the county, while most of the daughters had married sons of other local farmers.⁹

But a crucial change came in 1948: Thomas Vaughan was able to *buy* Pentre Court when death duties forced the Mortimer landowners to sell their estate. Local Welsh people now had the chance to buy land in their own country, to become owners not tenants:

now in 1948, ... Pentre was owned by the family that for a hundred and ten years had been working it.¹⁰

This pattern of family ownership and inheritance is commented on again when Matthew and Susan attend the celebrations of the marriage of Ivor Vaughan and Megan Parry:

It was the way it had gone for generations: the farms expanding and contracting by the chance of sons or daughters, of the distance of neighbouring marriages, of the adoption of roads to the more marginal land. ... It was the movement of the country: the movement of difficult land through the network of marriages and children.¹¹

This seems the very picture of a settled community, of a continuing tradition, and establishes the essential place of family in that community. Indeed, in *Border*

⁹ *The Fight for Manod* p.43

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p.44

¹¹ *Ibid*, p.162

Country we see how the farms are identified by family and place – ‘Parry’s Tregarron, James’s Cwmhonddu’¹² and so on.

However, *The Fight for Manod* shows that family farms are in trouble. In a sharp encounter between Modlen Jenkins and her brother-in-law Gethin Jenkins, he accuses her of being an outsider and not understanding the ties of family and land:

In the towns, aye, it’s all money, money. Just hold out your hand at the end of the week. Up here it’s different. We’ve not got it spare. We live by the farm and we live as family.¹³

It is this aspect of the Welsh border farming community that most interests Williams: how such a farming community can sustain and renew itself in economic and social terms, especially when put under strain.

Williams is well aware of the need for workers in rural communities to have a variety of sources of income or sustenance. The position of his father, a railway worker, illustrates the point perfectly:

These men at that country station were industrial workers, trade unionists, in a small group within a primarily rural and agricultural economy. All of them, like my father, still had close connections with that agricultural life. One of them ran a smallholding in addition to his job on the railway ... All of them

¹² *Border Country* p.90

¹³ *The Fight for Manod* p.94

had gardens, and pigs or bees or ponies which were an important part of their work and income.¹⁴

He also makes clear that renting or owning some land is not merely a matter of food or a source of income but a measure of personal control: 'the felt reality of an area of control of one's immediate labour'.¹⁵ This is reflected in *Border Country* in Harry Price's gardens, bees and trees and his use of land on Parry's farm in return for work on the farm. He is the green-keeper at the bowling club and also sells some of his produce on a very small scale. And he is not the only railwayman to do so: Jack Meredith, who alone stands out against strike action in 1926, has rented fields – he even has some cattle.

Morgan Rosser's commercial enterprise is something different in the community, and he finds local attitudes frustrating. At the collapse of the General Strike, Rosser becomes so demoralised and disillusioned that he decides to make a business out of something he had been doing to support the mining communities. Now he realizes that he could supply produce commercially: he buys a van; he has agreements with regular suppliers; and his trade grows, despite his concern that:

¹⁴ Raymond Williams, 'The Social Significance of 1926' in Daniel Williams (ed.) *Who Speaks for Wales?* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003) p.39; originally an address given in 1976

¹⁵ Williams, *The Country and the City* pp.102-3

“Well, a dealer’s a kind of *capitalist*, Harry. Small, yes, but that’s his economic basis”.¹⁶

It is almost as if he needs Harry Price’s approval but Harry takes a blunt, direct view of things, claiming that he sees no problem. Indeed, he thinks, perhaps uncharitably, that:

It seemed obvious that Morgan wanted to deal, knew how to deal and would deal. The only question was why he pretended otherwise.¹⁷

*

3.2 In a 1977 essay, Raymond Williams recounts an incident from his early days as an undergraduate at Cambridge when he attended a lecture by L. C. Knights who opined that in the twentieth century people cannot understand what Shakespeare meant by ‘neighbour’. Williams could not resist standing up and saying that he ‘knew perfectly what “neighbour”, in that full sense’, meant: for him, his home community embodied ‘that kind of recognition of certain kinds of mutual responsibility’:

I mean that there was ... 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.¹⁸

¹⁶ *Border Country* p.194

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p.195

For Williams, a significant part of this sense of community is what he calls 'settlement', a term that is often associated with Harry Price (it is also something Beth Owen yearns for after the birth of her daughter in *The Fight for Manod*). Settlement is not just a matter of the place where you live; it is about being part of a community, possibly one in a line of several generations living in the area, having relatives living nearby, and being, as it were, 'known' and recognized. As Williams puts it in *The Country and the City*:

Around the idea of settlement ... a real structure of values has grown ... it draws on many deep and persistent feelings: an identification with the people among whom we grew up; an attachment to the place, the landscape, in which we first lived and learned to see.¹⁹

In such a community, social relationships are crucial:

... a country community, most typically a village, is an epitome of direct relationships: of face-to-face contacts within which we can find and value the real substance of personal relationships.²⁰

¹⁸ Raymond Williams, 'The Importance of Community' reprinted in Daniel Williams (ed.) *Who Speaks for Wales?* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003) p.180

¹⁹ Williams, *The Country and the City* p.84

²⁰ *Ibid*, p.165. An interesting comment on this kind of community occurs in *Politics and Letters* when Williams is discussing his book *Culture and Society* written at a time when his 'distance from Wales was at its most complete': when he wrote in that book about 'cooperative community and solidarity' he admits he was nevertheless writing about 'Welsh social relations', drawing on his experience of Wales. *Politics and Letters* p.113

But this does not mean this is some kind of egalitarian society where all values are shared and identical. Williams points out that:

In the village as in the city there is division of labour, there is the contrast of social position, and then necessarily there are alternative points of view.²¹

Indeed, Williams was quite prepared to acknowledge that even in a community like his home he could not say that people all liked each other, or that they 'didn't play dirty tricks on each other' or 'have disputes'.²²

Furthermore, such apparent closeness in a community can become suffocating and Williams shows Matthew Price bristling a little under the social pressures of Glynmawr in *Border Country*. He feels that he is too much known, almost, though perhaps that is to be expected in an area where, as Edwin Parry says to Harry Price:

You know how it is here. You can't go into one house without finding somebody got a relation in all the others.²³

Matthew is irritated by the fact that many people know a lot about his life and family, such as his aunts who 'seemed to know everything about him, everything he had ever done, though he would hardly have known them if he had met them in the street.'²⁴ The price you pay for a community that closes round and shares times of

²¹ Ibid, p.166

²² 'The Importance of Community' p.180

²³ *Border Country* p.78

²⁴ Ibid, p.325

trouble is that you have to be more known than you might wish. This is partly why Matthew feels he will never be able to live here again and his failure to accept the ways of the village leads to a forthright castigation by Morgan Rosser, which to some extent echoes what Williams says about social relationships:

You've forgotten us, really. Forgotten how we live. Here it's got to be in the open, because in the end there's no hiding place, and none of us is going away. What there is we have to absorb, so we have to be straight.²⁵

Morgan is often a perceptive commentator on his society and a bearer of home truths to Matthew, whom we see still struggling to find some 'settlement' in *The Fight for Manod* where, despite his coming from a very similar rural background, he and Susan are nevertheless regarded as outsiders in Manod.

Another sort of 'outsider' perspective is provided by the Reverend Arthur Pugh in *Border Country*. Pugh is slightly outside the community, not highly regarded:

He seemed a man isolated from them, sad and indifferent, with few of their interests.²⁶

When it is decided that Will should try for Cambridge, Pugh agrees to tutor him. During one of these sessions, Pugh gives a remarkable insight into his own situation

²⁵ Ibid, p.355

²⁶ Ibid, p.276

and the role of the chapel in village life, a role the Church in Wales cannot fulfil.

Pondering why his church makes no real connection with the villagers, he says:

The real life, for these people, is each other. Even their religion is for each other ... when I look at what the chapels do, I understand this. The chapels 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 ... The chapels are social organizations, Matthew. The church is not ... 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.²⁷

This is the kind of neighbourliness that Williams had asserted as a young man at Cambridge; Williams may have shared his character's appreciation of the social role of the chapels but personally he felt very differently about the narrowness of chapel morality, an issue mentioned in Chapter 4 below. In Glynmawr, Pugh feels himself to be a kind of 'outpost', and he encourages Matthew to take the opportunity to go beyond the village – 'you must go and see for yourself'.²⁸

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²⁷ Ibid, pp.277-8

²⁸ Ibid, p.280

3.3 It is perhaps too clichéd to see life in farming villages as bound by the seasonal cycle, but even Tony Pinkney, who represents Williams as a profoundly non-realist novelist, seems to accept the seasons as the basis of Glynmawr life:

Most of the valley's activities are governed by seasonal time, in that energetic yet unhasty ploughing, planting, pruning, harvesting, picking, storing, bottling, preserving, which is the enduring material undercurrent of all the personal lives narrated in this novel. Social life is not governed by linear, progressive time but rather by cyclical festivals ...²⁹

Festivals like the chapel celebration, at which Will recites a Welsh poem, and the local eisteddfod. In the unpublished typescript of the earlier version called *Border Village* there is an extra public episode, involving whole-body immersion chapel baptisms in the river, one of whom is the 17 year old Eira: this is a troubling mixture of the sexual and the sacred for Will and an occasion of general opprobrium towards Morgan as he has invited a press photographer to the event.³⁰

The eisteddfod is described at considerable length. It is a prime example of continuity in a community and the way people are 'known'. The description of the 'conductor' of the event creates a perhaps rather bogus Welsh ambience:

²⁹ Tony Pinkney, *Raymond Williams* (Bridgend: Seren Books/Poetry Wales Press, 1991) p.20

³⁰ Raymond Williams Papers, Ref.: WWE/2/1/1/6/1

I. Morgan, Watch Repairer, as visitors to Gwenton might find him, became, for these occasions, Illtyd Morgan y Darren.³¹

His introductions of the performers become a 'ceremony of identification and memory', as he welcomes each young performer with a detailed recall of his/her older relatives who had played, recited or sung in the past:

Elinor Watkins. Come up, Elinor. Elinor Watkins. Elinor Watkins, Tremaen. Tremaen, yes. Where the white barn, the *white* barn, stands by the bend of the river. Elinor, yes. Elinor daughter of Mary who was Mary Rees when she went to marry John Watkins, the son of my very old friend John Watkins the Bridge ...³²

This extraordinary - almost incantatory - performance is indeed a feat of memory and knowledge, 'placing' people in their family history and their homes or farms in a very public forum: the presumption is that everyone shares this knowledge.³³ Will almost wishes for Morgan to make some 'blunder' but he also recognizes that, though the listeners may seem unresponsive, 'This, centrally, was the meaning of life'.³⁴

³¹ *Border Country* p.250

³² *Ibid*, p.251

³³ As Tony Pinkney points out, *Border Country* is full of histories or stories told/written about the area or as examples of the way the community represents itself to itself: there is the county history Will reads; the sense of English literary history and canon in the *English Authors* book in the Prices' home; the schoolmaster's declaiming the story of Gruffydd ap Llewellyn and the Saxon hordes; the part the railwaymen take in the General Strike; Morgan's 'recitation', a kind of 'oral communal history'; Lewis Price's story at the pre-funeral gathering. Pinkney, *Raymond Williams* pp.36-7

³⁴ *Border Country* p.251

Harry Price's death and funeral is another example of community life, so much so that Matthew is occasionally annoyed by the way control of events seems to pass beyond him. As soon as the death is known, Mrs Hybart and Mrs Whistance come to look after Ellen, and many visitors call, all of them asking, 'Are there to be flowers?'³⁵ Morgan Rosser takes the lead in getting the death registered, arranging flowers and wreaths, and taking Matthew to see Harry's body at the hospital, all the time using his influence to overcome obstacles which seem to baffle Matthew: 'Look, Will, you don't do these things our way, so let someone else do them'.³⁶ The day before the funeral there is a large gathering at the house, relatives, friends and neighbours, where the atmosphere is 'lively and even gay' and Matthew's uncle Lewis Price tells a humorous story.³⁷ So too on the day of the funeral, people gather at the house – 'many more than he had expected'.³⁸ The vehicles drive past the signal-box and then through the village:

In each house that they passed the curtains had been drawn, and at various places along the road people stood waiting for the cars to go by.³⁹

This ceremony of community respect can seem comforting and supportive, but there are comments in the narration which suggest that the communal response may – intentionally or not – leave little space for personal grief or adjustment:

³⁵ Ibid, p.404

³⁶ Ibid, p.413

³⁷ Ibid, p.418-9. See Appendix 2 on Language for comments on Lewis's story.

³⁸ Ibid, p.426

³⁹ Ibid, p.428

... a process began which was to take over and control all that had happened: a deliberate exertion of strength by this close community, made, as always, for its members who needed help, but made also it seemed, for the sake of the village to prevent anything reaching out and disturbing its essential continuity.⁴⁰

Although the narrative in the 'present' time sections (late 1950s) seems to be largely from Matthew's point of view, this passage stands too far back from Matthew's immediate situation, dealing with his father's death and the funeral, to be his own thoughts: his unease, even resentment, of the ways things have just happened out of a kind of customary necessity is evident in his remarks to his cousin Glynis,⁴¹ but the insight that the villagers' motives are partly to protect an 'essential continuity' seems more probably an observation of Williams the objective narrator, suggesting that community needs can sometimes smother the individual.

The rural community in *The Fight for Manod* does not seem so cohesive: there are significant tensions in the Vaughan and Jenkins families, and Ivor Vaughan and Gethin Jenkins are involved in Afren Holdings with John Dance, buying up farms on a speculative basis. Even though Gethin and Trevor help out on Ivor's farm following his tractor accident, this is one of the few incidents of neighbourly concern. There are minor details like old Will Rees coming round to unblock drains at Pentre Cottage, and later, when Susan and her sons are emptying Pentre Cottage before

⁴⁰ Ibid, p.401

⁴¹ See Ibid, pp.421-2

moving away, she gives a wardrobe to Modlen Jenkins, partly in exchange for Modlen's help in cleaning the place. As she explains to her son, Harry, it's

'Just the way we help and give things to each other.'

'In the family?'

'In the place.'⁴²

This seems a sentimentalised view. There is in this novel none of the intimacy and sense of mutual connection found in *Border Country*, probably because the central character, Matthew, is not truly a native of this community which he is at Glynmawr, however estranged he might feel.

The only significant gathering of the community is to celebrate the marriage of Ivor Vaughan and Megan Parry. It's a mainly good-humoured event but it has little of the community togetherness and warmth of even the funeral in *Border Country*; so, despite the various arguments for defending or preserving the Afren valley community against development from outside, the lived experience of the community as presented in the novel is not as cohesive as that in *Border Country*. In fact Williams toned down this sense of a community under stress. In an earlier draft – Manod was then called 'Delwyn' – Matthew rejects any notion of a close or ideal community: '... what I actually find disturbs me ... they have each other by the throat

⁴² *The Fight for Manod* p.196

... [it's] a quite social pattern ...'.⁴³ This is hardly 'idyllic', to use J. P. Ward's term for Glynmawr.

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3.4 But the Welsh farming communities are not the whole story in the trilogy. The novels are not studies of industrial or social history, of course, and they are set where the stories demand, but nevertheless even the two books with rural settings are not enclosed worlds. In *Border Country*, Matthew recalls seeing the glow from the ironworks, and the railwaymen are involved in a Britain-wide strike in 1926. And the signalmen like Harry Price are uniquely placed, through their contacts up and down the line, to understand how they are part of a wider network stretching well beyond their own locality. Indeed, Williams commented on this connectedness, referring to his own father:

... in the box in the valley: part of a network reaching to known named places, Newport and Hereford, and beyond them London, but still a man in the village ...⁴⁴

This, for Williams, was why the General Strike was such an important moment, as he explained in an address to a conference in 1976:

⁴³ Raymond Williams Papers: typescript draft of *The Fight for Manod* Ref.: WWE/2/1/1/10/1

⁴⁴ *The Country and the City* p.4 See also references to this network in J. P. Ward, *Raymond Williams* pp.6-7; and Dai Smith 'Relating to Wales' in Terry Eagleton (ed.), *Raymond Williams: Critical Perspectives* (Cambridge & Oxford: Polity Press/Basil Blackwell, 1989) p.41

... there in that country station, there were real connections – of neighbourhood, of kinship, of trade – with the mining valleys. It was not a struggle from a blank, though another social reality – the small farms, the mixed rural villages – was of course physically much closer. ‘To help the miners’; ‘to stand by the miners’: these were there from the beginning ... as effective impulses.⁴⁵

Harry Price, as a result of the strike, loses his job for a while but there are surprising signs of support in the community from Mr Evans, the schoolteacher, and Harry’s landlady, Mrs Hybart, who disapproves of the strike but refuses to take any rent while Harry is out of work.

The wider world in *The Fight for Manod* is represented by multinational oil companies, the international consortium with English and Belgian origins, the European Community and the London Government. As Robert Lane puts it, Manod and Wales as a whole are a ‘marginal’ concern unless there is huge outside investment available. There is another world here too, the world of universities where men (and it is mainly men, in Williams’ novels) of working-class origins struggle to find a place and retain a connection to the world they have come from. Matthew Price in *Border Country* is frustrated by his own research, studying the huge inward migration of outsiders to the Welsh industrial valleys in the nineteenth

⁴⁵ Williams, ‘The Social Significance of 1926’, p.41

century.⁴⁶ He has the facts and figures but cannot get beyond them; his own life has been a similar migration:

... a change of substance, as it must also have been for them, when they left their villages. And the ways of measuring this are not only outside my discipline. They are somewhere else altogether, that I can feel but not handle, touch but not grasp.⁴⁷

A similar sense of frustration is found in the Peter Owen of *Second Generation*. His PhD research has become more theoretical and methodological under the guidance of his supervisor Robert Lane, himself a working-class boy who has become a career academic (and a Government ministry official in *The Fight for Manod*). Peter agonises about his research, feeling the utter futility of it and its disconnectedness from anything of value to his own community and culture. He recognizes the paradoxes of his position, encouraged into higher education by his working-class family but by doing so becoming separated from them, and not able to be part of the changes needed in that culture:

⁴⁶ Eira Evans (née Rosser) comments on the irony that, for this research, Matthew had to live in London to study Wales

⁴⁷ *Border Country* p.4. It is significant that when Matthew, at the end of the novel, returns to his family in London, he reflects that 'Only now it seems like the end of exile. Not going back, but the feeling of exile ending. For the distance is measured, and that is what matters. By measuring the distance, we come home.' P.436

It was really as if, oppressed by an enemy, a people had conceived its own liberation as training its sons for the enemy service.⁴⁸

In his view, Lane has 'surrendered' and become one of the enemy, but at least a 'respected enemy'.⁴⁹ Peter Owen leaves the 'enemy' territory of the university and works on the line at the car factory before writing his major study, called *Industrial Estate*.

The focus in *Second Generation* is partly on the industrial working-class culture: Harold Owen is a long-serving and pragmatic union leader in the factory, and his wife Kate is a thwarted woman seeking some sexual and political release in an affair and organizing a protest march against job cuts. Their son Peter straddles two cultures in the city – the industrial working class and the university world – and struggles to reconcile the two. This is an issue of class and culture rather than community.

It is here that the novel has another Welsh dimension. This novel was published before Williams' re-awakened sense of Welsh identity, but it is certain that the Owens are from a more cohesive and politically committed community than they find in this English city. When Kate sees the chance of uniting the community

⁴⁸ *Second Generation* p.137

⁴⁹ It is characteristic of Williams' view of politics and culture that the term 'enemy' recurs in *The Fight for Manod* when Matthew says that the world of Dance and his partners is just 'the old, covert negotiation of England' and he feels he is 'Living in an enemy country'. *The Fight for Manod* p.115

against job losses, Harold recalls how such unity was part of the culture back in Wales:

We see it like that because of back home, with the men the whole village and the women bred to it ...

whereas here in the English city:

The work is just a traffic problem, something out on the edge.⁵⁰

There is perhaps a little mythologizing of Welsh industrial working-class community and culture here, understandable in a family of exiles in a world which does not seem to share their values and assumptions. However, that sense of common purpose and solidarity was clearly important for Williams. In the essay 'Towards 2000', he asserts that, following the massive and diverse migration into the Welsh mining valleys, there developed:

... after two generations ... some of the most remarkably solid and mutually loyal communities of which we have record.⁵¹

And it is a community which impressed Williams in the 1984/5 Miners' Strike, as he made clear in a review article, 'Community', originally published in 1985,⁵² and in a

⁵⁰ *Second Generation* p.191

⁵¹ Quoted in Dai Smith, 'The History of Raymond Williams' in *New Welsh Review* no. 12 (Spring 1991) p.34. Matthew Price says much the same thing in *The Fight for Manod* p.136: the Welsh industrial culture 'was always a mixed immigration, yet it led, didn't it, to one of the strongest autonomous cultures in Europe. A culture people made, not inherited'.

very similar scene in the novel *Loyalties* (1985) where food is handed out at an old cinema in Danycapel.⁵³ That kind of community loyalty and unity is, of course, found even in rural Glynmawr: the railwaymen support the 1926 strike and Morgan Rosser organizes the collection of food, and transports it up to the valleys for distribution. Perhaps the words of Nesta in *Loyalties* best sum up a social ethic found in various forms and communities in the Border trilogy:

Down here we stand by each other.⁵⁴

⁵² Williams, 'Community' p.31: 'I have stood with easy and friendly men and women, organizing communally provided food for the two hundred babies born in Gwent mining families during the strike, packing their thousand plastic bags a day of basic adult food, and heard the precise words of the histories: the closeness with each other, the intense determination and anger against those who are now so clearly and exultantly their enemies ... all that can be found and affirmed is each other'.

⁵³ See Raymond Williams, *Loyalties* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1985) pages 334 -338

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p.349

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION - A WELSH IDENTITY?

*Only now it seems like the end of exile. Not going back, but the feeling of exile ending.*¹

4.1 In chapter 1 of this study, it was established that, for Raymond Williams, an absolute identification with Welshness or Welsh culture was problematic, and not only because he did not speak Welsh, and came from a border region. In an interview with the editors of *New Left Review*, he explains the reasons for his 'rejection of my Welshness'. He says that only later did he realize that grammar schools in Wales, like King Henry VIII's Grammar School in Abergavenny, 'imposed a completely English orientation, which cut one off thoroughly from Welshness'. This, combined with 'revulsion' against 'the extreme narrowness of Welsh nonconformism',² led to the rejection which lasted until he was in his late thirties and began to read the history of Wales. The rejection of nonconformity did not, however, prevent his understanding the significance of chapels in creating the sense of community in Glynmawr, as the Reverend Arthur Pugh explains to Matthew (see Chapter 3 above), but despite Williams' frequent references to his Welsh border background in his various literary and cultural studies, he rarely gave sustained attention to Wales or Welsh issues in his non-fiction until later in his career. His teaching and academic life was in England and he was for many years part of the

¹ *Border Country* p.436

² Raymond Williams, quoted in *Politics and Letters* p.25

English faculty at Cambridge. Indeed, Williams saw himself as standing in the tradition of the very English novelists, George Eliot, Thomas Hardy and D. H. Lawrence, writers who included in their novels the kinds of working-class culture to which Williams himself tried to give a voice. It was primarily a matter of class rather than a particular national culture.

In his major works of historical cultural and literary analysis, *Culture and Society* (1958), *The Long Revolution* (1961) and *The Country and the City* (1973), the focus is on *English* social and political thinkers, or writers primarily concerned with English culture. In particular, *The Country and the City* is relevant to this study because it examines the ways that rural society is presented in the English literary tradition, but only occasionally is there a specific reference to elsewhere in the British Isles, so that on the whole the terms 'England' and 'English' sometimes stand for the whole of Britain. Collini comments on the 'discomfiting fact' that:

... in his critical writing (though not in his fiction), the Williams of the 1950s scarcely acknowledged his Welshness, blithely allowing the first-person plural that so liberally populated his prose to signal 'we in England'.³

There is, however, evidence in *The Country and the City* that Williams is able to distinguish national differences. He argues that in the literatures of Ireland,

³ Stefan Collini, 'Upwards and Onwards' [review of Dai Smith biography of Raymond Williams] in *London Review of Books* Vol 30, No. 15, July 2008: accessed at website www.lrb.co.uk on 20/10/2011

Scotland and Wales there are signs of communities which have not suffered the enormous changes endured by English rural society since the eighteenth century:

It has as much to do with a system of absentee and alien landlords, and with a strongly surviving national and community sense, as with the economic differences which are accentuated by the facts of marginal land. What has never quite happened in any of those countries ... is the social integration, however bitterly contested, of the English capitalist rural order. Different versions of community have persisted longer, nourished by and nourishing specific national feelings.⁴

And, of course, Williams was always ready to bring into his historical and cultural analysis experiences and anecdotes from his own family and his Welsh border background to illustrate aspects of social change.

Williams saw as one of Hardy's great strengths the fact that he escaped being merely a 'regional' novelist. For Williams,

A regional fiction is one which does not include the conflicts of the larger society of which the region is evidently a part ... This is absolutely not true of Hardy, whose novels reveal the major crises of late 19th-century England.⁵

⁴ Williams, *The Country and the City* p.269

⁵ Williams, *Politics and Letters* p.247

He regrets that so much working-class fiction presents enclosed worlds, lacking any convincing portrayal of the oppressors, the exploiting classes. With regard to the situation in Welsh fiction, he says:

... by definition you cannot write a fully realist novel about Wales without writing about England.⁶

It is interesting that he says 'England' here, not 'Britain': there is a very deep sense that England is where the power lies and Williams is touching on a common trope in Welsh culture, that of the English domination of Wales and the deliberate suppression of Welsh identity and culture by the English. Though he was not a native Welsh speaker himself, Williams has written about what he regards as a systematic suppression of the language – and, by extension, a whole culture.⁷

In the 1975 BBC Radio 3 talk, 'Welsh Culture', he discusses the attacks on the Welsh language caused not only by a huge inflow of non-Welsh speakers during the Industrial Revolution but also by

... conscious repression, by penalty and contempt, and in a late phase by deliberate policy. You can still see, as carefully preserved as the old tools, the

⁶ Ibid, p.267

⁷ See Raymond Williams, 'Wales and England' first published in *New Wales* 1, composite version reprinted in Daniel Williams (ed.), *Who Speaks for Wales?* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003) p.19 where he says 'The Welsh/English language differential is then quite fundamental, and direct or indirect action by English administration and education against the native language is not only unforgivable – that is an old score – but must still lead to the most intense and active resistance.'

little boards, the 'Welsh Nots', which children caught speaking their mother tongue had to hang round their necks, for shame.⁸

In his Introduction to *Who Speaks for Wales?* Daniel Williams shows that the view of the suppression of Welsh which Raymond Williams seems to support here is not wholly accepted now; what he calls 'revisionist' historians argue that many Welsh parents encouraged their children to use English as the language of modernity and aspiration and that 'Welsh Nots' were not widely used.⁹ But Raymond Williams is subtle enough anyway to know that the language is not synonymous with a nation's identity.¹⁰ Something else is necessary, and perhaps identity changes over time:

... you can be proud without being independent; you often have to be. In the older epochs of conquest, and in the modern epoch of industrial capitalism, there hasn't been that much choice ... But you don't live for centuries under the power of others and remain the same people. It is this, always, that is so hard to admit, for it can be made to sound like betrayal. And so a genuine identity, a real tradition, a natural self-respect, can be made to stand on their own, as if nothing else had ever happened.¹¹

It is interesting to see that in this 1975 talk the first-person plural 'we' is unmistakably Welsh:

⁸ Raymond Williams, 'Welsh Culture', BBC Radio 3 talk originally broadcast in 1975; reprinted in Daniel Williams (ed.) *Who Speaks for Wales?* p.7

⁹ See Introduction to *Who Speaks for Wales?* pp.xxxi - xxxii

¹⁰ Language is an important element of identity and in Appendix 2: Language, Dialect and Accent, I consider the representation of the Welsh borders speech in the three novels

¹¹ Williams, 'Welsh Culture' pp.7-8

To the extent that we are a people, we have been defeated, colonized, penetrated, incorporated. Never finally, of course.¹²

It is no accident that in the *The Fight for Manod* (1979), the most obviously 'Welsh' of the trilogy, some of these very terms are used.¹³

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4.2 Williams intended that the trilogy should not be merely 'regional'; the books should show the relation with the power which dominates Wales, that is, England. There are two pressing examples in *Border Country*: the General Strike of 1926 and Matthew going off to Cambridge University and later becoming an academic researcher in London. The response of the London Government to the Strike is demonstrated in the chilling detail of soldiers coming through Glynmawr heading for the industrial valleys; and while the railwaymen see themselves as part of a British struggle,¹⁴ the most real connection for them is with their near neighbours in the Welsh mining valleys. And, of course, all the real power lies in London where the union leaders meet and come under pressure, so that Morgan Rosser and others feel betrayed when the strike is called off by their national leadership.¹⁵ But that sense of betrayal would not have been restricted to the railway workers in Wales alone; the focus of power in London was, and still is, the hard political and economic

¹² Ibid, p.9

¹³ See *The Fight for Manod* 'a colony, you could say. Just the old penetration' p.135

¹⁴ The signalmen's wide network made them feel 'they were part of a modern industrial working class': from Williams, 'The Social Significance of 1926' p.40

¹⁵ Raymond Williams quotes verbatim the various actual messages from the Union and the Railway Company in the text of the novel – see pages 102-3,107, 110-2, 149-50,152-8.

fact for all regions of Britain, but was, perhaps, especially resented in the years before the movements towards devolution and the creation of the Welsh Assembly.

A similar pattern is evident in *Second Generation* where Harold Owen and the local union leaders in the dispute – in regional *England* - feel equally powerless in their struggle as the national leadership fails to assert their case at meetings in London. In fact, as in *Border Country*, Williams does not explore the machinations at national level: negotiations in both novels happen at a distance, feeding a kind of alienation in local working class communities. Harold and Kate reminisce about the solidarity of working class communities back in Wales but that is not the whole story: when Harold travels to the Longton plant where a strike is in progress, he makes a connection with his home area in Wales:

The whole town, in its blackened brick, and its bare treeless streets, was harsher than anything he had known. Brynllwyd, in detail, had been as hard and lifeless, but you had only to look out from it, to the broad green valley and the mountains in the distance, to see another kind of life.¹⁶

Things are clearly as tough, if not more so, in parts of regional England. The distinctive Welsh valley 'structure of feeling' which Williams perceived in this combination back home of industrial dark, smoke and grime contrasted with the

¹⁶ *Second Generation* p.293

openness of hills and sky¹⁷ is lacking in Longton but the essential struggle is the same.

The sense that the Welsh consciousness is not simply a matter of resistance to the power of England is also reflected in *The Fight for Manod*. There is some residual resentment of England, for example the brief outburst about English cities damming Welsh valleys for water or the suspicion that any new city development will come about mainly to solve the problems of English cities, and be populated largely by English incomers. Add to this Bryn Walters' complaints of deliberate neglect of the region by the London Government, Robert Lane's blunt assessment of how 'marginal' rural Wales is, and Matthew's impassioned assertion of the plight of Wales, and there is plentiful evidence of Wales being at the least overlooked and at the worst exploited by England. But Matthew comes to a position where he can see some merit in the city scheme, though it requires much more attention to the needs of local Welsh people and Wales generally. However, Peter Owen, who has no sense of Welshness at all, despite his background, sees that all the arguments between Matthew and Tom Meurig about the city are entirely irrelevant. All this agonising about Welshness and Welsh culture makes him impatient:

The actual history is back there in the bloody centre: the Birmingham-Düsseldorf axis, with offices in London, Brussels, Paris, Rome. You two post-Celts are just severed heads.¹⁸

¹⁷ See Williams, 'The Welsh Industrial Novel', reprinted in Daniel Williams (ed.), *Who Speaks for Wales?* p.104

For Peter Owen, the whole focus is on uncovering the hidden network of power, money, influence and political chicanery that allows international capitalism to triumph over communities of any kind. He has no affinity with or attachment to any particular landscape or local community in Wales or elsewhere: the struggle for a viable socialist future is all that drives him – as Beth recognizes, his motive force is anger against ‘a civilization and a society systematically repressive and false’ and he has to ‘fight it’.¹⁹ And it is clear from the attitudes of Peter and his mother Kate that England is seen as the source of much of what they despise.

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4.3 When Matthew Price leaves Glynmawr for university in 1938, it is Cambridge he goes to, not a Welsh university. Cambridge is, of course, one of the bastions of the English establishment, and Matthew’s experience precisely mirrors Raymond Williams’ own life here. It has already been observed that Williams the novelist saw himself as related to George Eliot, Hardy and Lawrence, and in *The Country and the City* he remarks that a critic had once patronisingly described these three as ‘our three great autodidacts’, presumably implying that they were not properly ‘educated’ at all since they had not gone to public school nor Oxbridge, and could therefore be dismissed as ‘either comically ignorant or, when they pretended to

¹⁸ *The Fight for Manod* pp.135-6

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p.68-9

learning, as awkward, over-earnest, fanatical.²⁰ But that is precisely why Williams identifies with them, even though he is at Cambridge himself:

But to many of us now, George Eliot, Hardy and Lawrence are important because they connect directly with our own kind of upbringing and education. They belong to a cultural tradition much older and more central in Britain than the comparatively modern and deliberately exclusive circuit of what are called the public schools. And the point is that they continue to connect in this way into a later period in which some of us have gone to Oxford or Cambridge; to myself, for instance, who went to Cambridge and now teach there.²¹

This is obviously an issue of class, of the relation between education or learning and 'the actual lives of a continuing majority of our people ... literally, our own families'.²² It is not primarily a matter of national identity: the kinds of emotional and social difficulties faced by Matthew in the two novels set in Wales are the result of leaving the known community and adjusting to changed lives, but that could be equally true of working-class people from all parts of Britain. Perhaps there is an added element in that a Welsh border young man going to somewhere like Cambridge is not just entering a different culture, but is going literally into another country. In one of the slightly enigmatic conversations so frequent in Williams'

²⁰ *The Country and the City* p.170

²¹ *Ibid*, p.171

²² *Ibid*, p171

fiction, the Reverend Pugh – after his account of the social significance of chapels in the local community – advises Matthew that he should aspire to enter Cambridge:

Yet the cathedrals, the universities. Perhaps I am too much away from them. Perhaps they are only the Glynmawr chapels, better built. Only as institutions, sometimes, they seem more. That, at least, you must go and see for yourself.²³

And, of course, he does.

This is clearly crucial for Matthew and this motif returns near the end of the novel in the section dealing with Harry Price's death and funeral. Pugh, now aged and about to retire, meets Matthew and asks, 'So you went to see? ... Were they only the Glynmawr chapels, better built?' Matthew's reply indicates that, perhaps unexpectedly, the going away to Cambridge has somehow increased his understanding of himself and his relation to his home community:

I don't know. Yes, in many ways. But at times it makes sense, this dialogue of the centuries. As an outpost of that it's important: keeping that conversation alive. And then clarifying, sometimes, where we live ourselves.²⁴

Precisely what 'dialogue' or 'conversation' is being referred to is elusive; it cannot be about faith because religion or dogma play no part in the novels. It is the church, chapels and universities as institutions which embody a history of a culture which

²³ *Border Country* p.280

²⁴ *Ibid*, p.419

seems important, and perhaps the dialogue is between, for example, the working-class rural community of Glynmawr in Wales and the dominant English culture of the established church,²⁵ and the social and political élite educated at public school and Oxbridge, whose decisions and policies in London have such an impact in Wales. The dominance of London throws up another seeming paradox which Eira Evans (formerly Rosser) points out in conversation with Matthew and her husband: 'He's studying Wales ... and he goes to London to do it', because, as her husband says, 'It's where the records are, is it? London?'²⁶

In *Second Generation*, both Peter Owen and his mother Kate, for their own personal motives as well as their political commitments, see something wrong at the heart of English culture – though it is difficult to know in this novel how far 'English' and 'England' actually signify Britain. Peter's dilemma about his thesis and sense of possible failure becomes a general reflection: 'Just the ordinary griping of the failed. The griping that filled England'.²⁷ At times he longs to escape, 'to walk out from under the whole system and its pressures', ridding himself of the 'English stalemate', the 'English prohibitions', and stand up to:

... challenge the English network ... [which] ... wasn't even a network, just an old spider's web, glistening on a bare hedge.²⁸

²⁵ The Church in Wales was disestablished in 1920. The Bill was passed in 1914 but the Church in Wales came into being in 1920

²⁶ *Border Country* p.337

²⁷ *Second Generation* p.137

²⁸ *Ibid*, p.177-8

England (Britain?) is so exhausted that the classes no longer despise each other but despise themselves:

... until now illusion and disillusion were so tightly tied together, in the English mind, that no break was possible; it was a drowning grip.²⁹

It is difficult to define whether Williams wants us to see that Welsh culture is also embraced here, in that 'drowning grip', or represents some ideal – or at least hope – of a more viable (and socialist) culture. Peter himself sees no salvation in Wales; he dismisses his uncle Gwyn's hopes for an escape in his life in Trawsfynydd: 'He was simply moving, in fact, to an outlying point on the same network.'³⁰

Kate too expresses a kind of disgust at the 'complacency of this English world'³¹ and the 'English genius' which is 'to stop something' rather than taking on a radical challenge. Clearly, much of Kate's anger is personal – her sense of being trapped in a lifetime of 'waiting', of 'stagnation', of 'postponements', longing for a different life. But it is significant that her complaint about the English genius for stopping things is aimed at her own husband, Harold,³² a product like her of a *Welsh* culture where solidarity in a struggle is a given. For her, at this moment of frustration, 'English' is a generic term, rather than specifically national, when she considers herself being:

²⁹ Ibid, p.178

³⁰ Ibid, p.234

³¹ Ibid, p.110

³² See *ibid*, p.112

... two persons in one world. Every scrap of English belittling, of narrowness, of philistinism, she felt quite active in herself ... But at the same time there was this quite different drive, towards belief, energy, action ... What might have been a division in the world was in fact the ebb and flow of her own mind.³³

Katie Gramich wants to present this duality as concerned with Welsh identity and English culture:

[Kate] feels here a division between her unnamed Welshness, a belief in her fellow beings which derives from her Welsh background and its close sense of community, and an Englishness which she experiences as sneering and negative.³⁴

Certainly, the sense of a more united community in Wales is contrasted with, for example, the lack of commitment of party voters in the city estate, but there is little evidence in the text for the association of Welshness with 'belief, energy, action'. In fact, Kate's desire for a new life is partly focused on her refusal to spend the annual holiday at the caravans at Trawsfynydd yet again, preferring to go to France. Unlike her more obviously 'Welsh' sister-in-law Myra, she shows little emotional attachment to Wales. And yet Kate cannot escape her background wholly. Gramich argues that

³³ Ibid, p.109

³⁴ Katie Gramich, 'The Fiction of Raymond Williams in the 1960s' in Tony Brown (ed.), *Welsh Writing in English: A Yearbook of Critical Essays* Vol. 1/1995 p.67

... Kate's failure is also distinctively Welsh: time and time again her political radicalism and her commitment to communal structures are identified as her Welsh characteristics, and yet it is the tight network of her Welsh family and its expectations which keep her in check.³⁵

There is certainly some influence of her Welsh identity in Kate's position but she is part of a more general radical socialist tradition which despises the compromises and controls, sometimes self-imposed, which hold back figures like her husband. She has a Welsh memory of 'Grey endurance and grey hard protest' from their days back in Wales before they made the break for the English city. They thought they were leaving 'that stubborn scaling down of expectations':

The new life had been a phrase in the meetings up on the hills, with the wind blowing the rain like a grey sail through the huddled crowd.³⁶

Holding in her mind that bleak image of Wales with its sense of a commitment to a better society and contrasting it with the disappointed hope of new life in England has fed Kate's frustrated rage. Her desire to break out into a different kind of politics and society is bound up with a need to escape from a stultifying home life and marriage, to assert her right to live the life she wants, though by the end of the novel there is a kind of uneasy reconciliation with Harold. Even so, there is not much specifically Welsh about that. And the Kate we meet in *The Fight for Manod*

³⁵ Ibid, p.72

³⁶ *Second Generation* all quotations from p.37

has certainly 'broken out' to some extent: she now seems to serve on some national (i.e. British, meeting in London) party committees, though characteristically she plays down her role – 'I'm the statutory co-optable woman ... And by the way they don't even listen'.³⁷

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4.4 The relation with English culture, often inextricably bound up with education, class and power, is inevitably part of any discussion of Welsh identity for Williams, but that is only part of how identity is formed. In 'The Shadow of the Dragon', a review article of 1985, Williams explains one of the advantages of being 'born and bred among the presumed Welsh', namely the 'profusion of official identities':

Wales and Monmouthshire, as it was for me at school, with special force since we lived in the appendage. England-and-Wales: that administrative, legal and even weather-forecasting area. Wales for rugby but All-England for cricket. 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.³⁸

This is almost a celebration of 'things being various', though the Welsh characters in the trilogy are remarkably homogeneous – always white, English speaking, nearly always working class, at least in origin or background. There are also varieties of

³⁷ *The Fight for Manod* p.156

³⁸ Raymond Williams, 'The Shadow of the Dragon' first published in *The Guardian*, 1985, reprinted in Daniel Williams (ed.) *Who Speaks for Wales?* p.67

Welshness within Wales; in *The Fight for Manod* Matthew responds to being called an 'exile' whose commitment to Wales is uncertain, by asserting: 'Enough of a commitment to know the divisions'.³⁹ Williams was well aware of the different kinds of Wales: he knew the rural Welsh borders and the industrial south Wales valleys,

But there was always another idea of Wales: the more enclosed, mainly rural, more Welsh-speaking west and north. For me, in the beginning, that was much more remote.⁴⁰

As we have seen, Matthew Price's research has led him to believe that cultures are made, not inherited, citing the cohesive valleys culture which resulted from mass inward migration of non-Welsh people in the nineteenth century. In the talk, 'Welsh Culture', Williams also dismisses any notion of racial or ethnic identity: being Welsh does not mean one is of a physically distinct race; he has little time for the whole 'Celtic' mythology – 'we are the Celts, whoever they may be!' – nor for the idea that the Welsh have a Celtic temperament, making them instinctive radicals and rebels.⁴¹ Dafydd Johnston, writing about *The People of the Black Mountains*, emphasises how far Williams is from any easy, romanticised conception of the relation of people and the land:

³⁹ *The Fight for Manod* p.135

⁴⁰ Raymond Williams, 'Who Speaks for Wales?' first published 1971, reprinted in Williams (ed.) *Who Speaks for Wales?* p.3

⁴¹ See 'Welsh Culture' pp.8-9

... the long historical perspective adopted by Williams gives rise to a radically different view of the relationship between people and territory. By depicting the Celts (perfectly accurately) as just one of a series of invaders he effectively undermines one of the cornerstones of modern Welsh nationalism, the mystic bond between language and land which is thought to give a people an absolute right over that territory.⁴²

Since Williams rejected any 'racial' notion of Welshness, we must look elsewhere for evidence of Welsh identity in the trilogy.

There is evidently the sense of *not being English*, of being neglected by the centres of power in England, and some mistrust of the English; and most of the central characters in the novels identify themselves as Welsh, with the notable exception of Peter Owen who disclaims any Welsh identity, even when pressed by Tom Meurig who 'proved I've got three Welsh grandmothers'.⁴³ None of the main characters speaks Welsh, though the people of Glynmawr are able to sing with gusto the Welsh national anthem.⁴⁴ For the characters in *Second Generation*, Wales is a memory of a cohesive industrial working-class culture and a homeland, but a place that had to be abandoned to find work; the Owen brothers and their wives still feel themselves to be Welsh, and in *The Fight for Manod*, Beth is keen to stay in Wales

⁴² Dafydd Johnston, 'Making History in Two Languages: Wiliam Owen Roberts's *Y Pla* and Christopher Meredith's *Griffri*' in Dr Tony Brown (ed.), *Welsh Writing in English: A Yearbook of Critical Essays* Vol. 3/1997 p.128

⁴³ *The Fight for Manod* p.136

⁴⁴ It is interesting that in that eisteddfod scene in *Border Country* the opening anthem is called the 'English' anthem, showing that the community did not identify with it, even though technically it is a British anthem

after her baby is born, though not from any specific sense of Welshness but partly out of a need for settlement anywhere and partly because her parents will be near at hand. The Afren valley and Manod seem securely Welsh in identity, though affected already by incomers and possibly massively so in the future should the plan go ahead.

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4.5 In several places, Raymond Williams acknowledges that his sense of Welshness returned from the late 1960s onwards. For some, it was not a welcome development: Fred Inglis regrets this 'late-come Welshness' as being the outcome of

... a simple triangulation of political forces, with his family and his railway now naturalised as full-blown Welsh at one corner, a generalised enemy situated in ruling-class England at another, and a rather gestured-at, never-quite-feasible future at the third.⁴⁵

The scepticism about the sudden 'Welshness' is evident, and Inglis goes further by linking Williams' turning back to Wales with his disappointment with the Labour Party in the late 1960s which, in Williams' view, had signally failed to take up the challenge for a new socialism as outlined in the *May Day Manifesto 1968* edited and largely drafted by Williams.⁴⁶ He rejected Labour, and

⁴⁵ Fred Inglis, *Raymond Williams* (London: Routledge, 1995; first paperback edition 1998) pp.257-8

⁴⁶ Raymond Williams (ed.), *May Day Manifesto 1968* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, expanded edition 1968)

... his deepest feelings, always silently eloquent on behalf of his private definitions of home, started to pull him off the border back into the safety of a more distinctive Welshness.⁴⁷

Clearly, Inglis feels that Williams' movement was a kind of retreat, a reaction to Labour's abdication from the essential struggle against 'the new capitalism and imperialism'.⁴⁸ Williams joined Plaid Cymru,⁴⁹ started to learn Welsh, and his cultural, social and political writing increasingly focused on Welsh issues; in the collection *Who Speaks for Wales?* edited by Daniel Williams, all the pieces are post 1971. It is no surprise that the New Left Review editors called the 1979 *The Fight for Manod* his 'most strongly and directly Welsh piece of writing to date'.⁵⁰ James A. Davies sees the later, more obviously 'Welsh' novels, *The Fight for Manod*, *The Volunteers* and *Loyalties*, as being mainly concerned with an 'alternative Wales, a Celtic commune under threat but indomitable'⁵¹ suitable for a quiet retired life. When Lane recruits Matthew Price for the research he suggests it will be 'a year in the country'; Tom Weinberg advises Matthew to leave the fighting to others and 'go down to Wales, take your new job quietly'. This hardly seems like the environment

⁴⁷Inglis, *Raymond Williams* p.229 . Raphael Samuel makes a similar point in "Philosophy Teaching by Example": Past and Present in Raymond Williams' in *History Workshop* No. 27, Spring 1989 accessed on 08/12/2011 via JSTOR at www.jstor.org/stable/4288891 p.149

⁴⁸ *May Day Manifesto 1968* pp.187-8

⁴⁹ In a notebook in the Raymond Williams Papers at Swansea University Library is his Plaid Cymru membership card dated 12/4/69: Ref.: WWE/2/1/12/1

⁵⁰ Raymond Williams quoted in *Politics and Letters* p.295

⁵¹ James A. Davies, "Not going back but ... exile ending": Raymond Williams's Fictional Wales' in W. John Morgan & Peter Preston, *Raymond Williams: Politics, Education, Letters* (Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press, 1993) p.207

for a sustained active opposition to international capitalism. Davies's stance may seem harsh but J. P. Ward also poses a troubling question:

It may finally be asked – as some have – whether Williams is, if not cynically, certainly conveniently, making use of his Welsh origin for this identification at a time of emerging Welsh consciousness ...⁵²

There was, then, a fortuitous conjunction between Williams' resigned recognition of Labour's failure to take on the challenges of forging a vibrant socialism, and his focus on a Welsh culture which he felt was more amenable to the kind of socialist communitarian politics he espoused and which gave him common ground with radical Left groups in Europe. In the earlier trilogy novels Williams explores in *Border Country* his relationship with his Welsh border background and, in a way, 'finds' himself in relation to his father and his own past; and in *Second Generation* he examines the present day conflicts (personal, familial, social and political) in some Welsh exile families, whose Wales is a matter of personal history and memory, and occasional visits. But in *The Fight for Manod* the sense of Welshness is central, reflecting the renewed attachment to Wales and its problems and possibilities.

Perhaps echoing the advice given to Matthew Price, J. P. Ward ends his short study of Williams by writing that a man like this

⁵² Ward, *Raymond Williams* p.76

... must have his own base as a person, a human being ... It would be astonishing if the exhaustive project of this indefatigably thoughtful man ... did not have the need for a wholly instinctual joy, one might say, a home, at its still centre.⁵³

By the time of *The Fight for Manod* that 'home' was unmistakably Welsh. But Davies points out that the Wales Williams seemed to identify with had 'almost completely disappeared' and there was no place in his fiction for:

Commercial Wales, high-tech Wales, intellectual Wales ... bourgeois Wales, urban and suburban Wales ...⁵⁴

Novels are not sociological or economic surveys. Williams' central characters, Matthew Price and Peter Owen, embody some of the conflicts of identity that Williams himself experienced, and struggle to know their place. For Matthew and others, coming from a specific Welsh community made being Welsh a crucial part of their identity, even if they live in England; for Peter the matter of Welshness is irrelevant: his identity is above all based on an anti-capitalist, class struggle. It is an irony that Williams found that the Welsh culture gave him the strength to carry on that very struggle. He found his place.

⁵³ Ibid, p.76

⁵⁴ Davies, 'Raymond Williams's Fictional Wales' p.198

APPENDICES:

APPENDIX 1: *Guardian* newspaper articles

SOURCE: Raymond Williams Papers in The Richard Burton Archive, Swansea University Library: A4 envelope WWE/2/1/1/10/1, containing notes and typescripts/manuscripts relating to *The Fight for Manod*; *Guardian* newspaper articles

1. Undated cutting, but it must be between 1967 and 1970, when Eirene White was Labour Minister of State for Wales. Extracts from the report:

“Mrs Eirene White, Welsh Minister of State, is to visit mid-Wales this week to discuss how to improve its economy. Terence Dendixson reports on

The Waste of Wales

... This time it is the Dulas valley in mid-Wales that is threatened by the insatiable appetite of the Midlands for water ... [the area is] notorious for depopulation as long as anyone can remember ... An established community that is as much part of the place as the landscape itself sees itself marked for extinction by a remote authority.

[Details are then given: 30 homesteads and 130 people threatened, including 2 chapels; and it is productive agricultural land]

... Less than a quarter of this number of people had been affected by the Severn River Authority’s last essay into the uplands at Clywedog, and it was much poorer land in that valley ... [The Dulas valley plan may be the ...] ... last sally into the Welsh uplands ...

[There are new ideas about water supply and conservation] ... The first sign of change was when the English lowland cities stopped using the uplands as huge municipal storage tanks. Liverpool’s Lake Vyrnwy and Birmingham’s Elan Valley are reservoirs of this type ...

[Clywedog does not have piped connections to a city; it merely stores water to release downriver in times of drought and keep up the flow; it allows Midland cities to] ... go on slaking their thirst from the lower reaches of the Severn ... The contents

of the reservoir are used to regulate the river instead of being piped direct to distant drinking water taps ...

... Unfortunately there is no indigenous body in mid-Wales which can contribute a well-researched point of view on such matters. The local authorities are too poor and the agencies of central government too fragmented.”

2. Cutting dated Wednesday, 27 July, 1966

“Proposed mid-Wales new town ‘would be tourist attraction’

By our correspondent

A new town in Montgomeryshire would be a viable economic proposition, says Economic Associates Ltd, of London, consultants employed by the Secretary of State for Wales, in a report to the Welsh Office ...

... It would help to regenerate one of Britain’s major problem areas and relieve some of the acute housing and overspill problems of Birmingham and the Black Country ...

[The new town would house about 70,000 people by the mid 1980s. It ...] ... would follow the traditions of the South Wales valleys and would take the form of village groups strung along 14 miles of the Severn Valley from Newtown to Llanidloes, both of which would become units in the new town structure. The centre would be the old Roman site at Caersws ...

[Economic Associates Ltd claim that, being only two hours from Birmingham, the town ...] ... could become a major tourist attraction, especially with the improved roads of the 1980s ... The Severn Valley would be flooded to produce two large lakes for recreation ...

[The report, prepared by Dr Peter Hall, 34, reader in geography at LSE,...] ... broke new ground in applying social and economic analysis to a planning problem ... The Minister will consider public reaction to the plan before deciding whether or when the project should go ahead.”

APPENDIX 2: Language, Dialect and Accent

In *Border Country* when Matthew Price, a successful academic working in London, arrives back in Gwenton, making his way to Glynmawr, the home he had first left over twenty years before, he is picked up near the station by an old family friend, Morgan Rosser. In the car Matthew reflects that 'It is like that this country; it takes you over as soon as you set foot in it.'¹ A key way in which this is shown is in the conversation between the two men: Morgan immediately calls Matthew 'Will', the name everyone uses in his home area; and in an example of what sociolinguists call 'accommodation', Matthew easily slips into the local language style, including its non-standard variations. This is the familiar language of the area, with its frequent use of 'mun' as in 'Come on, *mun*, get in' [my italics]; the use of 'Only' as a kind of initiator of a conversational turn, as in '*Only* sometimes we only recognize when we're expecting it'; the use of 'see' often at the end of a clause, as a kind of 'monitoring' expression, as in 'Aye, only then after all you were late, *see*' and 'And the rain, *see*'; and the grammatically non-standard use of the adjective rather than the adverb form in 'Well, I told you, *accurate*'. These features, together with the use of 'Aye' and 'Mam', enable Matthew to feel that even after an extended absence, a connection has been made:

It was easy at last, and enough had been re-established.²

These are the language forms of the home and the community. In the 'Welsh' or 'Border' trilogy, they are found in most dialogue in family settings. The expressions already mentioned occur in all three novels, as well as the familiar

¹ *Ibid*, p.11

² All these examples come from *Ibid*, pp.10 - 12

modes of address, 'girl', 'man', and 'boy', and the use of 'look' in a similar way to the use of 'see' as in 'The men, *look*, taking themselves seriously'.³

Even in *Second Generation*, set in England and in which much of the dialogue is relentlessly political, or academic, or concerned with arguing 'positions' on sexual morality and personal relationships, there are still times when the Welsh working-class central characters use the more informal register of their background. In Chapter Five, set in the car factory canteen, the brothers Harold and Gwyn Owen fall comfortably into the conversational tone of their Welsh border origins, as these examples demonstrate:

- Go on, *boy*, get it down you.
- No, *mun*, never. Though, *mind*, he did tell Myra there'd one day be a surprise coming to her.
- And he *don't do* bad, you know.⁴

Gwyn is the character most associated with these speech forms; in an unusual passage, Williams gives a kind of 'stream-of consciousness' of Gwyn's thoughts as he works on his car. His interior monologue is very Welsh in tone:

Only starting now in the autumn ... Easy enough, *see*, in the mornings ... *Only* the other night ... and the swing *only* flooded her ... We make them, *boy*, you wreck them.⁵

Similar language forms are used in *The Fight for Manod*. There are two meetings in the book between Matthew Price and Bryn Walters, the District Planning Officer. The first is a rather defensive 'clearing of the ground' as Matthew starts his research and Bryn is keen to establish exactly where Matthew stands. He uses 'boy', 'mun' and 'see' in his conversation while Matthew uses standard English; Bryn even

³ *Ibid*, p.368

⁴ *Second Generation*, examples from pp.41-3

⁵ *Ibid*, p.56

tries to call Matthew 'Will' but Matthew, at this stage, prefers his birth certificate name. In the later meeting, Bryn uses 'Will' without any objection by Matthew and he again uses the familiar 'boy' and 'mun'. As the narration says (and it seems to be Matthew's point of view here):

After their edgy first meeting they had found an easy, informal way of getting along...⁶

Nevertheless, Matthew never seems to use these local forms himself in this novel. Local usage and non-standard forms are most evident in the scenes when Trevor and Modlen argue, separately, with Gethin about money in Chapter V. As well as the use of 'Only', 'boy' and 'girl' (the latter especially by Gethin as a kind of dominance ploy with Modlen), there is the use of the singular noun where standard English would have the plural – 'You had twelve *pound*, only last week'. In the narrative itself, Gethin is described as '*swilling* his face', a usage regarded as dialectical; and there are several examples of non-standard grammar, such as '*She've had* no new clothes for a year back', 'He's done it *deliberate*', and '*What it is ... you was never born* to this life'. Some of these are regional forms found in various places but they are characteristic of south-east Wales and the borders. However, the only example of border dialect lexis is the word 'glat' in *Border Country* meaning a gap in a hedge or fence.⁷

In his review article 'Making it up', Raphael Samuel asserts that Raymond Williams

⁶ *The Fight for Manod* p.171

⁷ Anne Gladwell in her article 'Some Aspects of North Monmouthshire Dialect' in *The Anglo-Welsh Review* Vol. 21 No. 48 (Winter 1972) writes that '... a gap in the hedge is called a GLAT, and consequently TO GLAT is to mend the holes or gaps ...' p.38; she also comments on 'swill': '... conscientious housewives still SWILL the steps and the yard. This usually means a brisk rinse with water, and the word comes from Old English *swillan* or *swillian*, to wash' p.41

... has no ear for working-class speech ... He does not try to write in dialect ...⁸

There is some truth in this observation but it overlooks some quite lively passages of conversation, particularly in *Border Country*, such as the storytelling passage at the Prices' house the night before Harry's funeral. Will's uncle Lewis tells a comic tale, which includes many non-standard features, a real flavour of vernacular border Welsh English: '*Her han't growed a tail yet*', 'He was staggering, old Davy, and it *weren't* only the weight', 'Anyhow, Harry and I *cooched*⁹ down by the bag', 'Well, by now, of course, the hounds *was* into the wood, and Harry *looked at me should we run ...*' [non-standard forms in italics].¹⁰

Accent is more difficult to portray in prose unless there is frequent use of phonetic spelling which Williams avoids, but it is commented on in *Border Country*. When Harry and Ellen arrive in Glynmawr and recall their origins there, a contrast is drawn between the accent on the Herefordshire side of the border – 'the slow, rich, Herefordshire tongue' – and that in Glynmawr itself, 'the quick Welsh accent, less sharp, less edged, than in the mining valleys ... but clear and distinct ...'.¹¹ There is a revealing moment later in the novel, when Matthew rings up his wife Susan in London, their first conversation since he has returned home (Matthew speaks first):

'... I can't come back here to live.'

'No. Though you sound as if you had. Your voice is quite different already.'

'Is it? Has it changed?'

'Changed back,' Susan said. 'I prefer it.'¹²

⁸ 'Making It Up' [review of Inglis biography of Raymond Williams] in *London Review of Books* Vol 18, No. 13, July 1996; accessed on 21/10/2011 at London Review of Books website www.lrb.co.uk

⁹ The word 'cooched' is probably an Anglicised variant of the Welsh 'cwtch'.

¹⁰ These sentences taken from *Border Country*, pp.420-1

¹¹ *Ibid*, p.35

¹² *Ibid*, p.346

In Chapter 1 of this study, it was established that Williams himself was not a Welsh speaker, and that he was brought up in an Anglicized community in which the Welsh language survives only in place names and some personal or family names. Welsh is not used in any of the Border trilogy novels, and only in *Border Country* do we see any specific references to the Welsh language. There is a rather comic episode in which a close neighbour of the Prices, the preacher Joshua Watkins, rehearses aloud in Welsh in his 'high voice' the prayers and sermon he would eventually deliver in English.¹³ When Will is a schoolboy he recites 'a little Welsh poem of two verses' at a Baptist chapel celebration, but he flings the book prize he wins into the river, saying, 'I'm church, Mam, not chapel'.¹⁴ There is one occasion when the Welshness of the locals is evident: at the local eisteddfod, the singing of anthems makes a cultural and nationalistic point:

Everyone stood to sing the English national anthem, put at the beginning so that at the end, when they were really involved, they could sing the Welsh ... When all the choirs had sung, everyone stood and sang the anthem. It was now no longer simply hearing, but a direct effect on the body: on the skin, on the hair, on the hands.¹⁵

For all Morgan Rosser's cynicism – 'singing's the opium of the Welsh'¹⁶ – there is a clear sense of Welsh identity in the community at this kind of event, even if the Welsh anthem and choral works are learnt by heart only.

¹³ See *ibid*, p.219

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p.146

¹⁵ *Ibid*, pages 257 and 259

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p.259

APPENDIX 3: Poems about the Black Mountains

1.

Craswall

By Roland Mathias

With a long stirrup under fern
From a small blast of oaks and thorn
The shepherd scours the circling hill
And the sharp dingle creeping to the well.

A trickle from the canting neck
A pony coughing in the track
Are all the stranger hears, and steep
Among the fern the threading of the sheep.

This is the boundary: different burrs
Stick, stones make darker scars
On the road down: nightingales
Struggle with thorn-trees for the gate of Wales.

From Don Dale-Jones & Randal Jenkins (eds.), *Twelve Modern Anglo-Welsh Poets*
(London: University of London Press, 1975) pp.94-5

2.

Merthyr Clydawg

By Ruth Bidgood

Clodock; it sounds rustic, and English.
Clydawg; the lost Welsh is back. He seems
an off-beat martyr, killed for love,
out hunting, by a jealous rival; yet,
a prince who led in battle and prayer,
his story has a spice of miracle. Oxen
(helped by a broken yoke) refused
to drag his body over the ford, insisted
that here should be his burial-place.

In the church, the gallery's music-table
might be straight from Hardy. But Latin
on a dug-up stone remembers
"that faithful woman the dear wife
of Guinnda", who centuries back
lived in this place of shifting boundaries,
strife, loss, perpetual haunting, garbled names,
Welshness in the soil's depth,
unacknowledged riches,
uncomprehended power.

From *Singing to Wolves* (Bridgend: Seren/Poetry Wales Press, 2000), p.10

3.

Black Mountain Cairns

By Merryn Williams

[This poem was written by Merryn Williams, the daughter of Raymond Williams, herself a distinguished academic and writer. It is in memory of two prominent colleagues of Raymond Williams and set in the Black Mountains he loved.]

Black Mountain Cairns

(In memory of E. P. Thompson and Raphael Samuel)

Walking the silent tops of the Black Mountains
you find, every so often, a heap of stones,
anonymous, nothing scratched there. Not the broken
tablets which marked the boundaries of old sheep runs,
initialled by some farmer dead for a hundred years.
Nor the standing stones, isolated lower
in the valley, which track the path of the winter sun.

No, these were raised to assure the lonely traveller
someone had come here before, perhaps thinking his thoughts.
You can walk for miles till you see one, rest, and start on
the dry, exhausting trek to the next cairn.

They're kicked over often enough, the stones scattered
on to shale. The mist clears and the peaks return, occasionally.
Each time I pass I add another stone,
unnoticed, to the gaunt bulk of the cairn.

From Katie Gramich & Catherine Brennan (eds.), *Welsh Women's Poetry 1460-2001* (Dinas Powys: Honno/Association for Welsh Writing in English, 2003), pp.334-5

APPENDIX 4: Pictures

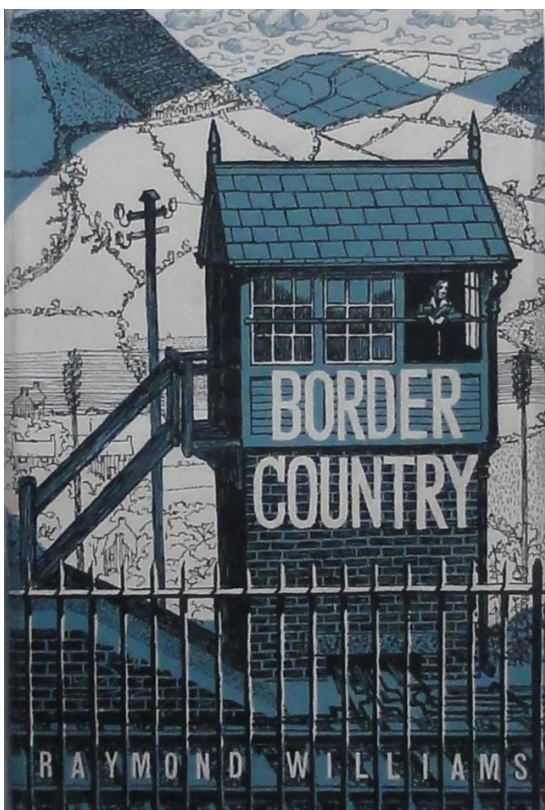


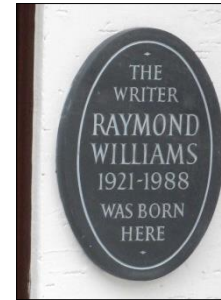
FIGURE 1: Left: The design for the original hardback dust-jacket for *Border Country* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1960): it features the signal-box set against a mountain background. Picture by G. J. Galsworthy.

FIGURE 2: Right: The gravestone of Raymond Williams and his wife Joy in the graveyard at Clodock church. [My mother is buried in the same graveyard].





FIGURE 3: Left: Llwyn Derw in Pandy, the much refurbished home of Harry and Gwen Williams in Pandy, where Raymond Williams was born in 1921, as acknowledged on the plaque beside the door:



In *Border Country* this is Matthew Price's birthplace and first home in Glynmawr, known in the book as Llwyn Celyn (see pp. 57 – 60 in *Border Country* (Cardigan: Parthian/Library of Wales, 2006)).



FIGURE 4: Left: Llwynon, just across the lane from Llwyn Derw is the house that Matthew's parents have moved to by the time his father Harry has fallen seriously ill; in *Border Country* we see Matthew's unfamiliarity with coming here instead of across the lane. This had been Morgan Rosser's house where Harry and Ellen Price first lodged in Glynmawr, then when the next tenants, the family of preacher Watkins, left, Harry and Ellen quickly moved in. In Williams' own life, this is where his parents moved to live in 1948.

FIGURE 5: Right: The right hand part of the white house across the lane is Llwyn Derw, so it easy to see how close these two homes were, both for Raymond Williams' own family and the fictional Matthew Price and his parents: this group of cottages (there are a few others along the lane) is what is called the 'patch' in *Border Country*.





FIGURE 6: *Left:* The former King Henry VIII Grammar School for Boys at Penypound, Abergavenny, which Raymond Williams attended (and where I was a pupil until the school moved to a new site when it amalgamated with the Girls' High School; indeed, a couple of Williams' teachers taught me in the 1960s!). This is the model for the grammar school in Gwenton (Abergavenny) which Matthew Price goes to before going to Cambridge. Williams in later life criticised grammar schools like this for their very *English* identity.



FIGURES 7 & 8: *Above:* The A465 through Pandy facing west (to Abergavenny) on the left, and facing east (to Hereford) on the right. This road, built in the 1960s, replaced the twisting old road through Pandy and made it difficult to keep a sense of a cohesive community. The effects of this road were foretold by Morgan Rosser in *Border Country* who saw its inevitability even in the 1930s, and in *The Fight for Manod* Matthew Price and his wife Susan revisit Glynmawr at the end of the novel and notice the changes it has brought: 'The new straight road for the lorries was thirty yards back ... Farther into the village, the straight line of the new motor road had changed the shape of the valley and its settlement'. pp. 203, 204 of *The Fight for Manod* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1988 edition of novel first published in 1979).



FIGURE 9: Left: The hill called Bryn Arw (not very distinct covered in snow on a grey day) seen from railway bridge by what was once Llanfihangel station near Pandy. It was above this hill that Williams said that, as a child, he could see at night from his home the glow produced by the opened furnaces at Blaenavon, up in the industrial valleys. This was a phenomenon I was familiar with, living in Abergavenny. Matthew Price in *Border*

Country is also aware of it: 'At dusk, above Darren, the glow of the steel furnace spread up each evening into the sky ...' (*Border Country* p. 102).

There were two stations just a couple of miles apart, Llanfihangel Crucorney and Pandy. Raymond Williams' father was a signaller at Pandy. However, in *Border Country*, Williams seems to use details based on the Llanfihangel station when describing Glynmawr station. Early in the novel, when Harry and Ellen Price arrive in Glynmawr, we get details of platforms, a zigzag path and a bridge.



Figure 10: Left: The 'up' line (i.e. towards Hereford) at Llanfihangel, looking down from the bridge (see above), showing the zigzag path up to road level. The remains of the platform are bottom left.

On page 26 of *Border Country*, we are told: 'The platforms at Glynmawr were not set opposite each other ... To the up platform a zigzag path led down from the road and the bridge'.



FIGURE 11: Left: The view towards Abergavenny (i.e. Gwenton) from the bridge. At the top of the bank on the left there was a private waiting room (now a house) and a platform below (not there now). The walled recess on the right might have been the site of the Llanfihangel signal-box.

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1. A4 Envelope: WWE/2/1/1/5/1: draft of parts of *Border Country* Chapter Three, 1 & 2 – Matthew on train through England
2. A4 envelope: WWE/2/1/1/5/2: a single sheet showing extended family trees of characters in *Border Country*, including dateline
3. A4 envelope: WWE/2/1/1/5/3: (a) copy of (torn) Chatto & Windus hardback edition dust jacket for *Border Country* ; (b) two proof copies of Hogarth Press paperback cover of *Border Country*
4. Box P: WWE/2/1/1/6/2: typescripts (mostly carbon copies) of sections of draft of *Border Village*, early version of *Border Country*
5. Treasury tag bound file, with card covers: WWE/2/1/1/6/1: Full typescript of *Border Village*, pages 1 – 299
6. Notebook: WWE/2/1/12/1: notes and plans for many purposes – lectures, courses, plans for chapters of critical works; notes & plans for *A Common Theme* (can't decipher handwriting!); list of composition dates; Williams' Plaid Cymru membership card, 1969
7. Notebook: WWEE/2/1/12/2: includes extended pencil written section of text of *Border Village*, apparently written (according to note to Joy Williams at beginning) on the train travelling to Pandy from London; Notes on sequence of novels initially called 'Between Two Worlds'
8. Pocket file: WWE/2/1/1/23/2: variety of typescripts, some just the carbons, of sections of what became *Second Generation* – not in ordered sequence, nor complete or continuous; many amendments, cuts, additions in handwriting often on facing page with letters in typescript to show where new inserts should go
9. Ribbon-tied folder: WWE/2/1/1/23/1: Complete typescript (pp.1 -409) of *Second Generation*, with Chatto & Windus label on cover

10. A4 envelope: WWE/2/1/1/10/1: Notes and typescripts/manuscripts of sections of drafts of *The Fight for Manod*: chapter lists but some words indecipherable; cut out articles from the *Guardian* about proposed dam and new town developments in mid-Wales

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