Chapter 25
The formation of a diasporic intellectual
An interview with Stuart Hall by Kuan-Hsing Chen

THE COLONIAL SITUATION

KHC: In your later work on race and ethnicity, diaspora seems to have become a central figure—one of the critical sites on which the question of cultural identity is articulated; bits and pieces of your own diasporic experiences have, at certain points, been narrated quite powerfully, to address both theoretical and political problematics.[1] What I am interested in is how the specificities of the various historical trajectories came to shape your diasporic experiences, your own intellectual and political position.

SH: I was born in Jamaica, and grew up in a middle-class family. My father spent most of his working life in the United Fruit Company. He was the first Jamaican to be promoted in every job he had; before him, those jobs were occupied by people sent down from the head office in America. What's important to understand is both the class fractions and the colour fractions from which my parents came. My father's and my mother's families were both middle-class but from very different class formations. My father belonged to the coloured lower-middle-class. His father kept a drugstore in a poor village in the country outside Kingston. The family was ethnically very mixed—African, East Indian, Portuguese, Jewish. My mother's family was much fairer in colour; indeed if you had seen her uncle, you would have thought he was an English expatriate, nearly white, or what we would call 'local white'. She was adopted by an aunt, whose sons—one a lawyer, one a doctor, trained in England. She was brought up in a beautiful house on the hill, above a small estate where the family lived. Culturally present in my own family was therefore this lower-middle-class, Jamaican, country manifestly dark skinned, and then this lighter-skinned English-oriented, plantation-oriented fraction, etc.

So what was played out in my family, culturally, from the very beginning, was the conflict between the local and the imperial in the colonized context. Both these class fractions were opposed to the majority

culture of poor Jamaican black people: highly race and colour conscious, and identifying with the colonizers.

I was the blackest member of my family. The story in my family, which was always told as a joke, was that when I was born, my sister, who was much fairer than I, looked into the crib and she said, 'Where did you get this coolie baby from?' Now 'coolie' is the abusive word in Jamaica for a poor East Indian, who was considered the lowest of the low. So she wouldn't say 'Where did you get this black baby from?', since it was unthinkable that she could have a black brother. But she *did* notice that I was a different colour from her. This is very common in coloured middle-class Jamaican families, because they are the product of mixed liaisons between African slaves and European slave-masters, and the children then come out in varying shades.

So I always had the identity in my family of being the one from the outside, the one who didn't fit, the one who was blacker than the others, 'the little coolie', etc. And I performed that role throughout. My friends at school, many of whom were from good middle-class homes, but blacker in colour than me, were not accepted at my home. My parents didn't think I was making the right kind of friends. They always encouraged me to mix with more middle-class, more higher-colour, friends, and I didn't. Instead, I withdrew emotionally from my family and met my friends elsewhere. My adolescence was spent continuously negotiating these cultural spaces.

My father wanted me to play sport. He wanted me to join the clubs that he joined. But I always thought that he himself did not quite fit in this world. He was negotiating his way into this world. He was accepted on sufferance by the English. I could see the way they patronized him. I hated that more than anything else. It wasn't just that he belonged to a world which I rejected. I couldn't understand how *he* didn't see how much they despised him. I said to myself, 'Don't you understand when you go into that club they think you are an interloper?' And, 'But you want to put me into that space, to be humiliated in the same way?'

Because my mother was brought up in this Jamaican plantation context, she thought she was practically 'English'. She thought England was the mother country, she identified with the colonial power. She had aspirations for us, her family, which materially we couldn't keep up with, but which she aspired to, culturally.

I'm trying to say that those classic colonial tensions were lived as part of my personal history. My own formation and identity was very much constructed out of a kind of refusal of the dominant personal and cultural models which were held up for me. I didn't want to beg my way like my father into acceptance by the American or English expatriate business community, and I couldn't identify with that old plantation world, with its roots in slavery, but which my mother spoke of as a 'golden age'. I

felt much more like an independent Jamaican boy. But there was no room for that as a subjective position, in the culture of my family.

Now, this is the period of the growth of the Jamaican independence movement. As a young student, I was very much in favour of that. I became anti-imperialist and identified with Jamaican independence. But my family was not. They were not even identified with the ambitions for independence of the national bourgeoisie. In that sense, they were different from even their own friends, who thought, once the transition to national independence began, 'Well, at least we'll be in power.' My parents, my mother especially, regretted the passing of that old colonial world, more than anything else. This was a huge gap between their aspirations for me and how I identified myself.

KHC: So you are saying that your impulse to 'revolt' partly came from the Jamaican situation. Can you elaborate?

SH: Going to school as a bright, promising scholar and becoming politically involved, I was therefore interested in what was going on politically, namely, the formation of Jamaican political parties, the emergence of the trade unions and the labour movement after 1938, the beginnings of a nationalist independence movement at the end of the war; all of these were part of the postcolonial or de-colonizing revolution. Jamaica began to move toward independence once the war was over. So bright kids like me and my friends, of varying colours and social positions, were nevertheless caught up in that movement, and that's what we identified with. We were looking forward to the end of imperialism, Jamaica governing itself, self-autonomy for Jamaica.

KHC: What was your intellectual development, during this early period?

SH: I went to a small primary school, then I went to one of the big colleges. Jamaica had a series of big girls' schools and boys' schools, strongly modelled after the English public school system. We took English high school exams, the normal Cambridge School Certificate and A-level examinations. There were no local universities, so if you were going to university you would have to go abroad, off to Canada, United States or England to study. The curriculum was not yet indigenized. Only in my last two years did I learn anything about Caribbean history and geography. It was a very 'classical' education; very good, but in very formal academic terms. I learned Latin, English history, English colonial history, European history, English literature, etc. But because of my political interest, I also became interested in other questions. In order to get a scholarship you have to be over eighteen and I was rather younger, so I took the final A-level exam twice, I had three years in the sixth form. In the last year, I started to read T.S.Eliot, James Joyce, Freud, Marx, Lenin and some of the surrounding literature and modern poetry. I got a wider reading than the usual, narrowly academic British-oriented education. But I was very much formed like a member of a colonial intelligentsia.

KHC: Can you recall any figure who influenced your intellectual development at that point in time?

SH: There was no single one. There was a whole series of them, and they did two things for me. First of all, they gave me a strong sense of self-confidence, of academic achievement. Second, they themselves being teachers, were identified with these emerging nationalist tendencies. Although they were strongly academic and English-oriented, they were also attentive to the rising Caribbean nationalist movement. So I learned a good deal about that from them. For instance, a Barbadian who studied at Codrington College taught me Latin and ancient history. A Scottish, ex-Corinthian footballer made me do the modern current affairs paper in my final history exam. The current affairs paper was about post-war history, about the war and afterwards, which wasn't taught formally. I learned for the first time about the Cold War, I learned about the Russian revolution, about American politics. I became interested in international affairs and about Africa. He introduced me to certain political texts—though mainly to 'innoculate' me against dangerous 'marxist' ideas. I devoured them. I belonged to a local library, called the Institute of Jamaica. We would go down there on Saturday mornings, we would read books about slavery. It introduced me to Caribbean literature. I started to read Caribbean writers. Much of that time, I read on my own, trying to make sense of them, and dreaming of one day becoming a creative writer.

The war was very important to me. I was a child during the war; the war was a dominating experience. It's not that we were attacked or anything like that, but it was a real presence. I was very aware of that. I used to play games about the war and learned a lot about where these places were, about them. I learned about Asia following the American war in the Philippines. I learned about Germany. I just followed current historical events through the war. When I think back, I learned a lot, just by looking at the maps about the war, about the invasion of the Far East, and playing 'war games' with my friends (I was often a German general, and wore a monocle!).

KHC: How important was Marx, or the tradition of marxist literature?

SH: Well, I read Marx's essays—the *Communist Manifesto, Wage Labour* and *Capital;* I read Lenin on imperialism. It was important for me more in the context of colonialism, than about western capitalism. The questions of class were clearly present in the political conversation about colonialism going on in Jamaica, the question of poverty, the problem of economic development, etc. A lot of my young friends, who went to university at the same time I did, studied economics. Economics was supposed to be the answer to the poverty which countries like Jamaica experienced, as a consequence of imperialism and colonialism. So I was interested in the economic question from a colonial standpoint. If I had an ambition at that point, the ambition was not to go into business like my

father, but to become a lawyer; becoming a lawyer was already, in Jamaica, a major route into politics. Or, I could become an economist. But actually, I was more interested in literature and history than in economics. When I was seventeen, my sister had a major nervous breakdown. She began a relationship with a young student doctor who had come to Jamaica from Barbados. He was middle-class, but black and my parents wouldn't allow it. There was a tremendous family row and she, in effect, retreated from the situation into a breakdown. I was suddenly aware of the contradiction of a colonial culture, of how one lives out the colour-class-colonial dependency experience and of how it could destroy you, subjectively.

I am telling this story because it was very important for my personal development. It broke down forever, for me, the distinction between the public and the private self. I learned about culture, first, as something which is deeply subjective and personal, and at the same moment, as a structure you live. I could see that all these strange aspirations and identifications which my parents had projected onto us, their children, destroyed my sister. She was the victim, the bearer of the contradictory ambitions of my parents in this colonial situation. From then on, I could never understand why people thought these structural questions were not connected with the psychic—with emotions and identifications and feelings because, for me, those structures are things you live. I don't just mean they are personal, they are, but they are also institutional, they have real structural properties, they break you, destroy you.

It was a very traumatic experience, because there was little or no psychiatric help available in Jamaica, at that time. My sister went through a series of ECT treatments given by a GP, from which she's never properly recovered. She never left home after that. She looked after my father until he died. Then she looked after my mother until she died. She took care of my brother who became blind, until he died. That's a complete tragedy, which I lived through with her, and I decided I couldn't take it; I couldn't help her, I couldn't reach her, although I understood what was wrong. I was seventeen, eighteen.

But it crystallized my feelings about the space I was called into by my family. I was not going to stay there. I was not going to be destroyed by it. I had to get out. I felt that I must never put myself back into it, because I would be destroyed. When I look at the snapshots of myself in childhood and early adolescence, I see a picture of a depressed person. I don't want to be who they want me to be, but I don't know how to be somebody else. And I am depressed by that. All of that is the background to explain why I eventually migrated.

KHC: From then on, you maintained a very close relationship with your sister, psychoanalytically speaking, you identified with her?

SH: No, not really. Though the whole system had messed up her life, she never revolted. So I revolted, in her place, as it were. I'm also guilty, because I left her behind, to cope with it. My decision to emigrate was to save myself. She stayed.

I left in 1951 and I didn't know until 1957 that I wasn't going back; I never really intended to go back, though I didn't know it at the same time. In a way, I am able to write about it now because I'm at the end of a long journey. Gradually, I came to recognize I was a black West Indian, just like everybody else, I could relate to that, I could write from and out of that position. It has taken a very long time, really, to be able to write in that way, personally. Previously, I was only able to write about it analytically. In that sense, it has taken me fifty years to come home. It wasn't so much that I had anything to conceal. It was the space I couldn't occupy, a space I had to learn to occupy.

You can see that this formation—learning the whole destructive, colonized experience—prepared me for England. I will never forget landing there. My mother brought me, in my felt hat, in my overcoat, with my steamer trunk. She brought me, as she thought, 'home', on the banana boat, and delivered me to Oxford. She gave me to the astonished college scout and said, 'There is my son, his trunks, his belongings. Look after him.' She delivered me, signed and sealed, to where she thought a son of hers had always belonged—Oxford.

My mother was an overwhelmingly dominant person. My relationship with her was close and antagonistic. I hated what she stood for, what she tried to represent to me. But we all had a close bond with her, because she dominated our lives. She dominated my sister's life. It was compounded by the fact that my brother, who was the eldest, had very bad sight, and eventually went blind. From a very early age, he was very dependent on my parents. When I came along, this pattern of mother-son dependency was clearly established. They tried to repeat it with me. And when I began to have my own interests and my own positions, the antagonism started. At the same time, the relationship was intense, because my mother always said I was the only person who fought her. She wanted to dominate me, but she also despised those whom she dominated. So she despised my father because he would give in to her. She despised my sister, because she was a girl, and as my mother said, women were not interesting. In adolescence, my sister fought her all along, but once my mother broke her, she despised her. So we had that relationship of antagonism. I was the youngest. She thought I was destined to oppose her, but she respected me for that. Eventually when she knew what I had become in England—fulfilling all her most paranoid fantasies of the rebellious son—she didn't want me to come back to Jamaica, because by then I would have represented my own thing, rather than her image of me. She found out about my politics and said, 'Stay over

there, don't come back here and make trouble for us with those funny ideas.'

I felt easier in relation to Jamaica, once they were dead, because before that, when I went back, I had to negotiate Jamaica through them. Once my parents were dead, it was easier to make a new relationship to the new Jamaica that emerged in the 1970s. This Jamaica was not where I had grown up. For one thing, it had become, culturally, a black society, a post-slave, postcolonial society, whereas I had lived there at the end of the colonial era. So I could negotiate it as a 'familiar stranger'.

Paradoxically, I had exactly the same relationship to England. Having been prepared by the colonial education, I knew England from the inside. But I'm not and never will be 'English'. I know both places intimately, but I am not wholly of either place. And that's exactly the diasporic experience, far away enough to experience the sense of exile and loss, close enough to understand the enigma of an always-postponed 'arrival'.

It's interesting, in relation to Jamaica, because my close friends whom I left behind, then went through experiences which I didn't. They lived 1968 there, the birth of black consciousness and the rise of Rastafarianism, with its memories of Africa. They lived those years in a different way from me, so I'm not of their generation either. I was at school with them, and I've kept in touch with them, but they have an entirely different experience from mine. Now that gap cannot be filled. You can't 'go home' again.

So you have what Simmel talked about: the experience of being inside and outside, the 'familiar stranger'. We used to call that 'alienation', or deracination. But nowadays it's come to be the archetypal late-modern condition. Increasingly, it's what everybody's life is like. So that's how I think about the articulation of the postmodern and the postcolonial. Post-coloniality, in a curious way, prepared one to live in a 'postmodern' or diasporic relationship to identity. Paradigmatically, it's a diasporic experience. Since migration has turned out to be *the* world-historical event of late modernity, the classic postmodern experience turns out to be the diasporic experience.

KHC: But when was the diasporic experience registered, in a conscious way?

SH: In modern times, since 1492, with the onset of the 'Euro-imperial' adventure—in the Caribbean, since European colonization and the slave trade: since that time, in the 'contact zones' of the world, culture has developed in a 'diasporic' way. When I wrote about Rastafarianism, about reggae, in the 1960s, when I thought about the role of religion in Caribbean life, I've always been interested in this relationship of the 'translation' between Christianity and the African religions, or the mixtures in Caribbean music. I've been interested in what turns out to be the thematic of the diaspora for a long time, without necessarily calling it that. For a long time, I wouldn't use the term diaspora, because it was mainly

used in relation to Israel. That was the dominant political usage, and it's a usage I have problems about, in relation to the Palestinian people. That is the originary meaning of the term 'diaspora', lodged in the sacred text, fixed in the original landscape, which requires you to expel everybody else, and reclaim a land already settled by more than one people. That diasporic project, of 'ethnic cleansing' was not tenable for me. Although, I also have to say, there are certain very close relations between the Black diaspora and the Jewish diaspora—for example, in the experience of suffering and exile, and the culture of deliverance and redemption, which flow out of it. That is why Rastafarianism uses the Bible, why reggae uses the Bible, because it is a story of a people in exile dominated by a foreign power, far from 'home' and the symbolic power of the redemptive myth. So the whole narrative of coloniality, slavery and colonization is re-inscribed in the Jewish one. And in the post-emancipation period, there were a lot of African-American writers who used the Jewish experience, very powerfully, as a metaphor. For the black churches in the States, escape from slavery and deliverance from 'Egypt' were parallel metaphors.

Moses is more important for the black slave religions than Jesus, because he led his people out of Babylon, out of captivity. So I've always been interested in this double text, this double textuality. Paul Gilroy's book *The Black Atlantic*,[2] is a wonderful study of 'the black diaspora' and of the role of that concept in African-American thought. Another landmark text for me, in this respect, is Bakhtin's *The Dialogic Imagination*,[3] which develops a range of related concepts about language and meaning—heteroglossia, carnival, or multi-accentuality, from Bakhtin-Volosinov—which we developed in cultural studies theoretically, really in the context of the question of language and ideology, but which turned out to be discursive tropes classically typical of diaspora.

MOMENTS OF THE NEW LEFT

KHC: Then you went to England in 1951. What happened then?

SH: Arriving on a steamer in Bristol with my mother, getting on the train to come to Paddington, I'm driving through this West Country landscape; I've never seen it, but I know it. I read Shakespeare, Hardy, the Romantic poets. Though I didn't occupy the space, it was like finding again, in one's dream, an already familiar idealized landscape. In spite of my anti-colonial politics, it had always been my aspiration to study in England. I always wanted to study there. It took quite a while to come to terms with Britain, especially with Oxford, because Oxford is the pinnacle of Englishness, it's the hub, the motor, that creates Englishness.

There were two phases. Up until 1954, I was saturated in West Indian expatriate politics. Most of my friends were expatriates, and went back to play a role in Jamaica, Trinidad, Barbados, Guyana. We were passionate

about the colonial question. We followed the expulsion of the French from Indochina with a massive celebration dinner. We discovered, for the first time, that we were 'West Indians'. We met African students for the first time. With the emerging postcolonial independence, we dreamt of a Caribbean federation, merging these countries into a larger entity. If that had happened, I would have gone back to the Caribbean.

Several West Indian students actually lived together, for a while, in this house in Oxford, which also spawned the New Left. They were the first generation, black, anti-colonial or postcolonial intelligentsia, who studied in England, did graduate work, trained to be economists. A lot of them were sent by their governments and went back, to become the leading cadre of the post-independence period. I was very much formed, politically and personally, in conversation with that, in the early Oxford days.

At that time, I was still thinking of going back to Jamaica having a political career, being involved in West Indian federation politics, or teaching at the University of the West Indies. Then I got a second scholarship, and decided to stay on in Oxford to do graduate work. At that point, most of my immediate Caribbean circle went home. During that time, I also got to know people on the left, mainly from the Communist Party and the Labour Club. I had a very close friend, Alan Hall, to whom I dedicated an essay on the New Left in *Out of Apathy*.[4] He was a Scotsman, a classical archeologist, who was interested in cultural and political questions. We met Raymond Williams together. We were very close to some people in the Communist Party then, but never members of it —people like Raphael Samuel, Peter Sedgwick. Another close friend was the philosopher Charles Taylor. Charles was another person, like Alan Hall and me, who was of the 'independent left'. We were interested in marxism, but not dogmatic marxists, anti-stalinist, not defenders of the Soviet Union; and therefore we never became members of the Communist Party, though we were in dialogue with them, refusing to be cut off by the Cold War, as the rulers of the Labour Club of that time required. We formed this thing called the Socialist Society, which was a place for meetings of the independent minds of the left. It brought together postcolonial intellectuals and British marxists, People in the Labour Party and other left intellectuals. Perry Anderson, for example, was a member of that group. This was before 1956. Many of us were foreigners or internal immigrants: a lot of the British people were provincial, working-class, or Scottish, or Irish, or Jewish.

When I decided to stay on to do graduate work, I opened a discussion with some of the people in this broad left formation. I remember going to a meeting and opening a discussion with members of the Communist Party, arguing against the reductionist version of the marxist theory of class. That must have been in 1954, and I seem to have been arguing the same thing ever since. In 1956, Alan Hall, myself and two other friends, both

of them painters, went away for a long summer vacation. Alan and I were going to write this book on British culture. We took away three chapters of *Culture and Society,*[5] *The Uses of Literacy,*[6] Crossland's book on *The Future of Socialism,* Strachey's book, *After Imperialism,* we took away Leavis, with whose work we'd had a long engagement. The same issues were also breaking culturally. We took away the novelist Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim,* new things that were happening in cinema in the British documentary movement—like Lindsay Anderson's essay in *Sight and Sound*. In August, while we were in Cornwall, the Soviet Union marched on Hungary and by the end of August, the British invaded Suez. That was the end of that. The world turned. That was the formation, the moment of the New Left. We were into something else.

Most of the people who had been in our circles, in the Communist Party left it, and the Oxford branch collapsed. For a moment in Oxford, this funny grouping, around the Socialist Society, became the conscience of the left, because we had always opposed stalinism *and* opposed imperialism. We had the moral capital to criticize *both* the Hungarian invasion and the British invasion. That is the moment—the political space—of the birth of the first British New Left. Raphael Samuel persuaded us to start this journal, the *Universities and Left Review,* and I got caught up in that. I became more and more involved in the journal. There were four editors, Charles Taylor, Raphael Samuel, Gabriel Pearson and myself. Once I decided to leave Oxford, in 1957, I came to London and taught in secondary school as a supply teacher, mainly in Brixton and the Oval in south London. I used to leave the school at four o'clock and go to the centre of London, to Soho, to edit the journal. So I didn't leave England, at first, because I became involved, in a new kind of way, in British politics.

It's important to say what my feelings are now about that second moment. I never felt defensive about the New Left, but in a broader political sense, I remain identified with the project of the *first* New Left. I always had problems in that period, about the pronoun 'we'. I didn't know quite who I meant, when I said 'We should do X.' I have a funny relationship to the British working-class movement, and the British institutions of the labour movement: the Labour Party, the trade unions, identified with it. I'm in it, but not culturally of it. I was one of the people, as editor of *Universities and Left Review,* mainly negotiating that space, but I didn't feel the continuity that people who were born in it did, or like people for whom it was an essential part of their 'Englishness', like Edward Thompson; I was still learning about it, in a way, as well as negotiating with it. I did have a diasporic 'take' on my position in the New Left. Even if I was not then writing about the diaspora, or writing about black politics (there weren't yet many black settlers in Britain), I looked at the British political scene very much as somebody who had a different formation. I was always aware of that difference. I was aware that I'd come from the

periphery of this process, that I was looking at it from a different vantage point. I was learning to appropriate it, rather than feeling that the culture was already mine. I was always reluctant to go canvassing for the Labour Party. I don't find it easy to say, straight, face to face with an English working-class family, 'Are you going to vote for us?' I just don't know how to utter that sentence.

KHC: Was the New Left essentially an intellectual formation or did it have an organized mass basis?

SH: It had no organized mass base. In the high period of the New Left, during the years between 1956 and 1962, it had much stronger links with political forces and social movements on the ground. The New Left Club in London was not just composed of intellectuals. The New Left's work on race, during the 1958 racial upheaval in Notting Hill was organizing on the ground, organizing tenants' associations, organizing defence grouping for black people. We set up the clubs, *Universities and Left Review* and New Left Review Clubs, and at one stage there were twenty-six clubs. They had people from the Labour Party, the trade unions, students, and so on. So they were not only intellectuals; though since the journal, *Universities and Left Review,* played the leading role, it was the intellectuals who took the lead. Then we made a very strong link with the CND, anti-nuclear movement. The link with the CND, with the peace movement, was again not only a class movement; but it did represent a deep involvement with what was one of the earliest 'new social movements'; thus we were in the forefront of what was to become, post-1968, the 'new politics'.

I am not trying to present the New Left as wider, in its social composition, than it actually was. But it is not true that at its high point it was composed exclusively of students and intellectuals, in an American sense. Remember, in Britain, universities were never large enough to form the autonomous space of politics. So, for a long time, the New Left had a wider formation. It emerged in that very moment of the 1960s, when there was a major shift in class formation going on. There were a lot of people in transition between the traditional classes. There were people with working-class backgrounds, who were scholarship boys going to colleges and art schools for the first time, beginning to get professional jobs, to be teachers, and so on. The New Left was in touch with people who were themselves moving between classes. A lot of our clubs were in new towns where people had parents who might have been manual workers, but they themselves got a better education, had gone to university, and come back as teachers. Hoggart and Williams, who both were from a working-class backgrounds, and became intellectuals through the adult education movement, are the classic members of the New Left, representative of the audience for the New Left Clubs, of readers of the New Left journals. We were more a 'new social movement' than a proto-political party.

KHC: Why wasn't there an attempt to get these 'audiences' organized into something?

SH: What a very much pre-'new social movements' question. That's what we kept asking ourselves—not knowing that the 'tyranny of structurelessness' was a problem for all 'new social movements'. But there were two reasons. One was the presence of the Labour Party. The overwhelming fact of the Labour Party, as a mass social democratic party, suggested that if only one could build a new alliance within the Labour Party, there already was a mass movement of the left, which could be penetrated by New Left ideas. The Labour Party was like a prize waiting to be won, if only that transformation, from an Old Left to a New Left Party, could be brought about. Is all this beginning to have a familiar ring? It is the dilemma of the left in Britain, writ large.

Secondly, because the New Left was, from its origins, anti-stalinist, and because is was opposed to the bureaucracy of the Cold War, to the bureaucratic apparatuses of the party during the early 1950s, and so on, it anticipated the new social movements, in being very anti-organizational. So we didn't want any structure, we didn't want any leadership, we didn't want any permanent party apparatuses. You belonged to the New Left by affiliating with it. We didn't want anybody to pay any dues. We may have been quite wrong about that, in many ways, but we were very antiorganizational. In very much the same way in which early feminism was anti-structure. It was the spirit of 1968, *avant la lettre*.

KHC: So there was this possibility of forming, or articulating, an alliance, without any organizational hierarchy?

SH: Yes, that was the ambition, but I don't think we knew how to do it. One couldn't just set up the New Left because, after all, the working class already had its own institutions, the Labour Party, the trade unions. And there were people sympathetic to New Left ideas in the Labour and trade union movements. We were in the light of the stalinist experience, deeply suspicious of the bureaucratic apparatus of the political party. So we decided to sidestep that question. What matters, we argued, was what new ideas the left subscribed to, not which party label it adopted. It was a struggle for the renewal of socialist ideas, not for the renovation of the party. 'One foot in, one out', we said. What is interesting is 'What are you doing on the ground? Do you have a local CND, are you going into the local market?' It was like occupying a space without organizing it, without imposing on people a choice of institutional loyalty.

Remember, there was no such thing as a 'new social movement' then. We hadn't identified this as a new phase (or form) of politics. We thought we were still in the old political game but conducting it in a rather new way. It's only retrospectively that we came to understand that New Left as an early anticipation of the era of the 'new social movements'. Exactly what

I'm describing was what later happened in CND: the anti-nuclear movement as an autonomous, independent movement.

KHC: Now about the *New Left Review,* what was the situation which put you on the spot, with all the more established or earlier generation people, such as Thompson and Williams, around?

SH: The situation was this: there were originally two groups, the *New Reasoner* and *Universities and Left Review*. People on the *New Reasoner*'s editorial board—Edward and Dorothy Thompson, John Saville, Alasdair McIntyre—were from a slightly older generation, one basically formed in the old Communist tradition, the dissident Communist tradition that grew up, especially amongst marxist historians of the 1930s and 1940s, the same generation as Raymond Williams, although Raymond was only briefly, as a student at Cambridge, a member of the party. Raymond then broke off and had an independent formation, and, as a consequence, became one of the mediating figures, belonging to the *Reasoner* generation in age, but closer to us in his preoccupations. We were the next generation, who started the *Universities and Left Review*. We were related to marxism, but much more critical of it, more willing to think new things, especially to open new spaces in relation to questions of popular culture, television, etc.—which the older generation did not regard as politically significant. Nevertheless, these two formations were so close together, shared so much in common, and found it so difficult, in financial terms, to keep two different journals going, that gradually the two editorial boards began to meet together. Then the idea emerged to form one journal. The obvious editor was Edward Thompson, the leading figure on the *New Reasoner*. But Edward, by then, had been locked into the struggle since 1956; first of all fighting inside the Communist Party after the horrors of stalinism were exhumed in Khrushchev's twentieth Congress speech, then being expelled, then trying to keep the *New Reasoner* going with very little funds, etc. He had two kids, and I think he and Dorothy simply couldn't go on any longer living like that. So the editorship passed to me, though the ambiguity of Edward's position, in relation to me, continued to be a source of tension on the editorial board.

KHC: What about Raymond Williams, was he the mediator?

SH: Yes, Raymond played a different role. Raymond never took on a detailed editorial role. He was a major figure, his writing influenced all of us. He wrote for both journals, especially the *Universities and Left Review,* and his writing helped to give the project of the New Left a distinctive and original identity. I was very much influenced by his work. Then there was the younger generation, Charles Taylor, myself, Raphael Samuel. Raphael was the dynamo and inspiration, absolutely indispensable, full of energy and ideas, though he wasn't the person to put in charge of getting the journal out regularly. By 1958, in effect I had become the full-time editor of the *Universities and Left Review*. Charles Taylor had already gone to

Paris to study with Merleau-Ponty. Charles was very important to me, personally. I remember the first discussions of Marx's 1844 *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts,* which he brought back from Paris, and the discussions about alienation, humanism and class.

KHC: You mentioned, in *Out of Apathy,* Doris Lessing. What role did she play?

SH: Doris was not involved in the editorial work of the journal. She contributed to it. She was very close to the Edward Thompson generation, and was one of those independent intellectuals in the Communist Party in the 1940s. She joined the *New Left Review* editorial board, but she was already taking her distance from active politics.

KHC: Then, after two years' editorship, in 1961, you were completely burned out. What did you do after that?

SH: I left the *Review* to teach media, film and popular culture at Chelsea College, University of London. I went to teach what was then called complementary studies, and what we would now call cultural studies. I was brought in by a group of people teaching there, who were sympathetic towards the New Left, interested in the work of Hoggart and Williams, but also in the work which Paddy Whannel and I were doing in film studies for the BFI (British Film Institute). I was appointed at Chelsea to teach film and mass media studies. I don't think there was a lectureship in film and mass media studies anywhere at that time. I had done work on film and TV with Paddy Whannel, through the Education Department of the British Film Institute. And there was also the connection with 'Free Cinema', the British documentary movement associated with Lindsay Anderson *et al.,* then *Screen* and the Society for Education in Film and Television. Between 1962 and 1964, Paddy and I did the work which finally resulted in *The Popular Arts*.[7]

KHC: Before that, you were going to write your dissertation on Henry James. Did you give it up because of the *New Left Review*?

SH: I gave it up literally because of 1956. I gave it up in a deeper sense because I was increasingly using my research time to read about culture and to follow that line of interest. I spent a great deal of time in Rhodes House library, reading the anthropological literature and absorbing the debate about African 'survivals' in Caribbean and New World culture. Actually, my thesis on Henry James was not as distant from these preoccupations as all that. It was on the theme of 'America' *vs.* 'Europe' in James's novels. It dealt with the cultural-moral contrasts between America and Europe, one of the great cross-cultural themes in James. I was also interested in James in terms of the destablization of the narrative 'I', the last such moment in the modernist western novel, before Joyce. Joyce represented the dissolution of the narrative 'I'; James is poised perilously on the edge of that. His language is almost overrunning the capacity of the narrative 'I'. So I was interested in these two questions, which have major

cultural studies implications. On the other hand, I didn't feel it was right for me to go on thinking cultural questions in 'pure' literary terms.

While teaching at Chelsea, I kept in touch with Williams and Hoggart. I organized the first occasion at which Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams met. It was for a conversation republished in the *Universities and Left Review*. They discussed *Culture and Society* and *The Uses of Literacy*. Hoggart had then decided to leave Leicester and go to Birmingham as the Professor of English. He wanted to continue graduate work in the area covered by *The Uses of Literacy,* rather than straight literary studies. And Birmingham University said to him, 'You can do that but we don't have any money to support you.' But he had testified in the *Lady Chatterley's Lover* trial, for Penguin Books, and he went to the head of the Penguin Books, Sir Allen Lane, and persuaded him to give us some money, to start a research centre. So Allen Lane gave Hoggart a few thousand pounds a year, which Penguin could write off against tax, because it was an education covenant. With this money, Hoggart decided to hire somebody who would look after this end of the work, while he remained Professor of English, and he invited me to Birmingham, to take it on. Hoggart had read *Universities and Left Review* and *New Left Review,* and *The Popular Arts,* and he thought that, with my combination of interests in television, film and popular literature, my knowledge of the Leavis debate and my interest in cultural politics, I would be a good person. I went to Birmingham in 1964, and got married to Catherine—who transferred to Birmingham from Sussex—the same year.

THE BIRMINGHAM PERIOD

KHC: There is a wide spread impression that, historically, CCCS in the beginning was only interested in the question of class. On the other hand, there is also a story that the first collective project in the Centre was one analysing women's magazines, but somehow the manuscript of this project got lost in the production process, without ever being xeroxed.[8] Is this true?

SH: Oh yes, it's absolutely true. Both of these are true. First of all, cultural studies was interested in class, in the beginning, in Hoggart's and Wil liams' sense, not in the classic marxist sense. Some of us were formed in critical relation to marxist traditions. We were interested in the class question, but it was never the only question: for instance, you can see important work on subcultures, which was done even in the early stages of the Centre. Secondly, when you talk about cultural studies theoretically, we actually went around the houses to avoid reductionist marxism. We read Weber, we read German idealism, we read Benjamin, Lukács, in an attempt to correct what we thought of as the unworkable way class reductionism had deformed classical marxism, preventing it from dealing

with cultural questions seriously. We read ethnomethodology, conversational analysis, Hegelian idealism, iconographic studies in art history, Mannheim; we were reading all of these, to try to find some alternative sociological paradigms (alternatives to functionalism and positivism), which were not open to the charge of reductionism. Both empirically and theoretically the idea that CCCS was *only* originally interested in class isn't right. Thirdly, we got ourselves into the question of feminism, (actually pre-feminism) and the question of gender. We took on fiction in women's magazines. We spent ages on a story called 'Cure for Marriage', and all those papers, which were supposed to be written up into a book, then disappeared; which means that moment from the history of cultural studies is lost. That was the Centre's 'pre-feminist' moment.

At a certain point, Michael Green and myself decided to try and invite some feminists, working outside, to come to the Centre, in order to project the question of feminism into the Centre. So the 'traditional' story that feminism originally erupted from *within* cultural studies is not quite right. We were very anxious to open that link, partly because we were both, at that time, living with feminists. We were working in cultural studies, but were in conversation with feminism. People inside cultural studies were becoming sensitive to the gender question at that time, but not very sensitive to feminist politics. Of course, what is true is that, as classical 'new men', when feminism did actually emerge autonomously, we were taken by surprise by the very thing we had tried—patriarchally—to initiate. Those things are just very unpredictable. Feminism then actually erupted into the Centre, on its own terms, in its own explosive way. But it wasn't the first time cultural studies had thought of, or been aware of, feminist politics.

KHC: Then in the late 1970s, you left CCCS for the Open University; why was that?

SH: I had been at the Centre since 1964, and I left in 1979, it was a long time. I was concerned about the fact of the 'succession'. Somebody, the next generation, has to succeed. The mantle has to pass on, or the whole venture would die with you. I knew that, because when Hoggart finally decided to go, I became acting director. He went to UNESCO in 1968, I 'acted' for him for four years. When, in 1972, he decided not to come back, there was a huge attempt by the University to close the Centre down, and we had to struggle to keep it open. I realized that, in a way, while I was there, they wouldn't close it down. They went to lots of academics to ask advice, and everyone said, 'Stuart Hall will carry on Hoggart's tradition, so don't close it down.' But I knew that, as soon as I went, they would try to close it down again. So I had to secure the transition. I didn't think, until the end of the 1970s, that the position was secure. When I did, I felt free to leave.

On the other hand, I felt also I'd been through the internal crises of each cultural studies year once too often. New graduate students came in

October, November; then there was always the first crisis, the MA not doing well, everything in turmoil. I'd seen this happen time, time and time again. I thought to myself, 'You're becoming like a typical disenchanted academic, you must get out, while the experience is good, before you are obliged to fall into these ancient habits.'

Then the question of feminism was very difficult to take, for two reasons. One is that, if I had been opposed to feminism, that would have been a different thing, but I was for it. So, being targeted as 'the enemy', as the senior patriarchal figure, placed me in impossibly contradictory position. Of course, they had to do it. They were absolutely right to do it. They had to shut me up; that was what the feminist political agenda was all about. If I had been shut up by the right, that was OK, we would all have struggled to the death against that. But I couldn't fight my feminist students. Another way of thinking about that contradiction is as a contradiction between theory and practice. You can be for a practice, but that's a very different thing from a living feminist in front of you, saying 'Let us get Raymond Williams out of the MA programme, and put Julia Kristeva in, instead.' Living the politics is different from being abstractly in favour of it. I was checkmated by feminists; I couldn't come to terms with it, in the Centre's work. It wasn't a personal thing. I'm very close to many of the feminists of that period. It was a structural thing. I couldn't any longer do any useful work, from that position. It was time to go.

In the early days of the Centre, we were like the 'alternative university'. There was little separation between staff and students. What I saw emerging was that separation between generations, between statuses—students and teachers—and I didn't want that. I preferred to be in a more traditional setting, if I had to take on the responsibility of being the teacher. I couldn't live part of the time being their teacher, and being their father, being hated for being their father, and being set up as if I was an anti-feminist man. It was an impossible politics to live.

So I wanted to leave, because of all these reasons. Then the question was, leave to do what. There was no other cultural studies department. I didn't want to go somewhere to be the head of a sociology department. Then the thing at the Open University came up. I'd been doing work with the Open University anyway. Catherine had been a tutor there from the very beginning. I thought, the Open University was a more possible option. In that more open, interdisciplinary, unconventional setting, some of the aspirations of my generation—of talking to ordinary people, to women and black students in a non-academic setting—might be just possible. It served some of my political aspirations. And then, on the other hand, I thought, here is also an opportunity to take the high paradigm of cultural studies, generated in this hothouse atmosphere of Centre graduate work, to a popular level, because Open University courses are open to those who don't have any academic background. If you are going to make cultural

studies ideas live with them, you have to translate the ideas, be willing to write at *that* more popular and accessible level. I wanted cultural studies to be open to that sort of challenge. I didn't see why it wouldn't 'live', as a more popular pedagogy.

The Centre was hothouse stuff: the brightest graduate students doing their PhDs. They aspired to connect, as organic intellectuals, to a wider movement, but they themselves were at the pinnacle of a very selective education system. The Open University was not. It was challenging the selectivity of higher education as a system. So, the question was 'Can cultural studies be done there?'

KHC: Getting back to the question of the diaspora. Some of the diasporic intellectuals I know of have exercised their power, for better or worse, back home, but you have not. And some of them are trying to move back, in whatever way. So, in that sense, you are very peculiar.

SH: Yes. But remember, the diaspora came to me. I turned out to be in the first wave of a diaspora over here. When I came to Britain, the only blacks here were students; and all the black students wanted to go back after college. Gradually, during my postgraduate and early New Left days, a working black population settled here, and this became the diaspora of a diaspora. The Caribbean is already the diaspora of Africa, Europe, China, Asia, India, and this diaspora re-diasporized itself here. So that's why more of my recent work is not only just about the postcolonial, but has to be with black photographers, black film-makers, with black people in the theatre, it's with the third generation black British.

KHC: But you never tried to exercise your intellectual power back home.

SH: There have been moments when I have intervened in my home parts. At a certain point, before 1968,1 was engaged in dialogue with the people I knew in that generation, principally to try to resolve the difference between a black marxist grouping and a black nationalist tendency. I said, you ought to be talking to one another. The black marxists were looking for the Jamaican proletariat, but there were no heavy industries in Jamaica; and they were not listening to the cultural revolutionary thrust of the black nationalists, and Rastafarians, who were developing a more persuasive cultural, or subjective language. But essentially I never tried to play a major political role there. It's partly because the break in the politics there—the cultural revolution that made Jamaica a 'black' society for the first time in the 1970s—coincided with a break in my own life. I would have gone back, had the Caribbean Federation lasted, and tried to play a role there. That dream was over at the moment in the 1950s when I decided to stay, and to open a 'conversation' with what became the New Left. The possibility of the scenario in which I might have been politically active in the Caribbean closed at the very moment when personally I found a new kind of political space here. After that, once I decided I was going to live here rather than there, once Catherine and I got married, the possibility

of return became more difficult. Catherine was an English social historian, a feminist; her politics were here. Of course, paradoxically, she is now working on Jamaica, and the imperial relationship, and she now knows more Jamaican history than I do, and she loves being there. But in the 1960s, it was very difficult for a white British feminist to feel anything but an outsider, in relation to Jamaican politics. My 'reconnection' with the Caribbean happened because of the formation of a Black diasporic population here. I began to write about it again in the context of the studies of ethnicity and racism for UNESCO, then I wrote about it in *Policing the Crisis,*[9] focusing on race and racism, and their internal relation to the crisis of British society, and now I write very much in terms of cultural identities.

KHC: So diaspora is defined by the historical conjunctures both personally and structurally, and the creative energies and power of the diaspora come, in part, from these unresolvable tensions?

SH: Yes, but is very specific and it never loses its specificities. That is the reason why the way in which I'm trying to think questions of identity is slightly different from a postmodernist 'nomadic'. I think cultural identity is not fixed, it's always hybrid. But this is precisely because it comes out of very specific historical formations, out of very specific histories and cultural repertoires of enunciation, that it can constitute a 'positionality', which we call, provisionally, identity. It's not just anything. So each of those identity-stories is inscribed in the positions we take up and identify with, and we have to live this ensemble of identity-positions in all its specificities.

8 August 1992

NOTES

1 For Stuart Hall's work on race and ethnicity, see 'Gramsci's relevance for the study of race and ethnicity' *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 10(2), 1986; 'Minimal selves', *ICA Document 6,* 1987; 'New ethnicities', *ICA Document 7,* 1988; 'Ethnicity: identity and difference', *Radical America* 23(4), 1989; 'Cultural identity and diaspora', in Jonathan Rutherford (ed.), *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference,* London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990; 'The local and global: globalization and ethnicity', 'Old and new identities, old and new ethnicities', in Anthony D.King (ed.), *Culture, Globalization and the World-System,* London: Macmillan, 1991; David A.Bailey and Stuart Hall (eds), 'Critical decade: Black British photography in the 80s', *Ten 8* 2(3); 'What is this 'Black' in Black popular culture?' in Gina Dent (ed.), *Black Popular Culture,* Seattle: Bay Press, 1992; The question of cultural identities', in Stuart Hall, David Held and Tony McGrew (eds), *Modernity and Its Futures,* Cambridge: Polity Press and the Open University, 1992.

2 Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic,* Chicago: Harvard University Press, 1993.

3 Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination,* Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981.
4 Stuart Hall, 'The "first" New Left: life and times', in Oxford University Socialist Discussions Group, *Out of Apathy: Voices of the New Left 30 Years On,* London, Verso, 1989.
5 Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society: 1780–1950,* London: Penguin, 1958.
6 Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy,* London: Penguin, 1958.
7 Paddy Whannel and Stuart Hall, *The Popular Arts,* London: Hutchinson, 1964.
8 We thank Larry Grossberg for providing this information; personal conversation, July 1992.
9 Stuart Hall, Chas Critcher, Tony Jefferson, John Clarke, Brian Robert, *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order,* London: Macmillan, 1978.