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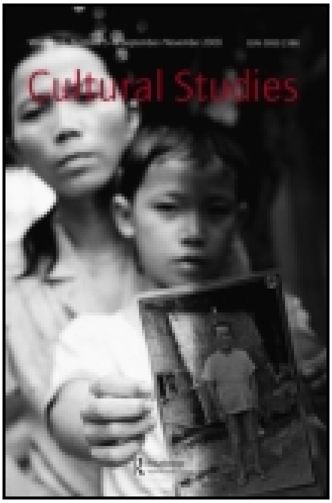

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Culture, community, nation

Stuart Hall

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▪ARTICLES▪

STUART HALL

CULTURE, COMMUNITY, NATION

Though I was never taught by Raymond Williams, and worked with him only in an informal capacity from time to time, he had a major influence on my intellectual and political formation.[1] We met in Oxford in the mid 1950s – he as a lecturer in adult education while I was an undergraduate and, later, a graduate student. At a key moment in the formation of the first New Left, some of us read *Culture and Society* in draft; and it helped to give a decisive shape to the concern with 'cultural politics' which has characterized the thinking and practice of an independent critical 'New Left' ever since. Thereafter, our paths crossed continually – on the Board of *New Left Review*, which I edited for a time; in the drafting of the *May Day Manifesto*; everywhere in the development of Cultural Studies, with which I was directly connected through the Birmingham Centre from 1964 onwards; and in anguished conversation in the eighties, as we all tried in different ways to make sense of the disorientation of the left under the impact of Thatcherism and the forces it unleashed, until his untimely death in 1988.

As I have tried to say elsewhere, this is to put his formative influence too weakly. I did not, of course, always agree with him; and nothing was more foreign to his dialogic mode of thinking than any hint of discipleship. Nevertheless, as I put it, the fact is that, 'in a broader intellectual sense, I often had, at different times in my life, the uncanny experience of hesitantly and confusedly beginning a line of thought, only to find that, apparently coincidentally, Raymond had not only been travelling much the same road but had given it a clearer, more forceful, clarifying formulation than I ever could' (Hall, 1993: 305).

There was another 'elective affinity' which made me feel close to him, despite our enormous differences in temperament, character, background, ages, generation and formation: our responses as 'scholarship boys' from the peripheries of English culture to our first encounter with the institutions which were at its very centre as a dominant cultural system: Oxbridge. I still recall the shock of recognition which I experienced on reading his response to his interviewers' questions in *Politics and Letters*, about the impact of Cambridge on him when he first went 'up' in October 1939: 'I was', he said, 'wholly unprepared for it. I knew nothing about it' (1979: 40). As he later wrote in 'My Cambridge': 'It was not my Cambridge. That was clear from the beginning . . . I have now spent 18 years in the university in three distinct periods. In each of them I have started by being surprised to be there and then, in time, made some kind of settlement. But this has always, even in the longest period, felt temporary . . . Cambridge can break you up, to no good purpose; confuse you, sicken you, wring you dry' (1989b: 5). Having spent six years in Oxford, I thought I knew immediately what he meant.

What was even more striking was the confidence with which Raymond Williams was able to measure the so-called 'civilization' of Cambridge against another civility, another set of standards, drawn from his experience of an alternative, and different, 'knowable community' – his Welsh 'Border Country' – against which he found Cambridge sadly wanting:

> I was reminded of a conversation my father had reported to me from his advance visit [to Trinity]. The porter had asked him, rather haughtily, whether my name was already down, 'Yes, since last autumn'. 'Last autumn? Many of them, you know, are put down at birth'. I try to be charitable and find it easier now. But I remember sitting on the benches in hall surrounded by these people and wishing they *had* been put down at birth. . . . The myth of the working-class boy arriving at Cambridge . . . is that he is an awkward misfit and has to learn new manners. It may depend on where you come from. Out of rural Wales it didn't feel like that. The class which has dominated Cambridge is given to describing itself as well-mannered and polite, sensitive. It continually contrasts itself favourably with the rougher and coarser others. When it turns to the arts it congratulates itself overtly on its taste and its sensibility; speaks of its poise and tone. If I then say that what I found was an extraordinarily coarse, pushing, name-ridden group, I shall be told I am showing class-feeling, class envy, class resentment. That I showed class feeling is not in any doubt. All I would insist on is that nobody fortunate enough to grow up in a good home in a genuinely well-mannered and sensitive community, could for a moment envy these loud, competitive, deprived people. All I did not know then was how cold that class is. That comes with experience' (1989b: 7–8).

What made Raymond Williams capable of, as he put it later, 'hitting Cambridge and being extraordinarily unafraid of it'? It was his 'placing' within another culture; his access to a different, 'knowable' community, indeed another national culture, a different 'structure of feeling'. Though subordinated to and displaced in its peripheral relationship to the dominant English culture, and with the culture of the educated, metropolitan, upper middle classes, this other 'knowable community' provided him with certain cultural resources, which enabled him to live and feel, and later to write and think, according to a different grain from that of 'Cambridge'. It was this, in turn, which influenced the way he thought about, and gave an experiential, 'lived', dimension to, such 'key ideas' as 'culture' and 'community', and indeed Wales as a nation and 'being Welsh' as a cultural identity, when later he came to reflect on this cluster of concepts. It is the strengths and limitations of his ideas on these subjects, and their value in helping us to think through the complexities of these formations now, in the very altered context of the 1990s and beyond, which forms the substance of these reflections. But the story properly starts here, with the idea of a 'knowable community' in the Welsh border country of his early years, and how it gave rise to and informed his theoretical work. As he said, recalling the way the Welsh writer, Emyr Humphreys, once introduced a reading from Williams' novel: 'not *Border Country* by Raymond Williams, but *Raymond Williams* by Border Country'.

In his discussion of 'culture', in the famous chapter on 'The analysis of culture' in *The Long Revolution*, his pathbreaking attempt to break with the literary-moral discourse of *Culture and Society* into a more sustained effort of general theorizing, the key conceptual move he makes is from an 'abstract' definition of culture – 'a state or process of human perfection' – to culture as 'a description of a particular way of life which expresses certain meanings and values, not only in art and learning, but in institutions and ordinary behaviour.' Culture, he insisted, with his characteristic inflection on 'our common life', is 'ordinary'. The analysis of culture, from such a definition, he argued, 'is the clarification of the meanings and values implicit and explicit in a particular way of life, a particular culture'. Characteristic here is not only the movement from abstract ideal to concrete, from texts to their contexts of institutional life and ordinary behaviour; but also the breaking down of artificial distinctions between art and literature – the signifiers of 'culture' in the first, as it were 'Cambridge' sense – and what he called 'the general social organization'. 'The art is there, as an activity, with the production, the trading, the politics, the raising of families. To study the relations adequately we must study them actively, seeing all the activities as particular and contemporary forms of human energy' (1961: 61).

Later he was to insist that the more specialized forms and conventions of what Cambridge knew as 'literature' were most valuably to be understood as different kinds of 'writing', all related in different ways and forms to wider 'structures of feeling', the way meanings and values were *lived* in real lives, in actual communities. 'The most difficult thing to get hold of, in studying any past period is this felt sense of the quality of life at any particular place and time; a sense of the ways in which the particular activities combined into a way of thinking and living . . . I think we can best understand this if we think of any similar analysis of a way of life that we ourselves share.' (1961: 80) He called this 'most delicate and least tangible' of structures the 'structure of feeling' of a period. Edward Said, the 1989 Williams Memorial lecturer, thought this concept, which enabled him to move beyond the 'the ideological capture of the text into the life of the communities beyond it', his 'most famous contribution to literary study' (1990).

Incidentally, few people know that one of the first, considered formulations of this central idea in Williams's work first appeared in a little book entitled *Preface To Film*, which he wrote and published (in 1954) with Michael Orrom, a film director who worked with Paul Rotha and whom Raymond met at Cambridge:

> All the products of a community in a given period are, we now commonly believe, essentially related, although in practice and in detail this is not always easy to see. In the study of a period, we may be able to reconstruct with more or less accuracy the material life, the general social organization and, to a larger extent, the dominant ideas. It is not necessary to discuss here which, if any, of these aspects is, in the whole complex, determining. . . . But while we may, in the study of a past period, separate out particular aspects of life, and treat them as if they were self-contained, it is obvious that this is only how they may be studied, not how they are experienced (1954: 9).

Even when, in *The Long Revolution*, his rather 'organicist' stress on culture as 'a whole way of life' moves in a more dialogic direction, to an emphasis on the giving and taking of meanings within a set of lived relations, this new emphasis on 'communication' is immediately linked back to and informs the idea of 'community':

> Human community grows by the discovery of common meanings and common means of communication. . . . Thus our descriptions of our experience come to compose a network of relationships, and all our communication systems, including the arts, are literally parts of our social organization. The selection and interpretation involved in our descriptions embody our attitudes, needs and interests, which we seek to validate by making them clear to others. At the same time the descriptions we receive from others embody their attitudes, needs and interests, and the long process of comparison and interaction is our vital associative life. Since our way of seeing things is literally our ways of living, the process of communication is in fact the process of community: the sharing of common meanings, and thence common activities and purposes; the offering, reception and comparison of new meanings, leading to the tensions and achievements of growth and change (1961: 10).

Theoretically, Williams's formulations grew over the years in both complexity and confidence – *Marxism and Literature* is a powerfully condensed statement of his more mature reflections on these topics. But the emphases we have identified in the early work remain active to the end.

What does his difficult wrestling with these questions of culture, community, shared experience and national identity have to tell us now in the more highly charged era of revived nationalisms in big and small societies, and the aspirations of marginalized peoples to nationhood, which have become so unexpectedly a feature of the late-modern world of the

1990s and are transforming the cultural life of modernity? How useful are they in helping us to decipher the unpredicted 'return' of nationalism as a major historical force, and the efforts to restore national cultures as the primordial source of cultural identity as these tendencies are manifesting themselves today, well beyond the limits of the national-liberation struggles that marked the decolonizing moment of the immediate post-war decades? How much can we learn from him in negotiating the shoals and currents of these confusing and dangerous waters?

We have, first, to set the context by trying, however sketchily, to characterize this 'new' situation. The great discourses of modernity – in this respect Marxism no less than liberalism, both in their different ways, Enlightenment 'grand narratives' – led us to expect, not the revival but the gradual disappearance of the nationalist passion. Attachments to nation, like those to tribe, region, place, religion, were thought to be archaic particularisms which capitalist modernity would, gradually or violently, dissolve or supercede. Socialism, the 'counter-culture of modernity' in Zygmunt Bauman's phrase, was equally predicated on the subsumption of these particularisms into a more cosmopolitan or internationalist consciousness. Globalization, drawing more and more of the globe into the net of the global capitalist market, is, of course, no recent, post-'Big Bang' phenomenon. It has been going on since the Spanish and the Portuguese initiated the West's 'encounter' with the Rest at the end of the fifteenth century. The recent integration of financial systems, the internationalization of production and consumption, the spread of global communications networks, is only the latest – albeit distinctive – phase in a long, historical process.

However, this latest phase of capitalist globalization, with its brutal compressions and reorderings across time and space, has not necessarily resulted in the destruction of those specific structures and particularistic attachments and identifications which go with the more localized communities which a homogenizing modernity was supposed to replace. Of course, the forces of capitalist modernity, in their combined and uneven development, have radically dislocated the societies into which they penetrated (though this distinctive history of capitalist development has, classically, been subordinated in its narrativization to the quite different story of how capitalism peacefully 'evolved' from the womb of feudal Europe). But the so-called 'logic of capital' has operated as much *through* difference – preserving and transforming difference (including sexual difference) – not by undermining it.

The engine of this expansionist history was the European nation-state, with its well-defined territorial boundaries, national economies and increasingly national cultures. Of course, side by side with this, were the flows – of capital, goods, labour – *between and across* national frontiers. As Immanuel Wallerstein has observed, 'At the very moment that one has been creating national cultures, each distinct from the other, these flows have been breaking down national distinctions' (1991: 19). This tension between the tendency of capitalism to develop the nation-state and national cultures and its transnational imperatives is a contradiction at the heart of modernity which has tended to give nationalism and its particularisms a peculiar significance and force at the heart of the so-called new transnational global order. Negotiating this tension was one of the key conjuring tricks of Thatcherism; and it was its failure to resolve this tension – the illusion that Britain could snatch the goodies of a 'single market' without sacrificing an inch of national sovereignty or 'Englishness' as a cultural identity to the European idea – which finally destroyed Mrs Thatcher and which has brought her successors, Mr Major and Mr Lamont, to the brink of the post-Maastricht abyss.

Nevertheless, the present intensified phase of globalization has favoured the tendencies pushing nation-states towards supranational integration – economic, and more reluctantly, political and cultural: weakening without destroying the nation-state and thereby opening up local and regional economies both to new dislocations and to new relationships. Paradoxically, globalization seems also to have led to a strengthening of 'local' allegiances and identities *within* nation-states; though this may be deceptive, since the strengthening of 'the local' is probably less the revival of the stable identities of 'locally settled communities' of the past, and more that tricky version of 'the local' which operates within, and has been thoroughly reshaped by 'the global' and operates largely within its logic.

One result has been a slow, if uneven, erosion of the 'centred' nationalisms of the Western European nation-state and the strengthening of both transnational relations and local identities – as it were, simultaneously 'above' and 'below' the level of the nation-state. Two features of this very uneven process have been the re-valorization of smaller, subordinate nationalisms and movements for national and regional autonomy by precisely those groups whose identities were swallowed up by or subsumed under what Ernest Gellner calls the 'political roof' of the big nation-states, and the parallel growth of a defensive reaction by those national cultures which see themselves threatened from their peripheries. We can see this not only in the strengthening of regional and national identities within the UK (or, as Raymond Williams calls it, 'the Yookay') but also in the growing efforts of local centres attempting to by-pass blockages of various kinds at the national level – Scotland's dream of breaking the English connection and restoring its Enlightenment links with Europe; the possibility of subsuming Northern Ireland's intractable problems in some sort of 'European' solution. Williams himself reflects the ambivalence of identification produced by these two tendencies when he referred to himself as feeling like a 'Welsh-European'. But there are similar signs elsewhere in Europe, the growth of the Northern League in Italy, as a way of dissociating the industrial (and, as it turns out, corrupt) Milan from the 'backward' (and, of course, equally corrupt) South, being only the most recent example.

At the same time as this has been going on in Western Europe, we have seen the break-up of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and the revival of ethnic nationalisms amongst peoples submerged for decades within the supernationalism of the Soviet sphere of influence. This seems to reflect a complicated double-movement – the attempt to reconstitute themselves as a nation representing both the reaction against the Soviet and state-socialist past and the hope for the future – which may turn out to be illusory – that 'nationhood' is the only passport or entry-ticket left for backward East Europeans to the new Western European prosperity.

Hence the confusing spectacle of what we may call ascending and descending nationalisms, locked in a sort of combined-and-uneven double helix. It seems clear that, despite the often over-rationalist expectations favoured by the internationalist perspectives of the left, nationalism is not only *not* a spent force; it isn't *necessarily* either a reactionary or a progressive force, politically. We have seen plenty of both varieties in recent years – even supposing that it is easy to establish the criteria by which they can be easily distinguished (is Iraqi nationalism progressive because it opposes the West or reactionary because it holds its people in a crude and violent dictatorial grip?). To coin one of Ernesto Laclau's phrases, nationalism 'has no necessary political belongingness'. It is capable of being inflected to very different political positions, at different historical moments and its character depends very much on the other traditions, discourses and forces with which it is articulated. The nationalisms of, say, 'Third World' countries in the era of decolonization, which were produced as the counter-discourses to exploitation and cultural colonization and linked with critical cultures and political traditions, had a very different political meaning and trajectory from those which have been generated as the historical reaction against imposed state socialism but which have reappeared in political cultures with strong ethnic and religious absolutist traditions.

The nation-state was never simply a political entity. It was always also a symbolic formation – a 'system of representation' – which produced an 'idea' of the nation as an 'imagined community', with whose meanings we could identify and which, through this imaginary identification, constituted its citizens as 'subjects' (in both of Foucault's sense of 'subjection' – subject of and subjected to the nation). There is no question, then, that the relative decline of the centralized nation-states, with their incorporating cultures and national identities, implanted and secured by strong cultural institutions, which claimed to be able to subsume all differences and diversity into their imagined unity, opens up profound ambivalences and fissures within the discourse of the nation-state and thus presents unprecedented opportunities for smaller nationalisms to realize their aspirations for autonomy in new, more effectively self-governing arrangements. This is the perspective which Raymond Williams addressed, with increasing frequency and urgency, in his writing about Wales and other struggles for 'actual social identities', especially in *Towards 2000*, but of course also, in a different register, in his fiction.

Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that the drive to nationhood in many of the 'ascending' small nationalisms can often take the form of trying to construct ethnically (or culturally, religiously or racially) closed or 'pure' formations in the place of the older, corporate nation-states or imperial formations; a closure which comes, in Gellner's terms, from trying to realize the aspiration, which they see as the secret of success of the great, modernizing nation-states of Western modernity, of gathering *one* people, *one* ethnicity, gathered under *one* political roof.

But the history of the nation-states of the West has *never* been of this ethnically pure kind. Without exception, as Daffyd Ellis Thomas, the former Playd Cwmry MP, pointed out again recently, they are without exception ethnically hybrid – the product of conquests, absorbtions of one peoples by another. It has been the main function of national cultures which, as we argued, are systems of representation, to *represent* what is in fact the ethnic hotch-potch of modern nationality as the primordial unity of 'one people'; and of their invented traditions to project the ruptures and conquests, which are their real history, backwards in an apparently seamless and unbroken continuity towards pure, mythic time. What's more, this 'hybridity' of the modern nation-state is now, in the present phase of globalization, being compounded by one of the largest forced and unforced mass migrations of recent times. So that, one after another, Western nation-states, already 'diaspora-ized' beyond repair, are becoming inextricably 'multicultural' – 'mixed' ethnically, religiously, culturally, linguistically, etc.

Despite this, many of the new nationalisms are busy trying, often on the basis of extremely dubious myths of origin and other spurious claims, to produce a purified 'folk' and to play the highly dangerous game of 'ethnic cleansing' – to use the charming phrase which the Serbs have returned to the postmodern European vocabulary. Here, real dislocated histories and hybridized ethnicities of Europe, which have been made and remade across the tortured and violent history of Europe's march to modernity, are subsumed by some essentialist conception of national identity, by the surreptitious return to 'tradition' – often of the 'invented' kind, as Hobsbawm and Ranger define it – which recasts cultural identity as an unfolding essence, moving apparently without change, from past to future.

Lest we think that this kind of ethnic absolutism is restricted to the Balkans – which Western Europeans have always thought unfit to govern themselves – we must remember that versions of it are alive and well in the old 'modern' nation-states, especially in the wake of the multicultural diversity which the dislocations of globalization are pushing along. We can now see Thatcherism's question – 'Are you one of us'? – as not only a search for true converts to the Gospel of Market Forces, but as only the latest effort, still continuing, to resurrect that rapidly vanishing species, the late-twentieth-century 'true born Englishman' (the gendered form is deliberate) and to rediscover, by a virulent form of regressive modernization (an attempt to capture the future by a determined long detour through the past) those discursive forms of manly and entrepreneurial 'greatness' which could restore 'Englishness' as a beleagured national identity: that cultural identity into which all the other diverse cultures of the British Isles and, at its peripheries, the colonized societies, were so often and so brutally collapsed.

In the face of the proliferation of cultural difference 'at home', and the multiethnic character of the 'new Britain', and threatened on the other side by the encroaching trauma of an emerging 'European' identity, we have seen in Britain, over the past decade, the construction of a particularly defensive, closed and exclusive definition of 'Englishness' being advanced as a way of warding off or refusing to live with difference – a retreat from modernity which no exercise in managerial newspeak or 'the new entrepreneurialism' can disguise or deflect. One slip of the Danish pen, and it has come pouring out – in different forms, as much from the left as the right. Confronted by an openly racist far-right in France or Germany, the British are apt to be smoothly superior and complacent. Nevertheless, the particular forms of cultural racism which have grown up under Thatcherism's shadow bring together and condense into a single discourse questions of race and ethnicity with questions of nation, national and cultural belonging: 'Cultural belongingness' (redefined as an old, exclusive form of ethnicity) has replaced genetic purity and functions as the coded language for race and colour. As Paul Gilroy observed in *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*:

> A form of cultural racism which has taken a necessary distance from crude ideas of biological inferiority now seeks to present an imaginary definition of the nation as a unified *cultural* community. It constructs and defends an image of national-culture, homogeneous in its whiteness yet precarious and perpetually vulnerable to attack from enemies within and without (1987: 49–50).

Something of the same fear of difference and diversity can be seen, in different forms, everywhere in the 'New Europe', as the most heterogeneous peoples hastily cobble together some new unitary cultural identity as a shield, not only against neighbours with whom they have peacefully dwelled for centuries, but also against Muslim, North African, Turkish and other migrants drawn to Europe from its peripheries. We can see it reflected in the consciously 'Little England' schemes drawn up for teaching literature and history – the key discourses in the construction of national identity – in the new English National Curriculum for schools. We can also see it in the violent backlash against multiculturalism in schools and universities in the US. These tendencies have their respectable allies and supporters in Britain and their not-so-respectable shock-troops elsewhere in Europe, as those displaced by the destruction of indigenous economies, the pricing out of crops and the crippling weight of debt as well as by poverty, drought and warfare, pursued with the help of the international arms trade, buy a one-way ticket and head across borders to 'Paradise' or 'The American Way'. Raymond Williams has, in fact, written eloquently about this trend in an earlier historical form, particularly as it affected rural Wales:

> As production and trading advantages shifted, vast numbers had to move again or be left stranded in the debris of a worked-out economy. Massive movements of this kind are still occurring in thousands of authorized and unauthorized emigrations and immigrations and in the desperate trails from land dispossessed by agri-business to the shanty-towns on the edges of densely populated cities (1983: 186).

The responses to these massive unplanned movements of populations from the declining 'South' to the overfed 'North' under the impact of globalization, powered as they are by polite and other forms of ethnic absolutism, are a species of *fundamentalism* every bit as backward-looking as those to be found in some sections of the Islamic world. These have replaced Communism in the demonology of the West and are superficially portrayed as the sign of a retreat from modernity by backward peoples, when they are often ambiguous responses by those either left out of 'modernity' or ambiguously and partially incorporated in one of its many forms, whereas the fundamentalisms which are afflicting 'modern' national cultures are not only arising from the very heart of modernity but are a continuing reminder of the dark shadow which has persistently accompanied modernity and the European Enlightenment from its inception.

In the face of these dislocations, it is easy to understand why Raymond Williams again and again affirms what he calls the 'rooted settlements', 'lived, worked and placeable social identities', to set off against what he persistently characterizes as the 'abstractions' of modern national cultural identities. With unerring accuracy, he places who or what is responsible for these dislocations, against which national identity has so frequently in the past been summoned as a reliable defence: 'It is, in the modern epoch, capitalism which has disrupted and over-ridden natural communities and imposed artificial orders. It is then a savage irony that capitalist states have again and again succeeded in mobilizing patriotic feelings in their own forms and interests' (1983: 184).

The persistent emphasis in Williams on 'actual lives' in 'knowable communities' is salutary in the current post-Maastricht confusion. For, much as one may support the shift from a narrow little Englandism to a broader European perspective, welcoming this enlarging and diversification of 'English' perspectives, one has also to acknowledge that the idea that, overnight, something called a 'European identity' or culture could be willed into being at the behest of a single market or the requirements of the European banking system, represents a conception of culture and an understanding of the mechanisms of social identification so shallow and 'abstract', in Raymond Williams's terms, that it deserves the comeuppance which the Danish have so tellingly delivered to the European Community in their referendum. The more one 'believes in Europe' or, to put it more accurately, the more the question of Europe appears to be a contested concept worth struggling over and around, the more important are the questions of 'which Europe?', and of 'what is European culture?' and 'whose European identity?' and 'which version of European modernity?' and indeed of how and whether it might ever be possible to be both 'Black *and* European'.

Williams certainly appreciated the complexities of trying to restore an already unified Welsh identity around any single notion of Wales as a national community. Despite the wonderful work he did in his novels in imaginatively recreating it as an 'imagined community', he often acknowledged his problematic relationship to Wales. His family, after all, were not Welsh-speaking, though they learned Welsh poems and songs for special occasions. His early 'hostility to the norms of Welsh nonconformist community' resulted initially in 'a rejection of my Welshness which I did not work through until well into my thirties, when I began to read the history and understand it'. Again and again, as we might expect, he insists that 'I have to emphasize great complexity in Wales and England'. Welshmen are always asking what Wales actually was, 'The problematic element is characteristic' (1989c: 68).

He fully understood the essentially mythic and constructed discourse of 'essential cultural continuity' with which the Welsh sometimes console themselves for what has happened to them. He knows from the inside the complexity of the ethnic history of 'what is now Wales from earliest times.' He acknowledges the complexity of the linguistic heritage where the already complicated Welsh/English language differential is cross-cut by another significant differential – 'how that majority of the Welsh who have lost their native language now speak and write English'. He sees both the dangers of reconstructing a spuriously unified cultural identity and a falsely continuous national history when the real history is one of ruptures and discontinuities – 'industrial conflict within rapid economic development and agrarian conflict within impoverishment, depopulation and marginalization' – and even the resistance to cultural colonization was itself a deeply differentiated response, governed as much by what it was responding to as what it was in itself. The Welsh national cultural revival, he insists, requires 'the working through of a history among now radically dislocated and subordinated people, rather than the fortunate resurgence of a subdued essence' (1989c: 68).

Nevertheless, the emphasis on 'actual and sustained social relationships' as the principal basis of identification and cultural 'belongingness' presents many real difficulties which take us back to that original stress, in Williams's work, on culture and community as a 'whole way of life'. Whose *way*? Which *life*? One way or several? Isn't it the case that, in the modern world, the more we examine 'whole ways of life' the more internally diversified, the more cut through by complex patterns of similarity and difference, they appear to be? Modern people of all sorts and conditions, it seems, have had, increasingly, as a condition of survival, to be members, simultaneously, of several, overlapping 'imagined communities'; and the negotiations between and across these complex 'borderlines' are characteristic of modernity itself. Lest one think that this capacity to live in and negotiate several 'worlds' at once is a sign of the modern alienated condition, a burden laid on the postmodern, Western nomadic subject alone, it is worth recalling that the burden of 'double consciousness' which W. E. B. DuBois identified, was the burden of consciousness, not of the Master but the Slave, and his/her descendants, who – as C. L. R. James observed – are 'in western civilization, who have grown up in it but yet are not completely a part of it'.[2]

In *Towards 2000*, Williams discusses the response of the white working-class man to what he calls – too euphemistically by half – 'the most recent immigrations of more visibly different peoples' and the angry confusions and prejudices which are triggered when, as he puts it, the blacks (for it is them – us – who are the 'visibly different peoples') 'intersect with the most selective forms of identity'. He acknowledges that the reaction to the presence of foreigners easily slides into specifying this 'otherness' as black. But he objects to this always being labelled 'racism' and especially to what he calls the 'standard liberal reply', 'But they are as British as you are', which, he argues, is to employ 'a merely legal definition of what it is to be British'.

> It is a serious misunderstanding when full social relations are in question to suppose that the problems of social identity are resolved by formal definitions. For unevenly and at times precariously but always through long experience substantially, an effective awareness of social identity depends on actual and sustained social relationships. To reduce social identity to formal legal definitions at the level of the state, is to collude with the alienated superficialities of 'the nation' . . . which are the limited functional terms of the modern ruling class (1983: 195).

This passage seems to me to contain a series of powerful truncations and ellipses and it is therefore no surprise that, in a now famous exchange in *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*, Paul Gilroy, quite correctly, fastened on it as representing in its implications a racially exclusive form of social identity, and a sign of the degree to which Williams's work, like so much other thinking on the left, remains both blind to questions of race and framed by certain unexamined 'national' cultural assumptions. As Gilroy asked, How 'full' must 'full social relations' be? How 'actual' are the social relationships between blacks and whites in many inner-city communities and how 'sustained' do they have to be to include equality of respect? It is true that social identity cannot be reduced to formal legal definitions. But it is a serious misjudgement to ascribe it exclusively to 'the alienated superficialities of "the nation" and the functional terms of the modern ruling class.' If you are a black woman trying to secure rights of citizenship from the local DHS office or an Asian family with British residence running the gauntlet of the immigration authorities at Heathrow, 'formal legal definitions' matter profoundly. They cannot be made conditional on cultural assimilation.

It should not be necessary to look, walk, feel, think, speak exactly like a paid-up member of the buttoned-up, stiff-upper-lipped, fully corsetted 'free-born Englishman' *culturally* to be accorded either the informal courtesy and respect of civilized social intercourse or the rights of entitlement and citizenship. This is to apply the Tebbit-test cricket test (i.e., which cricket team do Afro-Caribbeans support when the West Indies is touring Britain?) with a vengeance – subsuming cultural allegiance to the vagaries of the batting form of the England cricket team (a slender reed indeed), as the price of drawing the family allowance. In the matter of citizenship, of course, there are minimal responsibilities to those others with whom one shares a political community, just as there are 'rights'. But, far from collapsing the complex questions of cultural identity and issues of social and political rights, what we need now is *greater distance between them.* We need to be able to insist that rights of citizenship and the incommensurabilities of cultural difference are respected and that *the one is* *not made a condition of the other.* In this sense, unless the universalistic language of citizenship, derived from the Enlightenment and the French Revolution (but long denied both women in Europe and black slaves in Hispaniola) is transformed in the light of the proliferation of cultural difference, the idea cannot and does not deserve to survive in the transformed conditions of late-modernity in which it is required to become substantively operable.

Since cultural diversity is, increasingly, the fate of the modern world, and ethnic absolutism a regressive feature of late-modernity, the greatest danger now arises from forms of national and cultural identity – new or old – which attempt to secure *their* identity by adopting closed versions of culture or community and by the refusal to engage – in the name of an 'oppressed white minority' (*sic*) – with the difficult problems that arise from trying to live with difference. The capacity to *live with difference* is, in my view, the coming question of the twenty-first century. New national movements that, in their struggle against old closures, reach for too closed, unitary, homogeneous and essentialist a reading of 'culture' and 'community' will have succeeded in overcoming one terrible historical hurdle only to fall at the second. This is also the challenge confronting the difficult question for the left, of how to adapt and transform the language of citizenship to new historical circumstanes – I mean, of course, a substantive conception of citizenship for our times, not that phoney, 'active' one being promoted by Mr Major's Citizen's Charter, which redefines citizens as 'customers' and 'consumers' – about which, see the devastating critique advanced by Williams in the 'Culture of nations' Chapter in *Towards 2000*. 'For now from the other side of its mouth it speaks of the consumer: the satisfied, ever stuffed, the sovereign consumer' (1983: 32).

I began by speaking of how Raymond Williams and myself, coming from such very different backgrounds and formations, often found ourselves in the same places, making some of the same kinds of response from the 'margins' to the encounter with the exclusive and excluding redoubts of the dominant national culture, the seed-bed and nursery of English national cultural identity. I have been profoundly influenced by the stubborness with which, throughout his life and writing, Williams held to and honoured those 'actual, lived relationships' of place, culture and community which did not figure in an exalted way in the hierarchy of conventionally valued English things. I honoured the sympathy he expressed for the struggles of the peoples and cultures – I stress the plurals – of Wales and his determination to hold on to his two emphases: 'the cultural struggle for actual social identities and the political redefinition of effective self-governing societies'.

But, in honouring him – in order *to* honour him – I feel compelled to close, as it were, from another place. From the place of the millions of displaced peoples and dislocated cultures and fractured communities of the 'South', who have been moved from their 'settled communities', their 'actual lived relations', their 'placeable feelings', their 'whole ways of life'. They have had to learn other skills, other lessons. They are the products of the new diasporas which are forming across the world. They are obliged to inhabit at least two identities, to speak at least two cultural languages, to negotiate and 'translate' between them. In this way, though they are struggling in one sense at the margins of modernity, they are at the leading edge of what is destined to become the truly representative 'late-modern' experience. They are the products of the cultures of hybridity. This notion of hybridity is very different from the old internationalist grand narrative, from the superficiality of old style pluralism where no boundaries are crossed, and from the trendy nomadic voyaging of the postmodern or simplistic versions of global homogenization – one damn thing after another or the difference that doesn't make a difference. These 'hybrids' retain strong links to and identifications with the traditions and places of their 'origin'. But they are without the illusion of any actual 'return' to the past. Either they will never, in any literal sense, return or the places to which they return will have been transformed out of all recognition by the remorseless processes of modern transformation. In that sense, there is no going 'home' again. That is why they speak and sing and write so eloquently within the metaphorical languages of 'voyaging', travelling and 'return'.

They bear the traces of particular cultures, traditions, languages, systems of belief, texts and histories which have shaped them. But they are also obliged to come to terms with and to make something new of the cultures they inhabit, without simply assimilating to them. They are not and will never be *unified* culturally in the old sense, because they are inevitably the products of several interlocking histories and cultures, belonging at the same time to several 'homes' – and thus to no one particular home. As Salman Rushdie, who should know, has remarked, 'having been bourne across the world . . . they are translated men [and women].' They are the product of a diasporic consciousness. They have come to terms with the fact that in the modern world, and I believe irrevocably, identity is always an open, complex, unfinished game – always under construction. As I remarked elsewhere, it always moves into the future through a symbolic detour through the past (Hall, 1990). It produces new subjects who bear the traces of the specific discourses which not only formed them but enable them to *produce themselves anew and differently*. I sometimes think Raymond Williams may have seen them as 'lost souls'. But I want to end with a different reading of their condition, from Rushdie's *Imaginary Homelands*:

> *The Satanic Verses* celebrates hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs. It rejoices in mongrelization and fears the absolutism of the Pure. *Mélange*, hotchpotch, a bit of this and that, is how *newness enters the world*. It is the great possibility that mass migration gives the world and I have tried to embrace it. *The Satanic Verses* is for change-by-fusion, change-by-co-joining. It is a love-song to our mongrel selves' (1992).

Notes

1. Versions of this paper were given in Cardiff ('The 1992 Raymond Williams Lecture', The Welsh Open University and the National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education); in Birmingham ('The Raymond Williams Lecture', The Centre for Cultural Studies and the Birmingham International Film and Television Festival); and in Oxford ('Cultural Theory at the Fin-de-Siècle Conference', The R. Williams Memorial Trust).
2. The idea of 'Double consciousness' is from W. E. B. DuBois (1989).

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