SELECTED WRITINGS ON MARXISM

Edited, introduced, and with commentary by **Gregor McLennan**

Stuart Hall

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Stuart Hall: Selected Writings

A series edited by Catherine Hall and Bill Schwarz

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"Black Crime, Black Proletariat" from Stuart Hall, Chas Critcher, Tony Jefferson, John Clarke, and Brian Roberts, *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order* © 1978, SpringerNature. Reprinted by permission.

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A NOTE ON THE TEXT

Hall's publications and papers did not follow a consistent method of presentation, nor was his referencing as precise as nowadays would be expected of fully polished texts. There were also many inadvertent author or printer slippages of grammar and spelling that Hall would certainly have ironed out in a thoroughgoing editorial process, had this been a priority for him. In bringing together the work for this volume as uniformly and accessibly as possible, numerous matters of those kinds have been attended to and further details supplied, though obvious gaps and glitches remain, especially when it is unclear which editions of Marx and Engels's texts Hall was working with. Moreover, chapters 5, 6, 7, and 12 have been abridged, both for reasons of general economy/readability and to ensure best fit with the overarching theme of this selection of Hall writings. The nature and extent of the cuts to the originals are indicated in the editor's introduction and discussions. Some of the original subheadings have been adjusted as part of this process.

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Mediating Marxism

Rationale

Architect of contemporary cultural studies; New Left analyst of British political moments and movements; radical educator *sans pareil*; herald of new ethnicities and hybrid social selves; critical race theorist and diasporic voice: Stuart Hall (1932–2014) can be characterized in many ways. The purpose of this volume of Hall's writings is to help decide how centrally the designation "Marxist thinker" should be placed within, or ranged right across, that protean spectrum of endeavor.

I should say at once: "help further decide," because the basic proposition at issue has been aired before in various collections of papers, commentaries, and interviews geared toward identifying Hall's fundamental contributions. Not least, it features within other publications in the Hall series by Duke University Press. Thus, in framing *Essential Essays*, editor David Morley underlines Hall's "lifelong intellectual investment in Marxism," and many of his selections, not only those assigned to the most ostensibly relevant section, provide ample testimony to the influence of Marxism on Hall.[1] Similarly, introducing *Cultural Studies 1983*, Larry Grossberg and Jennifer Daryl Slack depict that brilliant course of Hall lectures as undertaken in order to clarify "Marxism's contribution to the interpretation of culture," resulting in a superb record of Hall's ongoing "'wrestling with the angels' of Marxist theory."[2] Likewise, the editors of *Selected Political Writings* insist that "Hall's

engagement with politics cannot be fathomed without acknowledging this long presence of Marxism in his thought," the contours of which are then briefly traced in Michael Rustin's afterword to that book.[3]

The goal of the present work is to extend the evidence and angle of those previous volumes by gathering another group of Hall's central texts—writings that do not appear together elsewhere—and by giving undivided attention to the Hall/Marxism issue. If Marxism is agreed to have been—albeit in a complex way—at the forefront of Hall's thought over the years, then we should track this through as many of his emblematic compositions as possible. We should also bear in mind that some presentations of Hall's thought make it difficult to conclude that Marxism *was* central to him. Indicatively, a collection of essays on Hall involving close associates was entitled *Without Guarantees*, referring to what many see as his signature attitude toward the politics of theory.[4] That catchphrase was culled from a Hall essay (our chapter 4) the full title of which ("The Problem of Ideology: *Marxism* without Guarantees") conveyed a specific anchorage for the relevant sense of openness. The truncation was therefore questionable; but even so, it was fit for purpose, because across the four hundred pages of that tribute volume, Hall's Marxism received only a smattering of passing mentions. More recently, in Homi Bhabha's stylized conversation with Hall beyond the grave, the cultural critic describes that same Hall trademark—"without guarantees"—as our consciousness of how "affect registers and regulates the subject's ambivalent and anxious responses as it faces what is new, partially known . . . at the same time it provides the agent with an imminent sense of sensory and bodily attentiveness to the task of change." To this rather nebulous end, Hall is construed by Bhabha as "deftly recast[ing] Antonio Gramsci in the spirit of poststructuralism," transforming the latter's "concept of conjunctural analysis into an active rhetorical practice" in conditions of "multifaceted contingency." Hall is thereby positioned as having little to do with the totalizing "*Marxisant* narrative."[5]

Twenty years earlier, from an unequivocal Marxist standpoint, Colin Sparks handed down a surprisingly similar verdict: that Hall, never having been a Marxist, was always a poststructuralist-in-waiting.[6] Preempting any rejoinder to the effect that during the 1970s Hall's governing concepts were demonstrably influenced not only by Marx himself but also by Louis Althusser, Antonio Gramsci, and other Western Marxists, Sparks ruled that some of those figures, and Althusser above all, were philosophical idealists and social conservatives, not proper materialists and true radicals. More recently, while coming from the same straight-left political camp as Sparks

and having in the 1970s registered his own closely worked criticisms of Althusser, Alex Callinicos begged to differ, exempting Hall from the charge of being a non-Marxist discourse theorist.[7]

This volume invites readers to participate in such debates by providing indispensable Hall material about which we can make our own judgements; by organizing the material in a particular way; by offering an overall conception of Hall's distinctive intellectual persona; and by providing further textual and contextual commentary and discussion.

Structure of the Volume

The first part of the book is the longest, providing four core papers from the decade in which Hall's relationship to Marxism was at its closest. One indication of this is the level of sheer detail in his engagement with the works of Marx and Engels. Chapters 1–3 are very much *studies* in their thought, on the thoroughgoing basis of which Hall subsequently—as in chapter 4—synthesized in a more strategic way. Determined fully to plumb the depths of the "classic" Marxist statements and wholly absorbed by the surrounding disputation, Hall's coverage is extensive: the early as well as the mature Marx texts; the philosophical and the economic; the letters as well as the treatises; the contrasting modes of the political writings (interventionist here, observational there). Hall's first aim here is to get to grips, soundly, with the totality of Marx's thought. Notwithstanding their considerable thematic overlap and some commonality of reference, in these essays Hall makes canny, specialist use of different canonical works, and different slices of the same works, to illuminate each problem under examination. In all this, naturally, Hall has his own take on Marx, the works under examination, and the key issues. But it is not as though his preferred interests—the relative autonomy and constitutive role of the superstructures (ideology, culture, politics)—are independently projected on to, or pulled out of, his encounter with Marx and others. Expressed so consistently in that terminology, they could not be. Rather, Hall sees his concerns as intimately woven into the layered, checkered bulk of Marx's oeuvre and legacy.

A second observation seems almost too obvious to press, except that it is not quite the same as the previous point and is seldom stated plainly: that these writings exhibit a clear intent on Hall's part to *defend* Marx, to embody commitment to his ideas. Undoubtedly, Hall was a critical, revisionist Marxist. In these pieces it is the "best Marx," not every bit of Marx, that Hall is after,

and this was a shared motivation at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham, of which Hall was director throughout the 1970s. Thus, *The Communist Manifesto*, despite its rhetorical brilliance and provocative intent, was ultimately regarded as too crudely teleological to make the cut. Yet the extent to which Hall constructively elucidates Marx, goes along with Marx's stated intentions, brings out his depth of insight, and refuses to indulge in easy putdowns is notable. More will be said about these writings in my later discussion, especially concerning the quasi-foundational status of Hall's reading of Marx's 1857 "Introduction" to the *Grundrisse*.

Meanwhile, the very title of chapter 1 signals something central to Hall's conception of method that has perhaps gone under-remarked and gives this first part its heading: his approach to questions of theory by way of detailed close readings. This inclination reflects something of the "practical criticism" of English literature in which Hall first trained, where the discourse develops—at least at first—in elucidatory-interpretative rather than propositional mode. Hall has described this methodological "imperative" or "idiom" as it developed in Raymond Williams's work in the 1960s—which was formative for Hall—as "the preference for text over general argument . . . the privileging of 'complexity of response' over position."[8] Though always more analytically inclined than Williams, Hall retained from the older thinker that strong sense of the need for attention to detail, text, and timbre. As Hall practices it, the close-up method also incorporates something of the collective spirit of the many radically minded and educationally driven "reading groups" of the late 1960s and 1970s, aiming to share basic understandings of a particular author-text in pursuit of a common interpretation or "line" that would have wider interventionist ramifications. In relation to both author-text and fellow inquirers, then, Hall wants us to "think with" as part of thinking better, and that is how he proceeds with Marx.

Part II showcases three thematic overviews of demarcated problem areas. Although it is hard to see the part I pieces as anything other than concentrated theoretical scholarship, Stuart Hall did not regard himself primarily as a theorist in any system-building sense. Rather, his characteristic mode, incorporating his practice of "reading," was the critical interpretive survey of standpoints within a politically relevant field. Yet the overview genre as Hall and his coauthors developed it was certainly theoretically driven and conceptually creative—it was not just a matter either of political contestation or applying to urgent social matters theories developed elsewhere. There are many outstanding reviews of this sort distributed across Hall's work. In

the first volume of *Essential Essays*, for example, Hall's defining discussions of cultural studies (e.g., "Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms"); his journey through the sociology of knowledge in search of "ideology" ("The Hinterland of Science"); and his critique of communications studies ("Culture, The Media, and the 'Ideological Effect'") are eminent cases in point, all closely aligned with our own selections.[9] It is necessary to add that Hall's overviewing talent is also evident in later writings on race and difference, in which the presence of specifically Marxist concepts is hard to discern—for example, in "The Multicultural Question" of 2000, which appears in the second volume of *Essential Essays*.[10]

Two of the part II selections come from collective works that are often taken to be quintessential Hall—and quintessential "Birmingham school." One is from *Resistance through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-war Britain*, the other from *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order*.[11] These works are designed to illuminate specific sociological realities and to facilitate political change. Accordingly, their conjunctural positioning is crucial. At the same time, many of their pages were preoccupied with developing the right (chiefly Gramscian) Marxist or neo-Marxist theoretical framework, and they have been edited with that in mind.

The third (also abridged) item in this part, "Variants of Liberalism," is one of Hall's lesser-known excursions, deriving from a set book for the Open University (OU) course "Beliefs and Ideologies." Hall's writing in thematic-overview vein stocked a remarkable stream of OU teaching materials, some conventionally published as thematic compilations, others produced in-house and sent directly to the large numbers of students. Hall composed hundreds of thousands of words (plus a great many broadcasts and audio guides) during his time as the principal figure within such large-scale collective OU productions as the "Social Sciences Foundation Course," "Crime and Society," "State and Society," "Popular Culture," "Understanding Modern Societies," and several others. Altogether, Hall's work for that nontraditional university represents a truly unique contribution to cultural politics.

His forays into political discourse, and about political discourse, were numerous, and by their nature were short. They were often fed, however, by longer investigations such as his consideration of the multisided political tradition of liberalism. This selection is interesting for us in two main ways. It shows Hall holding on—sometimes at a pinch—to historical materialist analysis in order coherently to place the emergence, heyday, and signal ideological expressions of the defining political tradition of Western modernity.

The essay also lays the groundwork for Hall's excoriating contribution of 2011, "The Neo-liberal Revolution."[12] Fans of the latter are many, some seeing it as a return to uncompromising Left analysis on Hall's part; but they may not be aware of its connection to the earlier study.

The chapters in part III represent different sorts of points of departure regarding Marxism, theory, and politics. Chapter 8 is an appreciative review of the Greek Marxist Nicos Poulantzas's final book. Poulantzas worked in Paris and very much in the structuralist-Althusserian mode, albeit with considerable drive of his own. He committed suicide in 1979, aged forty-three. Hall's significant reservations about his theory of class, as detailed in our chapter 3, are by no means erased in this review of Poulantzas's foreboding last work, *State, Power, Socialism*, but they are not foregrounded because Hall is equally concerned to reach out to a kindred spirit: someone who continually felt the pull of systematic Marxism, but who was lately beginning to lever away from it in ways that could not be completely rationalized. Hall is especially perceptive on the tensions that emerge when the ideas of Michel Foucault on the saturating microeffects of "power-knowledge" are brought into contact with Marxist perspectives (whether traditional or structuralist) on class interests and the coercive role of the state. Those comments of Hall's are doubly interesting for us, because while he incisively identifies sources of inconsistency in Poulantzas, these increasingly had to be grappled with in his own thinking in the years ahead, as he sought to incorporate aspects of Foucault that his 1970s work held at a distance. In that regard, Hall's phrasing, in this piece, of the problems facing the Marxist theorization of power as constituting an intractable "knot" is telling.

The debates with E. P. Thompson and with Bob Jessop, Kevin Bonnett, Simon Bromley, and Tom Ling in chapters 9 and 10 were highly charged and were received at the time as politically consequential. Never comfortable with personal polemic or high-handed dismissal, Hall typically sought out some basis for commonality, even at times of strenuous disagreement. However, this residual quality of Hall's was sorely tested in both these exchanges.

The first originated in the History Workshop conference of 1979. The circumstances of its delivery were in themselves dramatic. The occasion was a discussion of Thompson's polemical *The Poverty of Theory*, which had recently been published.[13] The venue was a church in Oxford, where the electrical power had failed, replaced only by dim candlelight. The church was packed out, and the atmosphere crackled. Not only had Thompson, in Hall's view, unjustly caricatured Althusser's contribution to Marxism, Thompson

had, at the conference, gratuitously taken to task Richard Johnson, Hall's Birmingham colleague, for seeking out a constructive middle ground between theorists and historians, between conceptual and substantive work. Though himself suspicious of stand-alone exercises in abstraction, Hall reacted to Thompson unambiguously, by opposing to the "poverty of theory" thesis the case for its vital necessity in giving depth and shape to the empirical surfaces of history and society. This brief exchange, we should note, is freighted throughout with the sense that a longer-term process of reckoning had come to a head. Thompson's substantive studies and formidable critical powers had long been admired by Hall, which he routinely deployed in teaching, along with the work of the much less combative Raymond Williams, as touchstones for the central issues defining the cultural studies field. But now, after nearly a decade in which Hall's own Marxism and (explicitly qualified) commitment to "theory" had been serially developed, Thompson's stress on the primacy of "experience" had to be challenged.

Williams makes no appearance in chapter 9, but that unwitting founder of "cultural studies" looms large on the horizon. Hall often drew attention to the irony of Thompson defending the richness of "experience" against the political blight of flinty abstraction, given that Thompson himself had previously lambasted what he saw as Williams's romanticized exaggeration, in *The Long Revolution*, of the intrinsic value of "lived experience" and "whole ways of life."[14] Although loyal to Williams in many ways, Hall agreed with the substance of Thompson's evaluation, as neatly summarized in a piece written, coincidentally, at the very time of his standoff with the great historian. Hall felt that even when Williams, like himself, turned more explicitly to Gramscian Marxism in the early 1970s—to the extent, we should note, of each writing keynote essays on "base and superstructure," having similar purposes and arguments—"concrete experience" and "structure of feeling" remained too central to Williams's problematic for Hall's liking. Evocative and essential though they may be in terms of humanistic appreciation, these fulsome notions struck Hall as too vague—"uninspected" and "unsatisfactory"—for purposes of conceptual analysis, with "the question of determination" in particular being "the theoretical thorn" in Williams's side. Thereafter, Hall could not bring himself to disagree with those who categorized Williams ultimately—though the disparagement bothered him—as a "culturalist."[15]

A few years later, a variant of the charge of "culturalism" was laid against Hall himself, in a stinging critique in *New Left Review* by Bob Jessop and colleagues of Hall's alleged "ideologism" in his analysis of Thatcherism.

Ideologism, for Jessop and others, meant exaggerating the strength of commitment—whether on the part of elites or in popular "common sense"—to Thatcher's "regressive modernization" worldview, and correspondingly underemphasizing endemic socioeconomic contradictions. In his vigorous rejoinder—our chapter 10—Hall insists that he was not discounting such structural factors; rather, he was underlining the fact that the Left was still insufficiently attuned to the way political projects seek hegemony through ideological—imagined, moral—imperatives and identities, even if that hegemony turns out to be partial and contested. It was the tone of the attack as much as its content that struck Hall as inappropriate, not least since Jessop's perspectives on the state, on structuralist Marxism, and on Marx's "method of articulation" were close to Hall's own.[16] With some magnanimity given the provocation, Hall allowed that his delineation of "authoritarian populism" might have been more precise. What he was offering, we might again say, was a certain way of reading Thatcherism, seeking illumination rather than comprehensive validity.

The remaining texts push further into this growing mood of possible departure from Marxism, though in notably different ways. Chapter 11—"When Was 'the Post-colonial'? Thinking at the Limit"—is by any reckoning a significant discussion, deserving its place in any selection seeking to exemplify both Hall's range and his best. It goes untampered with here for that reason and also because its implications for Marxism are indirect, being strewn across both topic and treatment. It registers the definite tensions that arise—manifestly there in Hall too—when historical-materialist discourses on modernity, capitalism, and imperialism become interwoven with postcolonial purposes and concepts. Relatedly, Hall's incremental interest in Jacques Derrida's ideas reaches a peak in this essay, the effects of which are interestingly debatable.

The final chapter is an extract from one of the Open University books comprising the bumper "Culture, Media and Identities" course of 1997. In keeping with the latter's decisive platforming statement concerning the growing substantive and epistemological centrality of culture, Hall's "Notes on the Cultural Revolutions of Our Time" take him to the threshold where—perhaps contrary to the circumscribed relative autonomy accorded to ideologies and subjectivity throughout his previous work—"culture" finally strikes out to achieve not only political and investigative centrality but also a more comprehensive theoretical primacy. I return to this issue of incipient "culturalism" in the relevant discussion.

What Kind of Marxism?

Alignment with Marxism comes in many varieties and palpably changes over time, including our own. As an ideal type, or maximum program, we might think of Marxism as containing the following elements:

- a philosophical anthropology, in which the activity and creativity of *labor* define humanity's "species being" in its practical encounter with nature;
- a conception/methodology of history, outlining the course of social development from so-called primitive communism at one end to (anticipated) advanced communism at the other, with a handful of epochal stages in between characterized by different types of labor exploitation and class division (modes of production);
- a dialectical materialist philosophy, or scientific epistemology, capable of orientating all major questions of human understanding;
- an account of the structural logic of capitalism, being the current and most crucial mode of production, based on the formally free sale of workers' capacity to labor to owners of capital, the dynamic contradictions of which form the material and social preconditions for socialism;
- a socioeconomic sociology highlighting—for any epoch, but especially the capitalist one—the centrality of *class* positions, relationships, and experiences;
- a revolutionary politics based on (working-)class struggle, without which the transition to socialism cannot be realized;
- an analysis, working from those tenets, of the nature and function of institutional and informal social spheres such as politics and the state, culture and ideology, consciousness and belief systems.

Heuristically useful, the need for such a comprehensive package has always been contested among Marxists themselves, as has the nature and scope of each presumed component element. Crucial questions arise at all levels. For example, does the analysis of capitalism and class today require strict adherence to the labor theory of value? Must Marxist historians conform to the idea of a given sequence of modes of production when seeking to explain the dynamics of their chosen period and focus? Does Marxism really require a distinctive, superior form of epistemology? And so on. In any case, the very content of Marxist thinking has always been thoroughly overdetermined

by strategic geopolitical factors: the dominance, first, of German gradualist social democracy in the later nineteenth century; through the phases of Leninist and Stalinist consolidations of authoritarian Marxist "orthodoxy" (with Trotskyist and libertarian alternatives consistently in opposition); and on again to the markedly more pluralistic, predominantly academic Western Marxism of the later 1960s and beyond. In turn, these currents came to be significantly challenged by feminist, postcolonial, and environmentalist perspectives and priorities.

According to Göran Therborn's convenient terminology, the situation today is that the original hallmark "triangle" of Marxist understanding—philosophical-historical theorizing; the structural analysis of capitalism; revolutionary class politics—now lies damaged and perhaps even irretrievably broken, though "resilient" Marxists still strive to hold it all together.[17] At the least, each of the component sides of that triangle seems to require considerable stretching and bending to hold up. Ironically perhaps, this uncertain predicament of Marxism has fed a revival of interest in, and respect for, the person of Karl Marx himself. Following the global financial crash of 2008, commentators of all stripes rediscovered the incisiveness and wit with which Marx pilloried capitalism's fundamental irrationality and spiraling inequalities. In parallel, within networks like cultural studies, the residual sense of embarrassment through the 1990s regarding its own previous Marxist proclivities gave way, toward and beyond the millennium, to a definite awkwardness about *that*. Yet if Marx has returned to the seminar rooms, to activist vocabularies, and even to the arts—during 2017 the "Young Marx" was in the movies and on the London theater stage—his rehabilitation has been limited. Indicatively, Gareth Stedman Jones's heavyweight intellectual biography of 2016, *Karl Marx*, was even-handedly subtitled "greatness and illusion," yet the emphasis was firmly on the second of those terms.[18]

Stuart Hall developed a highly qualified approach to Marxism, and he is often considered, reasonably enough, to be a "neo-Marxist." But the brunt of my sketch of the Marxist problematic is that neo-Marxisms are intrinsic to the history and health of Marxism, not something external, far less necessarily hostile. Moreover, Hall's work and example have done more than anyone's to justify such an inclusive, self-critical remit as a valid expression of contemporary Marxism.[19]

One interpretative difficulty in locating Hall in relationship to Marxism concerns his own (ever-growing) canonicity and aura within cultural theory and politics. This led, from the mid-1980s on, to Hall giving a stronger

impression of distance and equivocation than may be warranted—certainly if we have the 1970s texts in front of us (such as our part I). To take a single example: There is no doubt that Hall found Althusser's prioritizing of philosophical thought within Marxism excessive. This was recast later by Hall himself, and picked up by others accordingly, in overly gladiatorial terms, as a "warring to the death," with Hall taking his stand, refusing to be beaten down, and going not one inch further.[20] What is occluded by this dramatization is, first, that very many Marxist academics—philosophers, historians, sociologists, political theorists—were also routinely both critiquing residual Marxist reductionism and wrestling hard with the theorists of Western Marxism, not least Althusser. Second, the depiction plays down how crucial—if never wholesale—Althusser's influence on Hall was. Many of the phrasings that within cultural studies came to be associated almost exclusively with Hall himself, peppering so many of his writings and interviews, were taken directly from Althusser: articulation, problematic, the specific effectivity of the superstructures, the "matrix" conception of mode of production, "both ends of the chain," determination and relative autonomy, theory as a (necessary) "detour," "bending the stick" to achieve due balance, avoiding at all costs the traps of "essentialism" and any philosophy of "guarantees." As Hall put it in *Cultural Studies 1983*, Althusser's injection of structural complexity into Marxism was a "genuine moment of transformation," such that cultural studies thereafter could not be contemplated outside the effects of that contribution.[21]

By the later 1980s, Hall's relationship with Marxism had become not just complex but agonistic. In the discussion section of his contribution to the landmark conference (and later megavolume) *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, Hall stated: "I no longer believe in the Marxist notion of connections being 'given' in the origins of the social formation."[22] Yet this is curious, because Hall never *did* believe in that, and we may doubt whether many "dogmatic" Marxists themselves ever did. Related slippages occur when Hall runs "classical" Marxism alongside other terms designating the brands of Marxism he is dissociating himself from—vulgar, mechanical, traditional, orthodox, reductionist, and so on. This is problematical because several chapters in the present volume witness Hall arguing that neither Marx's classic works, nor key contemporary Marxist authors, *are* seriously reductionist. During the conference discussion, Hall aired the thought that Marxism's "whole classical edifice begins to rock" as soon as we "abandon that teleological structure" whereby "the economy" is always assumed to

determine everything, at least when Saint Peter arrives and the last trumpet sounds. However, by this time not only were there relatively few devotionally religious Marxists left, but Hall's own work had emphatically shown that it is erroneous to describe the primacy in Marxism of the mode of production as the direct causal effect of "the economy" as such. Despite drifting into overstatement in this way, however, Hall did not go on to conclude that it was time to leave Marxism behind. On the contrary, he ended the paper by depicting himself as engaged in "unfashionable salvage work," retaining from Marx the "notion of classes," "the capital/labour contradiction," "the social relations of production, *etc*."[23] That is a lot to recover. So when Hall says occasionally that he was only ever within "shouting distance" of Marxism; that Marxism was more of a problem for cultural studies than a central theory or problematic; that reductionism is "intrinsic to sophisticated and vulgar Marxism alike," we need to tread carefully.[24]

What Style of Intellectual Mediation?

Such oscillations in outlook and phrasing can best be resolved, in my view, by thinking about Hall's Marxism in relation to the type of intellectual that he exemplified. This goes beyond accounting for his success in terms of his uniquely winning personality, tempting though that is. One natural move would be to portray Hall as a Gramscian in every respect, not least because what he says about Gramsci could surely be said of Hall himself:

> He understood that the general framework of Marxist theory had to be constantly developed theoretically; applied to new historical conditions; related to developments in society which Marx and Engels could not possibly have foreseen; expanded and refined by the addition of new concepts. . . . Not that he *ever* forgot or neglected the critical element of the economic foundations of society and its relations. But he contributed little by way of original formulations to *that* level of analysis. However, in the much-neglected areas of conjunctural analysis, politics, ideology and the state . . . [he] has an enormous amount to contribute.[25]

Yet this commonality between Gramsci and Hall is more about the high degree of substantive theoretical affinity between the two thinkers than with the kind of intellectual *modality* that I am trying to bring out here.

Placing Hall within Gramsci's own theory of intellectuals is another possibility. Gramsci distinguished between "traditional" and "organic" intel-

lectuals, the former encompassing professions that carried over essentially premodern roles and class configurations into capitalist modernity. By contrast, the organics are projected as the leading layers of the new industrial working class, or at any rate are closely connected to the "fundamental social groups" of the present day (Gramsci was talking of course about the 1920s). However, from where we sit now, Gramsci's categories seem too anachronistic, too class-specific, and too intimately bound up with his abiding concern for the role of the "Modern Prince," a.k.a. the Communist Party, to apply to Hall. In his paper "Theoretical Legacies," Hall does invoke Gramsci's concepts to convey the way that the Birmingham CCCS understood its academic endeavors as political. But his conclusion that "we were organic intellectuals without any organic point of reference" implicitly concedes that the category did not really fit.[26]

At this point, we can turn to Jean-Paul Sartre for useful prompts. Sartre makes relatively few appearances in Hall's written work, but they are all positive, as they were in his graduate cultural theory course at Birmingham—Sartre's *Search for a Method* (alternatively translated as *The Problem of Method*) being one of the key readings for that module. For example, in the first issue of *Working Papers in Cultural Studies*, Hall "quarrelled" with what he saw as the phenomenological subjectivism of a fellow contributor, citing Sartre's formulations in *Search for a Method*.[27] Let me be clear: I am not suggesting that Hall is a "Sartrean." Rather, Sartre's account of the predicament and pluralism of Marxism in that short book serves to illuminate defining aspects of Hall's mode and practice as a political intellectual. For Sartre, Marxism was "the one philosophy of our time which we cannot go beyond": only Marxism, with its unrivaled comprehensiveness and totalizing sequence of investigation—think back to those bullet points on Marxism listed above—enables us to situate all manner of cultural phenomena and human aspirations in historical-materialist terms. Sartre called this explanatory armory the "regressive" part of a two-step methodological process, regressive only in the sense of retrospectively accounting for how things come to be as they are, historically speaking, and what the range of class positions and interests is at any given time.[28]

But Sartre also warned that "lazy Marxism" stands as a constant danger, treating as "concrete truths" what should be "regulative ideas."[29] Correspondingly, good Marxists will understand that the work of totalization is never complete, only "perpetually in process." In order to grasp the totality, at any given time, in its full complexity, Sartre goes on, more "mediations" are

required than simplistic formulas can ever cope with. And the mediations of Marxism which most exercised him were existentialism, psychoanalysis, sexuality, and microsociology. He regarded these as enclaves operating *within* the orbit of Marxism, but somehow simultaneously both "engendering" and "rejecting" it.[30] Of course, Sartre was probably even more controversial a Marxist than Hall, and to repeat, I am not drawing a parallel between them in any substantive or political sense. But like Sartre, Hall was vitally concerned with problematical enclaves that both mediated and disturbed an overarching Marxist perspective. He too would have flagged up sexuality/psychoanalysis as one such zone of engagement, but he had other concerns too—race and ethnicity, feminism, postcolonialism, and cultural studies itself.

Sartre identifies a second, "progressive" form of social and political understanding: appreciation of the richness and singularity of "projects." I take him to be referring here to action-orientated phenomena such as social movements, local popular initiatives, subcultural contestations, organization building, campaigns and protests, inventive artistic or philosophical currents. Being future- and possibility-oriented, projects cannot be grasped only in causal-explanatory Marxist terms. Rather, they require an acceptance of historical contingency and identification with what Sartre calls "the profundity of the lived."[31] Again, this insightfully encapsulates Hall's habitual interest in cultural specifics, in the grounding of theory in the politics of people's creativity and adaptability as they make their way in the world, nothing of which renders any less important the constraints set by socioeconomic conditions. In the Sartrean sketch, dialectical mediators are those who make sense of both universals and particulars; who develop a varied trail of connections and dislocations, "from the broadest determinations to the most precise." The relative autonomy—Sartre uses that term too—of cultures, movements, and politics means having the "power of mediation" vis-à-vis larger structural forces, and *new* mediations can be expected to arise at every juncture.[32] Hall, I want to suggest, can best be appreciated as a peerless dialectical mediator of that kind. He mediated *within* Marxism—structuralism/culturalism; economism/ideologism; class/nonclass social forces—and he mediated *between* Marxism and various non- and post-Marxist discourses and movements. For all his reservations, Hall embraced Marxism; and arguably he needed it, too, because without the anchorage that Marxism provided—a committed baseline from which to branch out—the risk was that Hall's theoretical and political mediations might become too thinly pluralistic.

NOTES

1 "General Introduction," in Stuart Hall, *Essential Essays*, vol. 1, *Foundations of Cultural Studies*, ed. David Morley (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019), 4.
2 "Editors' Introduction," in Stuart Hall, *Cultural Studies 1983: A Theoretical History*, ed. Jennifer Daryl Slack and Lawrence Grossberg (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), ix.
3 "Introduction," in Stuart Hall, *Selected Political Writings*, ed. Sally Davison, David Featherstone, Michael Rustin, and Bill Schwarz (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 5.
4 Paul Gilroy, Lawrence Grossberg, and Angela McRobbie, eds., *Without Guarantees: In Honour of Stuart Hall* (London: Verso, 2000).
5 Homi K. Bhabha, "'The Beginning of Their Real Enunciation': Stuart Hall and the Work of Culture," *Critical Inquiry* 42, no. 1 (2015): 1–30, 1–3, 6–8.
6 Colin Sparks, "Stuart Hall, Cultural Studies and Marxism," in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (London: Routledge, 1996), 71–101.
7 Alex Callinicos, "Stuart Hall in Perspective," *International Socialism: A Quarterly Review of Socialist Theory*, no. 142 (2014); and Alex Callinicos, *Althusser's Marxism* (London: Pluto Press, 1976).
8 Stuart Hall, "The Williams Interviews," *Screen Education*, no. 34 (1980): 98.
9 Chapters 2, 4, and 10, respectively, of Hall, *Essential Essays*, vol. 1.
10 Chapter 5 of Stuart Hall, *Essential Essays*, vol. 2, *Identity and Diaspora*, ed. David Morley (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019).
11 "Resistance through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-war Britain," *Working Papers in Cultural Studies*, nos. 7–8 (Birmingham: Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham, 1975); Stuart Hall, Chas Critcher, Tony Jefferson, John Clarke, and Brian Roberts, *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order* (London: Macmillan, 1978).
12 Reproduced in Hall, *Selected Political Writings*, chap. 21.
13 E. P. Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays* (London: Merlin, 1978).
14 E. P. Thompson, "The Long Revolution" (in two parts), *New Left Review* I/9 (May–June 1961): 24–33; and I/10 (July–August 1961): 34–39; Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1961).
15 Hall, "The Williams Interviews," 101, 103. Hall was reflecting on Raymond Williams, *Politics and Letters: Interviews with New Left Review* (London: New Left Books, 1979). See also Raymond Williams, "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory," *New Left Review* I/82 (November–December 1973): 3–16. Perhaps just because of their otherwise close concerns and trajectories, Hall took some time fully to work through those aspects of Williams's "culturalism," and his Marxism, that he accepted, and those from which he took due distance. The most considered version of that assessment is given in *Cultural Studies 1983*. Into the 1990s, Hall noted further "difficulties" with Williams's affirmation of "whole ways of life" as the basis of social belonging. This time, Hall's worry was about

its conservative, and perhaps even ethno-nationalist implications for questions of cultural identity, diversity, and selfhood. See Hall, "Our Mongrel Selves," in his *Selected Political Writings*, 275–82, 280. The paper was originally given as the Raymond Williams Memorial Lecture, 1992.

16 Bob Jessop, *The Capitalist State: Marxist Theories and Methods* (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1982), 213–20.

17 Göran Therborn, *From Marxism to Post-Marxism?* (London: Verso, 2008), 116–20.

18 Gareth Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx: Greatness and Illusion* (London: Allen Lane, 2016).

19 By "neo-Marxist" I do not mean anything as vague as "vaguely Marxist." Some of the standard dictionary connotations of *neo-* are more precise and appropriate, even as they chafe against one another: new, contemporary, revised, extended, adapted, modified, revived.

20 Hall, "Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies," in *Essential Essays*, 1:75–76.

21 Hall, *Cultural Studies 1983*, 114.

22 Stuart Hall, "The Toad in the Garden: Thatcherism among the Theorists," in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Houndmills, UK: Macmillan, 1988), 60.

23 Hall, "The Toad in the Garden," 72–73.

24 Hall, "Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies," 74–75.

25 Stuart Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity," in *Essential Essays*, 2:22, 25–26.

26 Hall, "Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies," 77. For Gramsci's notion of the intellectuals, see *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), 4–14.

27 Stuart Hall, "A Response to People and Culture," *Working Papers in Cultural Studies* 1 (1971): 97–102.

28 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Search for a Method* (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), xxxiv. Part III of *Search* is devoted to "The Progressive-Regressive Method."

29 Sartre, *Search for a Method*, 35, 53.

30 Sartre's idea of mediations is set out in part II of *Search for a Method*, "The Problem of Mediations and Auxiliary Disciplines."

31 Sartre, *Search for a Method*, 145.

32 Sartre, *Search for a Method*, 49, 66.