

24. Paul Gilroy, 'Between Camps: Race and Culture in Postmodernity', 10.
25. For a fuller discussion of this see P. Hintzen, *West Indian in the West: Self Representations in an Immigrant Community* (New York: New York University Press, 2001). The material for the ensuing discussion of West Indians in the San Francisco Bay area is taken from this work.
26. See S. Fisher, *From Margin to Mainstream: The Social Progress of Black Americans*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1992); G. Horne, *Fire This Time: The Watts Uprising and the 1960s* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995); Mervyn Dymally, 'The Rise of Black Political Leadership in California', in *What Black Politicians are Saying?*, ed. Nathan Wright (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1972), 32-43; R. Sorenshein, *Politics in Black and White: Race and Power in Los Angeles* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); B. Wyman, 'Roots: The Origins of Black Politics in the East Bay', *Express* 9, no. 43 (August 1987).
27. J.B. Justus, 'Introduction', in *Imagining Home: Class, Culture, and Nationalism in the African Diaspora*, 131.
28. Paul Gilroy, 'Between Camps: Race and Culture in Postmodernity'.
29. See C.V. Fong, 'Tracing the Origins of a "Model Minority"'. A study of the Depictions of Chinese Americans in Popular Magazines' (PhD diss., Department of Sociology, University of Oregon, 1989); W. Young-Jin, "'Model Minority' Strategy and Asian American Tactics', *Korea Journal* (Summer 1994): 57-66; S. Steinberg, *The Ethnic Myth: Race, Class and Ethnicity in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1981).
30. N. Glazer and P. Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1963); T. Sowell, 'Three Black Histories', in *American Ethnic Groups*, eds. T. Sowell and L.D. Collins (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 1978), 41.
31. P. Kasinitz, 'From Ghetto Elite to Service Sector: A Comparison of Two Waves of West Indian Immigrants in New York City', *Ethnic Groups* no. 7 (1998): 173-204; R. Farley and W. Allen, *The Color Line and the Quality of Life in America* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1987).

13 | Epilogue: Through the Prism of an Intellectual Life¹

Stuart Hall

Thinking about Thinking

I cannot begin at this point to try to reply or respond in any detail to the many papers which have been presented, the important ideas which have been circulated and the points which have been raised. Since I cannot respond in detail, what on earth can I do? Perhaps I can start by trying to invoke a certain way of experiencing myself over the last two days of the conference. I keep looking around trying to discover this person 'Stuart Hall' that everybody is talking about. Occasionally I recognize him. I sort of know him. He has a certain familiarity every now and again. I am familiar with a lot of the ideas people are referring to. I recognize some of the quotes, though I have to confess, not all! There are one or two I am very grateful to have rediscovered, and I hope to get the references. But this experience of, as it were, experiencing oneself as both subject and object, of encountering oneself from the outside, as another — an *other* — sort of person next door, is uncanny. It is like being exposed to a serialized set of embarrassments. And I want just to draw from that experience a first thought about thought. I think theory — thinking, theorizing — is rather like that, in the sense that one confronts the absolute unknowingness, the opacity, the density, of reality, of the subject one is trying to understand. It presents itself, first, as both too multifarious and too complicated, with its patterns too hidden; its interconnections un-revealed. One needs the act of distancing oneself — as Lacan would say — 'from the place of the other'. Marx once suggested that one should use concepts like a scientist uses a microscope, to change the magnification, in order to 'see differently' — to penetrate the disorderly surface of things to another level of understanding. There is a sense in which one has to stand back, outside of oneself, in order to make *the detour through thought*; to approach what it is one is trying to think about indirectly, obliquely, in another way, another mode. I think the

world is fundamentally resistant to thought. I think it is resistant to 'theory'. I do not think it likes to be thought. I do not think it wants to be understood. So inevitably, thinking is hard work, a kind of labour. It is not something that simply flows naturally from inside oneself. Thus, one of the perplexities about doing intellectual work is that, of course, to be any sort of intellectual is to attempt to raise one's self-reflexiveness to the highest maximum point of intensity. Someone — I think Mike Rustin² earlier on — referred to my early work, the subject of my putative D.Phil, on the novels of Henry James, and what a bizarre thing it is that this is where my academic career started. One of the things about James was of course his attempt to gain the maximum intensity of self-consciousness, to be as self-aware as possible about the finest movements of his own conscious thinking — as he said, 'to be someone on whom nothing is lost.' Yet to do that is to become instantly aware of the enormous *unconsciousness* of thinking, of thought; one simply cannot and will never be able to fully recuperate one's own processes of thought or creativity self-reflexively.

These provisional thoughts about thinking come from being present at a conference at which I am, somehow, both being discussed and also discussing! If I distance myself, see myself 'from the place of the other', I can see what James, in one of his finest short stories, called 'the figure in the carpet' that I could not see before. I was often tempted during these last two days to join in and speak of me in the third person! Now what I wanted to say about this strategy is that, of course, by taking the 'detour through thought', one sees all sorts of things about one's self and one's own thinking, connections in one's work, the patterns behind the patterns, which one could not possibly see for oneself in any other way. In that sense, one is always unconsciously escaping the attempt to self-knowledge, the attempt to become identical with myself. That is not possible. I cannot become identical with myself. That is the paradox of identity which I have tried to write about elsewhere — one can only think identity through difference. To think is to construct that inevitable distance between the subject that is thinking and the subject that is being thought about. That is just a condition of intellectual work.

Caribbean Formation

The second thought about thinking and about the 'thought' that we have been discussing these two days was my response to the invitation from Brian, Tony and Rupert, to, as it were, become, at this very late stage in my life, a Caribbean intellectual. In what sense could I possibly claim to be a Caribbean intellectual? Certainly, not in the most obvious sense of the term. My work has not been largely about the Caribbean. I have not been actively present in the enormously important work of trying to *write* the history of the Caribbean and Caribbean societies in the period of independence, including writing its past from the perspective of an independent nation. Of course, my hopes have been caught up with the fate of the nations of the region since decolonization. However, I have not been party in that deep way to the project of 'nationhood'. I am Caribbean in the most banal sense, in the sense that I was born here. But that accident of birth is not enough to justify owning up to the title. I have to confess, although they do not know it, that I did seriously think of saying to them, 'I am sorry, but I am not a Caribbean intellectual in the sense in which I think the Centre ought to be honouring people.' The reason I decided not to do that was because, reflecting on my own life and practice, I have to say that, although in many moments of my life I have been thinking about what many people in the Caribbean would think of as other problems, other places, other dilemmas, it seems to me I have always been doing so through what I can only call *the prism of my Caribbean formation*. In that sense I am committed to the idea of a politics of location. This does not mean all thought is necessarily limited and self-interested because of where it comes from, or anything like that. I mean something rather looser — that all thought is shaped by where it comes from, that knowledge is always to some degree 'positional'. One can never escape the way in which one's formation lays a kind of imprint on or template over what one is interested in, what kind of take one would have on any topic, what linkages one wants to make and so on. This is true even about so-called Cultural Studies, the field with which, inevitably, my work and my career have been identified, and for which I feel a certain responsibility. I have tried as far as possible to evade this 'burden of representation', and I sometimes make rude noises about it so people think 'oh well it does not really belong to him after all'. I deny paternity —

Cultural Studies had many origins, many 'fathers', but nevertheless, one feels a certain responsibility for it.

Well, Cultural Studies has its own internal history as a discipline, but when I think about why I ever got into it, I know it was because, before what is called Cultural Studies ever began at Birmingham in the early 1960s, I had to confront the problem of trying to understand what Caribbean culture was and what my relationship was to it. I put it that way because my relationship to it, in terms of a naturalistic logic — 'He was born here, so he must be a Caribbean intellectual' — does not work. My relationship to the Caribbean was one of dislocation, of displacement, literally and figuratively. My life as a young person, as a child, as an adolescent, was spent there. I left when I was 18 years old. Though I have never ceased to think of myself as in some way 'Jamaican', I have never lived for long periods in the Caribbean since then. A relationship then — a negative relationship, you would think — of displacement and dislocation. Dislocation in a deeper sense, too. The reason why I was so committed to leaving the Caribbean when I finished school at the end of the 1950s and the reason why in some ways I never returned to live here, had to do with my colonial formation, my formation and experience as a *colonial subject*. Because there are so many young people in the audience, I want to remind you that I am talking about something very specific, now more or less lost as an immediate experience to those who are not of or nearly my age. Most of you are children of the 'postcolonial'. I am talking about experiencing oneself, thinking about one's society and one's future, from the position of a colonial subject. I left for England 12 years before independence. My whole formation had been as a child of coloured middle-class Jamaican society. That is to experience oneself as 'colonized' — that is, fundamentally displaced from the centre of the world, which was always represented to me as 'elsewhere' and at the same time dislocated from the people and conditions around me. My relationship to that background, which I do not want to go into in a personal sense, was to make me feel (in the eloquent term which the great critic of Orientalism, Edward Said, used as the title of his memoir of a strikingly similar childhood half way around the world in another colonized space) 'out of place', both in relation to my family and my personal formation and in relation to the society into which I had

been born. I hope it is not necessary to add that colonization, class, race and colour were intrinsic to that troubled story.

Up to the point where I left Jamaica in 1951, I did not understand what was the source of that dislocation. I thought it was a largely personal one. It was not until much later that I discovered that this was a feeling of dislocation experienced by a whole generation of intellectual Caribbean people at the end of Empire. When I went to London, there they all were, hiding out: all of them making some kind of escape attempt from colonial society. All of them in search for a way to become modern subjects, but with the bizarre thought that in order to do so, you had to leave the place of your birth — to go somewhere else — to become, borrowing the title of one of George Lamming's novels 'a native of my person'. Not anywhere else, of course, but right to the heart of the dislocation itself, to that which had, at a distance, dis-placed, un-homed you. And when I say 'dislocated', I am talking about serious stuff. I am talking about never feeling at one with the expectations my family had for me; of the sort of person I should become, of what I should do with my life. And of dislocation from the people themselves — from the mass of the Jamaican people: not at home 'in the castle of my skin'. Not being able to find myself 'at home' in the context in which I was born, brought up and lived. And I thought, this a recipe for disaster. The thing to do, I felt, is get out of there. There is a wonderful passage in Lamming's *The Pleasures of Exile*³ — a book which I strongly recommend to you if you are interested in this period of Caribbean intellectual history, and especially if you can appreciate and enjoy the ironies of the word 'pleasures' in which Lamming, speaking of the West Indian writers who all found themselves living in London between 1948 and 1958 says, 'they simply wanted to get out of the place where they were born'. This is the decade which, as he says, 'witnessed the "emergence" of the novel as an imaginative interpretation of West Indian society by West Indians. And every one of them: Mittelholzer, Reid, Mais, Selvon, Hearne, Carew, Naipaul, Andrew Salkey, Neville Dawes, everyone has felt the need to get out.'⁴ As an aspiring young writer, get out I did. However, what I soon discovered was that I had not and could never really 'get out' or be fully part of this 'elsewhere' that had simultaneously made and un-made me. To make the return journey: not literally, because for many, 'you can't go home again', but symbolically, in my head. I had no

alternative but to come to terms with and try to understand the very culture from which I had felt distanced and, unsuccessfully, engineered an impossible escape. And when in the mid-1950s after the *Empire Windrush* and the beginning of mass migration to England from the Caribbean, I met black Caribbean men and women looking for work and a place to live in the grey, wet and inhospitable London streets — one more turn in the story of the Middle Passage and a critical moment in the formation of another displaced black diaspora — I resolved to go back, to read, read about, try to understand and to make a part of me the culture which had made me and from which I could never — and no longer wished — to escape. The central theme of *Pleasures of Exile*, Richard Drayton says in the preface to the new edition,⁵ is ‘the recovery of self’ — even if it can only be recovered on the other side of the Black Atlantic. That was the personal origins, for me, of my own ‘making’ as a black intellectual (like many Jamaicans of my generation and class background, I had never until then thought of myself as ‘black’); and also the first encounter with, what later came to be called Cultural Studies. All this no doubt explains how my perspective on ‘being a Caribbean intellectual’ and my conceptualization of ‘culture’ acquired from its earliest point so disrupted and *diasporic* an inflexion.

Subjectivity and Culture

What we think of as our individuality — something given before culture, which we possess as a subject just by being born, after which we learn to use the tools of culture — is quite the reverse. This is part of what I meant by saying that identity is not settled in the past but always also oriented towards the future. We enter culture, and by doing so, appropriate a language, a culture, which someone else — many other people — created for us, and only in that way gradually become subjects. Men and women make history, not on conditions of their own making, but with elements which are provided for them from the past, and which in some sense, are their conditions of existence, and they and shape and form them in ways that they have to live subjectively but for which they cannot be directly responsible. It is one of Michel Foucault’s greatest insights that in order to become ‘subjects’ we must be ‘subjected’ to discourses which speak us, and without which we cannot speak. Of course, culture is also enabling as well as constraining,

disciplining. Within culture, we can form intentions, make purposes, create the most extraordinary intuitions into life. We can produce great works of philosophy, of painting, of literature; but only because we have already subjected ourselves to the laws and conventions and meanings of a language, the circumstances of history and culture, without which we could not have made ourselves. This process is called ‘the decentring of the subject’. It represents the dislocation of the subject from the position of authorship and authority. It is the dislocation from that humanist dream which, I think, is really a humanist fantasy, that actually Man (sic) is the centre of the universe, it all proceeds from us and we are the origin. I could say more about how that figure of the displacement from the position of origin and identity has recurred in my own thinking but this is not the place or the time. However, it represents the end of a certain fantasy of romantic individualism to which I once subscribed (I went to England, after all, as a Romantic poet *manqué*), and the starting-point in my thinking of a profound belief that ‘the social’ is more than the sum of individuals, it is what the early sociologists — Marx, Weber, Durkheim — called ‘society *sui generis*’. My critics would say this is how I fell prey to structuralism but it really preceded all that. It came in part from thinking about my own formation, my own subjecthood. I do not apply this insight substantively. It is not what I think about but rather what I think *with*. When I think about a problem, I realize retrospectively that I have done so by making this ‘detour’. I am sure this ‘methodological presupposition’ of my thinking has something to do with my own personal ‘displacement’, but this is a connection I cannot spend time reflecting on — it is part of the unconsciousness of thought about which I was speaking earlier.

Trans-disciplinary Thought and Intellectual Activism

I am trying to now respond or refer to things which have been said in the last couple of days without actually being able to take on directly arguments which have been made. I am trying to share with you my thoughts, prompted by the last few days, about this strange object/subject — ‘the thought of Stuart Hall’. I have been describing a kind of ‘thinking under erasure’. What I mean by that is simply that in intellectual thought there are rarely absolutely new paradigms, which

nobody has ever attended to before. We think within traditions and paradigms of thought — they think us — even when our intention is to break with and transcend them. But there are moments when the paradigms shift, when what David Scott calls ‘the problem space’ changes. We do live in a period when many of the existing paradigms established and developed within traditional intellectual disciplines either no longer in themselves adequately correspond to the problems that we have to resolve, or require supplementing from other disciplines with which they have not historically been directly connected. These are the openings for what is called a trans-disciplinary field of inquiry. And I speak about it because I have — once again somewhat unconsciously — found myself in a trans-disciplinary field. I have never been able to be satisfied with working from within a single discipline. It has nothing to do with not respecting what has gone on in the work of developing intellectual disciplines, but I am at the same time aware of the fact that the organization of modern knowledge into the disciplinary framework occurred at a specific historical moment. That historical moment may have passed, or may be passing, or ‘on the wane’; or that particular way of organizing knowledge may no longer be adequate to the reality it is trying to analyse and describe. I feel a disjuncture between the disciplines, on the one hand, and the rapidly shifting and changing fragments of reality which confront us today. Again, I am not recommending to you an anti-disciplinary pathway, I am simply saying that I have not found it possible to think simply within the framework of the given disciplines. I started in literature and literary criticism but I never became a writer or a critic. I was a professor of sociology but I have no formal academic training in the field. Cultural Studies is a trans-disciplinary field of inquiry, not a discipline.

Now, that has had profound costs on my own thought. First of all, I really am not an academic in the traditional sense at all. I mean Barry Chevannes⁶ was very kind to refer to me as a ‘scholar’, but I am not really in the true sense of the word a ‘scholar’. That is not what I am. I have lived an academic life and earned my living — not terribly well — from doing academic work. I love to teach. I wanted to teach from the earliest point that I can remember. And teaching goes on in academic worlds. I respect and defend the academy to the hilt and the capacity it gives to transmit knowledge to future generations and to pursue knowledge for its own sake. One has to defend this arena of

critical thought — especially these days when it is under such attack from so many quarters — with one’s life. But it does not mean that I want to be or think of myself as having been an academic. I would claim, I would insist on, my right to the title of having done intellectual work. I am an intellectual. I am an intellectual in Gramsci’s sense because I believe in the power and necessity of ideas. Of course, as a sort of materialist, I do not believe ideas alone make the world go round. And I certainly do not mean that I think my task is to produce theory. I would do without theory if I could! The problem is I cannot. You cannot. Because the world presents itself in the chaos of appearances, and the only way in which one can understand, break down, analyse, grasp, in order to do something about the present conjuncture that confronts one, is to break into that series of congealed and opaque appearances with the only tools you have: concepts, ideas and thoughts. To break into it and to come back to the surface of a situation or conjuncture one is trying to explain, having made ‘the detour through theory’. Marx, in his 1857 Introduction, which is a wonderful methodological text about which I have written, as Larry Grossberg⁷ remarked the other day, describes exactly this process. I am talking here about a working method of Marx. I am not talking about whether one subscribes to all the theories of Marxism or not. That is a different question. And what Marx says is you begin with an obvious fact: a social system is composed of people, and this gives us our first, what he calls ‘chaotic’ conception — the category of ‘population’. How far can you take this category of population? Well, you can take it quite far. But really, you have to break with that descriptive approach at the moment when you understand that every population is always divided, it is not a homogeneous or multifarious single object. Always within that population are relations between capitalists and labour, men and women, masters and slaves. Relations of difference are what matters. The social categories into which people are inserted are more important than the sum of the humanity — the fact ‘that we are all human under the skin’ — which they constitute. And to make the move of analysing the population, as it were, into its particular categories, and the relations of similarity and difference between them, seems an abstract movement: the necessary moment of abstraction. However, as Marx says, you cannot stop there — which a great deal of theory does. You know, it is pleased to produce the

categories and it proceeds to refine the abstractions, but, Marx says, far from it. You need to return then to the problem you really wanted to solve, but now understanding that it is the product of 'many determinations', not of one: not of a singular logic unfolding through history; not of a teleology, a deterministic circle which has its own end already inscribed in its beginning. Not Hegel's fantasy of the 'resolution of reason', the sub-sumption of the real and the rational, the dialectical resolution which is some moment when Thought and The Real — theory and historical reality — could be identically the same. None of that. Instead, you return to a world of many determinations, where the attempts to explain and understand are open and never ending — because the historical reality to be explained has no known or determined end. Well, some of the things that people have remarked on in my work arise from this method of thinking, which I am only addressing because you selected the absurd notion of spending two days thinking about the thought of Stuart Hall!

Studying the Conjuncture

So I have been thinking about the thought of Stuart Hall too, and I am telling you what I seem to have found out! Certain habits of thinking, certain ways of addressing a problem. If you are not interested in the disciplines, and if your subject is not given by the discipline, what is it are you trying to find out about? What is the object of your inquiry, what methods can you use, and most important of all, when does your *object of inquiry* — and thus the *questions demanding answers* — change, opening a new paradigm moment, a new 'problem space'? David Scott has done much, especially in his challenging new reading of C.L.R. James's *The Black Jacobins*, to make me think about this idea of a problem space and to relate it to what Althusser called 'a problematic' and Gramsci called 'the conjuncture'. Does this cluster of concepts refer to aspects of the same thing? (Incidentally, I nearly said when David had finished his wonderful paper⁸ that we can go home now, because we now know all we ever need to know about the thought of Stuart Hall!) David said that the question I am addressing is what he called the 'contingency of the present'. Now actually, I would not quite put it that way myself, although I understand perfectly well why he did. I would say that the object of my intellectual work is 'the

present conjuncture'. It is what Foucault called 'the history of the present'. It is, what are the circumstances in which we now find ourselves, how did they arise, what forces are sustaining them and what forces are available to us to change them? The 'history of the present', which is a kind of Foucaultian way of talking, brings together two rather contradictory ideas: history and the present. The present sounds as if it is very 'presentist' in its implication: right now, what is happening to us right now. What confronts us immediately now, which is certainly what he describes as 'dangerous and difficult times'. Yet the history of the present commits us to thinking of its anterior conditions of existence, what Foucault might have called its 'genealogies'. So the present, of course, is a force we have to now transform, but in the light of the conditions under which it came into existence: the history of the present. The question of the contingency of the history of the present is critically important because this is what I want to say about the present — that it is the product of 'many determinations' but that it remains an open horizon, fundamentally unresolved, and in that sense open to 'the play of contingency'.

Contingency and Identity

Here I am simply going to try to identify a number of ideas or themes which have emerged in the course of the last few days and make a few brief remarks about them before I pass on. Why contingency? What is it that I have been wanting to say about contingency? I do not want to say, of course, that the world has no pattern, no structure, no determinate shape, no determinacy. But I do want to say that its future is not already wrapped up in its past, that it is not part of an unfolding teleological narrative, whose end is known and given in its beginning. I do not believe, in that sense, in 'the laws of history'. There is no closure yet written into it. And to be absolutely honest, if you do not agree that there is a degree of openness or contingency to every historical conjuncture, you do not believe in politics, because you do not believe that anything can be done about it. If everything is already given, what is the point of exercising yourself or of trying to change it in a particular direction? This is a paradox which lies, of course, right at the heart of classical Marxism. If the laws of history are certain to unfold, who cares about the practice of the

class struggle? Why not just let them unfold? There are a whole series of Marxisms which were precisely mechanistic and reductionist in that 'scientistic' way. Let the laws of capital unfold! Contingency does require you to say, 'of course, there are social forces at work here'. History is not infinitely open, without structure or pattern. The social forces at work in any particular conjuncture are not random. They are formed up out of history. They are quite particular and specific, and you have to understand what they are, how they work, what their limits and possibilities are, what they can and cannot accomplish. As Gramsci said, 'Pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will'. But the outcome of the struggle between those different contending relations or forces is not 'given', known, predictable. It has everything to do with social practice, with how a particular contest or struggle is conducted. Even Marx, who was too inclined to subscribe to nineteenth-century scientific historical laws, thought the triumph of socialism which was supposed to be written in 'the logic of history', was not inevitable. He saw another alternative — one which unfortunately seems much closer in the days of the New World Order: 'socialism or barbarism,' he predicted, 'the ruin of the contending classes.'

My task has been to try to think what determinacy means — what I once called 'the contradictory, stony ground of the present conjuncture' — but without falling into absolute determinacy. I do not believe history is already determined. But I do believe that all the forces at work in a particular historical conjuncture or a situation one is trying to analyse, or a phase of history or development one is trying to unravel, are *determinate*. They do not arise out of nowhere. They have their own specific conditions of existence. So the conceptual issue is, is there a way of thinking determinateness which is not a closed determinacy? And contingency is the sign of this effort to think determinacy without a closed form of determination. In the same way, people say, 'you are a conjuncturalist. You want to analyse, not long epochal sweeps of history, but specific conjunctures'. Why the emphasis on the conjunctures? Why the emphasis on what is historically specific? Well, it has exactly to do with the conception of a conjuncture. The fact that very dissimilar currents, some of a long duration, some of a relatively short duration, tend to fuse or condense at particular moments, into a particular configuration. It is that configuration, with its balance of forces, which is the object of one's analysis or intellectual inquiry. The

important thing about thinking conjuncturally is its historical specificity. So, for example, to put it very crudely, I am not as interested in racism as a single phenomenon marching unchanged through time, but in different racisms that arise in specific historical circumstances, and their effectiveness, their ways of operation. I am less interested in capital or capitalism from the seventeenth century to now than I am in different forms of capitalism. I am interested particularly, just now, in the enormously important shift in global capitalism which occurs in the 1970s. That represents the end of what I would call one conjuncture — the conjuncture of the period of the post-war settlement, dominated largely — especially in Europe — by a social democratic balance of forces and the welfare state, and the beginning of the rise of neoliberalism, of global capitalism, and the dominance of 'market forces', which constitutes the contradictory ground on which new interrelationships and interdependencies are being created across the boundaries of nationhood and region, with all the forms of trans-national globalization that have come to dominate the contemporary world. This is what is stamping a new rhythm on politics, in different ways, across the face of the globe. Nation states, national cultures, national economies, remain important, but these 'differences' are being condensed into a new, contradictory 'world system', which is what the term 'global' actually stands for. This is radically different from the world of decolonization — what David Scott has called 'the Bandung moment' — into which new nations, like Jamaica, emerged. This is a radically new historical moment, and sets us radically new questions, radically new political questions. That is all that is entailed in the move from one conjuncture to another. And the task of — as I once put it — 'Turning your face violently towards things as they really are', is what is required by 'thinking conjuncturally'.

I have also emphasized the question, 'why identity?' I am interested in identity because identity is a source of agency in action. It is impossible for people to work and move and struggle and survive without investing something of themselves, of who they are, in their practices and activities and building some shared project with others, around which collective social identities can cohere. This is precisely because, historically, there has been an enormous waning and weakening in the given collective identities of the past — of class and tribe and race and ethnic group and so on, precisely because the world has now become more pluralistic,

more open-ended, though of course those collective identities have not disappeared in any sense. So those constraints are still on any identity formation. But to me there is a relatively greater degree of openness in the balance between the 'givenness' of an identity and the capacity to construct it or make it. That is all that I was trying to register in the new work on identity. I thought the greater global interdependence and interconnectedness would undermine strongly-centred but exclusive identities and open the possibility of more complex ways of individuals and groups positioning themselves in their own narratives. And I believed that the complexities of the black and 'creole' cultures of the Caribbean and the complexities of the 'hybrid' diaspora identities emerging in the wake of global migration had a great deal to teach us about the dynamics of this new process of identity-formation. Paradoxically, you might think that the revival of fundamentalisms of all kinds runs counter to this thesis. Actually, I believe that the pull of fundamentalism and all types of exclusive identities is a reaction to being marginalized or left out of the process of 'vernacular modernization' — the search everywhere for all peoples to have equal access to the means of becoming 'modern persons' and to live the technological possibilities of modern life, in their own ways, to the full, as it were, 'from the inside', which I think is hesitantly, also going on across the world — in the very teeth of the struggle by global capital to master and hegemonize historically constituted differences.

However, though I wrote a lot about 'identity', I always refused the notion that a whole politics could be identified with any single identity position. I have tried to say that identity is always the product of a process of identification. It is the product of taking a position, of staking a place in a certain discourse or practice. In other words, of saying, 'This is, for the moment where I am, who I am and where I stand'. This positional notion of identity enables one then to speak from that place, to act from that place, although sometime later in another set of conditions, one may want to modify oneself or who it is that is speaking. So in that sense, identity is not a closed book any more than history is a closed book, any more than subjectivity is a closed book, any more than culture is a closed book. It is always, as they say, in process. It is in the making. It is moving from a determinate past towards the horizon of a possible future, which is not yet fully known.

Globalization and Diaspora

I want to think of one more set of terms, which has arisen in the course of our discussion. These are around the terms diaspora and globalization. I was, as you can imagine, absolutely astonished to discover that the Jamaican government is this week having the very first conference on the diaspora. Since the *Empire Windrush*⁹ lauded in 1948, there has been a massive black diaspora in Britain, and I am not only thinking about the numbers of people from the Caribbean, Africa, India and elsewhere from the former colonial world, who have landed up in Britain and the other postcolonial metropolises since World War II. What is happening to the nation, here, cannot be insulated from the process of globalization and from the formation of diasporas elsewhere — which is, indeed, in my view, the 'dark side' of the globalization process. I do not have time to unravel this problem but I do want to say one or two things, rather dogmatically, about it. In this new awareness of 'the diasporic' dimension, something very important is happening to the idea of nations and nationhood, to nationalism, which was the driving force of decolonization, and to social identities. The nation cannot be taken unproblematically as the 'given' entity which social and historical explanation takes for granted. What's more, the nation cannot be any longer identified with its territorial boundaries. Further, the nation is a territorial entity and a political power, but it is also an 'imagined community', and so the questions about how the nation is constructed culturally and represented are part of its contemporary reality. These three dimensions interact, but they are not the same and do not always coincide. Now, the thinking so far in Jamaica about its diaspora is, of course, really just emerging — I think it is a sign of how slowly but irreversibly globalization is de-centring the experience of nation-building which focused our minds in the first stage of decolonization. I do think you largely think of Jamaicans living abroad as just like you, as belonging to you. I think you largely think, these are really Us — only, over there. When they come back, they will come back and rediscover their 'us-ness'. This is of course, partly true: of course, those connections are deep and long-lasting and are constantly re-forged. But don't you think about how they made any connections with *there* as well as with *here*? Do you think people live a whole life, survive in strange conditions, often of poverty, discrimination

and certainly of institutional and informal racism in Britain — brought up children, schooled them, watched them grow up in the multicultural metropolis and it does not rub off in any way on them? Do you imagine their culture — their Jamaicanness — which they took with them just goes on throbbing, unchanged, untransformed, preserving their culture as a fixed umbilical cord? Of course, they have roots; but don't you think they also had to put down new roots? How otherwise did they survive? For Caribbean people — part of a colonial and pan-African Diaspora who, having emigrated again, have been twice 'diasporized' — who go on being 'translated' — their 'routes' are as critical to their identities as their 'roots'. Oh, they certainly survived by thinking about home. They planned from the beginning to go back home. They are a little disturbed, when they return, that everybody says, 'But you been in 'foreign'! 'Something about the way you stand, walk, talk, shift around, or as somebody said, can't move the hips, marks out the difference!

The problem of the diaspora is to think of it always and only in terms of its continuity, its persistence, the return to its place of origin, and not always and at the same time in terms of its scattering, its further going out, its dissemination. The impossibility of ever going home in exactly the same way as you left it. The diaspora is always going to be, in a certain way, lost to you. It has to be lost to you, because 'they' have a double stake, an investment in both here and elsewhere. It is not because they love us or because elsewhere has been good to them, but because the material conditions, the historical necessity, of having to 'make a life' means that they have to have ideas, investments, relationships with somewhere else as well. Now, my writing about the notion of the diaspora, about identity, even about the necessary 'hybridity' or creolization of all culture, has been shaped profoundly by reflecting on the Caribbean experience, even when I have not directly written about it. I have been trying to think about these very complicated processes of continuity and rupture, of the return to the old, of the imaginary recuperation or reconfiguring of the old, as well as the becoming — the opening to the new, to the future — and what is happening, concretely, on the ground, in everyday life, in changing the culture of those people who have been 'diasporized'. That is certainly one dimension of the work that I have been trying to do on the diaspora.

The second one is to remember that in the particular circumstances of the Caribbean, the people are themselves 'a diaspora'. We are ourselves the effect of the dislocation and displacement, of the dissemination from somewhere else: and of what then happens, culturally, as, out of the cauldron of colonization, enslavement and plantation society, something new, something genuinely novel, emerges. Does that mean that we do not have any connection with what went before? How could it possibly mean that? But it does mean that that connection is not something which can now be naturally summoned up as if it exists in all of us, somewhere down there, in our bodies, in our genes, as a force of nature. It has to be recreated, has to be sustained in the culture, reconfigured, in the new historical circumstances which confront us. It has to be sustained in the mind, or the connection cannot be made. We would be wrong to adopt a notion of tradition as something which does not change, which protects us against change. As I have had to say to people before, 'Africa is alive and well in the diaspora', but the Africa we left 400 years ago under the conditions of slavery, transportation and the Middle Passage has not been waiting for us — unchanged — to go back to, either in our heads or in our bodies. That Africa, far from being just the ancestral home, is the subject of the most brutal and devastating modern forms of exploitation. It is the subject and the object of the most vicious forms of contemporary neoliberalism, victim of the strategies of the new forms of geopolitical power, as well as ravaged by civil war, poverty, hunger, the rivalry of competing gangs and corrupt governing powers and elites. Long after we left it, even after the war, Africa was first of all inserted into a relationship with the West in the very moment of decolonization, in the relations of neocolonial subordination. In the second phase of the Cold War, all the difficulties of creating independent polities and independent national economies were overridden by the Cold War struggle between two competing world systems. All the difficulties of the emerging societies and the nascent postcolonial states were overridden by the struggle between the two world powers: a struggle which was then, paradoxically, fought out on postcolonial terrain. When next we invoke the problem of 'failed states' in Africa, let us remember the distortions that the Cold War imposed on the problems of the emerging postcolonial states. Remember who is implicated in the failure of the capacity of those states. Since the

mid-1970s, those already failing states, states with the enormous difficulty — never resolved — of becoming postcolonial, like the Caribbean and elsewhere in the so-called Third World, have been enmeshed in new constitutive relations of geopolitical, economic, cultural and symbolic global power — the new system, the New World Order. That is what the signifier, 'Africa', so often bandied about in Western media and political discourse, means today. I do not need to unpack that story for you. Now of course there is the most profound connection between the African diasporas of the Caribbean, the US, of Brazil and Latin America and the diasporas of London or Paris, but these different 'Africas', though deeply interconnected, historically, cannot be 'the same' any longer. They are not the same. There are, of course, strong and deep persistent threads which connect them. At the same time, each has negotiated its relation to the West, to the surrounding world, differently. This is the complicated dialectic of 'sameness' and 'difference' which confronts us in today's globalizing world. So when one talks about the way in which identities of this kind have been ruptured by the different conjunctural breaks in post-war history, reorganized and reordered by them, yielding deep and concretely specific, differentiated formations, we know we have to, not discover, but *rediscover* what our connection now is with Africa. I believe this is the difference between a 'cultural nationalist' approach to our African connection, and the pan-African imaginary, which has done so much over the years to keep these connections alive. The concept of 'diaspora' is — for me — central to that imaginary.

So diaspora led me to think, first of all, about what is happening, and the complicated cultural processes going on, in the black diasporas of the metropole. Secondly, it led me to think about what exactly is meant by the 'diasporic' nature of Caribbean society and Caribbean culture. What exactly do we mean by that? And that led me to think about the diasporic nature of cultures themselves. I became aware of the fact that, discursively, cultures always represent themselves as fixed, exclusive, originary and unchanging: but, historically, when you look at them, that cannot be the case. Some change very slowly, some more rapidly: but they all change. They are all interrupted by movement, by conquest, by colonization, by trade, by migration, free and forced. They are disrupted by external influences, as well as evolving internally. Culture — the forms through which individuals and societies make

sense of themselves and represent their real conditions of life, symbolically, to themselves — cannot be outside of history. Cultures are changed within and changed by history. So the broadly diasporic nature of Culture itself is a kind of conceptual model that I have derived, analogically, from thinking about a specific diaspora and reflecting on the diasporic nature of the culture which I thought I had left behind and had to rediscover in myself and come to terms with in a different way. This is my very long way of trying to answer the question, in what sense can I be 'a Caribbean intellectual'?

Just a final twist to that: under globalization, everywhere is becoming more 'diasporic'. It is not because people like to travel. It is because the very conditions under which the world now operates create what one can only call the astonishing late twentieth-century, early twenty-first-century movement of dispersed peoples. From that perspective, I go back and look at my own movement in 1951, the black migration and the migration from the Asian subcontinent to Britain in the 1950s and 1960s, as the beginning of an enormous historical tide. The disruption of people from their settled places, from their homes, from their familiar surrounding, their roots in the land and landscape, from their traditional ways of life, from their religions, from their familial connections — the uprooting that has become the history of modern 'global society'. The fact of the homeless, of what Negri and Hardt, in their book on *Empire*¹⁰ call 'the multitudes'; of people who only survive by buying a ticket from some person who is trading in bodies; hanging out on the bottom of a train, crossing boundaries at the depth of night, running the gauntlet of surveillance cameras and border patrols, and disappearing into the depths of the cities. The economic migrants and the asylum-seekers, the illegal immigrants, the 'sans papiers' — the ones without proper papers. The ones driven into the camps across the borders by famine, civil war, environmental devastation or pandemic. A movement of people trying never to be 'there', crossing every boundary in the world. And think, though we did not know it at the time, we were the forerunners! Since then, into the UK alone, there have been — how many? Seven waves? Caribbean, Indians, Pakistanis, people from Bangladesh, West Africans, Cypriots, Chinese, then the people displaced from North Africa and the Middle East — from Afghanistan, Iraq; the people displaced from ethnic cleansing in the Balkans, now the people from Eastern Europe, from the former

Soviet empire. Wave after wave after wave of people living in the new multicultural metropole, presenting the question of how is it possible to make a life where people from very different historical backgrounds and bearing different cultural values and religious traditions are required to make some kind of common life. People attempting to negotiate the terms of some kind of tolerant life without either eating one another, shooting one another or separating out into warring tribal enmity.

That is what I call the multicultural question of modern times. And this globalization from below is occurring in the context of the globalization from above, which is of course the movement of every single thing, apart from people. The movement of capital, of technologies, the 'flow' of messages and images, the 'flow' of investment, the movement of entrepreneurs, of the executive corporate global class. Everybody is 'on the move' according to the logic of globalization, except the poor; except the poor. Labour — ordinary folks — is the only factor which is not supposed to move. Why? Because how can you take competitive advantage of the trans-location of production and consumption, if the one-dollar a day labourer in Latin America is going to be 'free' to move to the West Coast and claim advanced salaries? The function of the dispersal of capital around the globe, of the decentralization of capital in the modern global system, depends on the capacity to exploit labour, cheap labour, where it is! So the control on the movement of how many people are allowed to cross borders is absolutely central to the new constituent logic of contemporary globalization. The movement of peoples for economic purposes — escaping poverty, escaping ill health, escaping ecological devastation, escaping civil war, escaping ethnic cleansing, escaping rural depopulation, escaping over-urbanization, escaping a thousand and one problems — has become illegal. This is the underbelly of the contemporary globalization system. Therefore, our new diasporas are simply one part of this huge new historic movement, of a huge new geopolitical formation, which is creating the mixtures of cultures, and peoples and histories and backgrounds and religions, which is the contemporary problem of the modern world.

Speaking Truth to Power

So though I started with a question of diaspora in a rather limited empirical way, it has — here's my last reflection on the thought of Stuart Hall — in its usual way, undergone enormous conceptual expansion. It has illuminated something else of vital significance to the Caribbean. The idea of the diaspora now is obliterating, not nations and nationhood, but the moment of the nation state, the moment of nationalism. It is quietly subverting it. It is quietly transcending the project of one life in one nation, in one nation state, located in one national economy, and superintended by one national culture, attached to one national identity, which was for decades the driving vision of nationalism.

What the ultimate balance might be between globalization from above and globalization from below, whether there is any way of transforming that system, it is not my purpose at this stage to discuss. I am trying to suggest what it might mean to be riveted throughout my life by the phrase 'unravelling the present conjuncture', by being disturbed by, and trying to analyse so as to transform, systems and structures of power, of injustice, of inequality, which are generated by forces that one does not fully understand and whose consequences one therefore cannot fully estimate and whom one cannot therefore effectively resist. Well, I commend to you what I have to call the politics of intellectual life. David Scott quite rightly said that, though he would not subscribe to everything that Edward Said has said about the nature of intellectual life, there is a kind of vocation there which is similar to my own. I am honoured by the comparison, for Edward Said's life and practice has been exemplary for me and I mourn deeply and personally his recent death. I do think it is a requirement of intellectuals to speak a kind of truth. Maybe not truth with a capital T, but anyway, some kind of truth, the best truth they know or can discover — to speak that truth to power. To take responsibility — which can be unpleasant and is no recipe for success — for having spoken it. To take responsibility for speaking it to wider groups of people than are simply involved in the professional life of ideas. To speak it beyond the confines of the academy. To speak it, however, in its full complexity. Never to speak it in too simple a way, because 'the folks won't understand'. Because then they will understand, but they will get it

wrong, which is much worse! So, to speak it in its full complexity, but to try to speak it in terms in which other people who, after all, can think and do have ideas in their heads, though they are not paid or paid-up intellectuals, need it. They need it like you and I need food. They need it in order to survive. I commend the vocation of the intellectual life in this sense to you. I remind you that the academy is one of the places in which it takes root. It is not the only place, and I do plead with you not to over-estimate its role or to get entrained in its internal rituals. Simply because one is on the site, you might be led to think that somehow, because you are there, you are therefore thinking. It does not absolutely follow, believe me! But I commend to you the duty to defend it and the other sites of critical thought. I commend you to defend it as a space of critical intellectual work; and that will always mean subverting the settled forms of knowledge, interrogating the disciplines in which you are trained; interrogating and questioning the paradigms in which you have to go on thinking. That is what I mean by borrowing Jacques Derrida's phrase, 'thinking under erasure'. No new language or theory is going to drop from the skies. There is no prophet who is going to deliver the sacred books, so that you can stop entirely thinking in the old way and start from year one. Remember that revolutionary dream? 'Year One'? 'From now on, socialist man'? This is when the new history begins! Today, the dawn of the realm of freedom! I am afraid the realm of freedom will look mostly like the old realm of servitude, with just a little opening here and there towards the horizon of freedom, justice and equality. It will not be all that different from the past; nevertheless, something will have happened. Something will have moved. You will be in a new moment, a new conjuncture: and there will be new relations of forces there to work with. There will be a new conjuncture to understand. There will be work for critical intellectuals to do. I commend that vocation to you, if you can manage to find it. I do not claim to have honoured that vocation fully in my life, but I say to you, that is kind of what I have been trying to do all this while.

Notes

1. I want to thank Brian Meeks, Anthony Bagues, Rupert Lewis, Directors of the Centre for Caribbean Thought, University of the West Indies, Mona, for the enormous work which has gone into organizing and presenting this

- conference and Rex Nettleford for his generosity. I also want to thank Adlyn Smith, Sonjah Stanley Niaah and others who worked with me to prepare for this conference and the University Library for its tremendous work of research and discovery.
2. See in this volume, Michael Rustin, 'Working from the Symptom: Stuart Hall's Political Writing'.
 3. See George Lamming, *The Pleasures of Exile*, 2nd edition (London: Alison and Busby, 1984).
 4. *Ibid.*, 41.
 5. See George Lamming *The Pleasures of Exile* (London: Pluto Press, 2005).
 6. Barrington Chevannes, Dean of Social Sciences at the University of the West Indies, Mona, 2004 and Chair of Stuart Hall's address.
 7. See, in this volume, Lawrence Grossberg, 'Stuart Hall on Race and Racism: Cultural Studies and the Practice of Contextualism'.
 8. David Scott's paper which opened the conference was entitled 'Stuart Hall's Ethics'.
 9. The *Empire Windrush* was the first ship to arrive in the United Kingdom from the West Indies bearing immigrants after the Second World War.
 10. See Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 2000).