Conversations Unfinished—in the company of Stuart Hall
Yasmin Gunaratnam

John Akomfrah's sensational video installation, *The Unfinished Conversation* (2012) stories the life of Stuart Hall. Built from a bricolage of music, photographs, and audio and film clips that has become Akomfrah's trademark[1], the non-synchronous three-screened narration puts into play the layered times and spaces of the diasporic intellectual. Through the juxtaposing of iconic motifs familiar to Hall's generation of post-war migrants to Europe—trains, planes, the places and loved ones left behind—we see and hear something of "the making of Stuart Hall as a category that could come into being" (Akomfrah quoted in Stacey 2015, 44). To speak of Hall like this is not as strange as it might seem. For Akomfrah's work is a poetic animation of Hall's insistence that the individual is a composite of social and historical forces. And because of Akomfrah's dispersal of sensory attention, we are lured into another aspect of Hall's theorizing: there is nothing reductive or predictable about the dance between the personal and bigger structures. And so, the chafing arrhythmia that loops through the installation reverberates with Hall's attentiveness to the disjunctures between the social and the psychic, between the subject who narrates and the subject who is spoken into being by their narrative. This is a "divided field of enunciation" (Barnett 1997, 140). More specifically, under imperial spectres the missed beats of representation hold hopeful possibilities: "since the colonized subject is positioned in relation to cultural narratives which have been profoundly expropriated," Hall has written, "he/she is always 'somewhere else'" (Hall 1987, 115).

Born in Kingston, Jamaica in 1932, Hall's life and work were marked by colonial legacies and paradoxes. To grow up in relative class privilege and in the death throes of the old colonial order, and then to move from the colony to the English metropolis in 1951, was to be ensnared in an ambivalent interdependence — 'a hinge'—that after C.L.R. James, Hall came to recognize as a tension for the postcolonial exile, caught between marginalization and dwelling; of being "in, but not of, Europe" (Hall 2003, 59). In more temporal and historical terms, he would render such liminality as "the moment of the diasporic" (Hall 2012, 29); a moment set in train by post-war migration—"the world historical event of late modernity" (Hall quoted in Jaggi 2000)—global de-colonisation and national independence movements. In no uncertain terms, European colonialism for Hall, and the relations of

dependency and underdevelopment it imposed, were not so much eroded as reconfigured in the passage to the postcolonial, to be "restaged and displaced as struggles between indigenous forces, as internal contradictions and sources of destabilization within the decolonized society, or between them and the wider global system" (Hall 2000, 213). As an operation of "double inscription" (Hall 2014, 213)— in which categories and identities are mutually constitutive, coming into being in relation to each other—Hall saw colonial power at work in formations of European racism and white supremacy, as much as in the continent's distinct and varied national multicultures. In conversation with Caryl Phillips (1997), who drew attention to the cultural lineage of artists and activists such as Marcus Garvey, Colin Powell, Sidney Poitier and Harry Belafonte, Hall elaborated a particularly Caribbean dialect to double inscription as, "double insights, double voices, double consciousness. Looking two ways…Looking at the front, being at the border. In transition, in migration, in movement between."

As Engin Isin makes clear in the preface to this volume, the postcolonial intellectual as a "transversal political subject", crosses geometries of geopolitics and power-knowledge. In this regard, the trope of doubleness in Hall's "in, but not of" and "looking two ways" is more than an accident of birth. It would become an artful strategy of surviving within and disrupting the power-knowledge games of academic institutions. Hall always pursued political and campaigning work outside of the university and brought a commitment to political engagement into the heart of Cultural Studies. His work spans and blurs genres and voices. As well as academic publications, there are punchy political essays and manifestos on capitalism, New Labour politics and neoliberalism. He was a founding editor of *New Left Review* and coedited the 1967 May Day Manifesto, with E.P. Thompson and Raymond Williams. His searing critique of Thatcherism as an ideology was laid out in essays for *Marxism Today*, a monthly journal of the British Communist Party.

And long before using multi-media platforms became *de rigueur* among academics and activists, Hall was moving effortlessly between texts and audio-visual media, dense theory and everyday cultures; from talks in local community halls to addressing huge crowds at Trafalgar Square. Akomfrah's tributes to Hall, which include the film *The Stuart Hall Project* (2013), were possible because of the 800 plus hours of materials that comprise Hall's audio-visual archive. Indeed, many of my generation came to know him through his broadcasts, particularly his late-night 1980s

BBC TV programmes for the Open University. To see a black man on TV at that time—and one who wasn't a drug dealer or 'mugger'—was rare. And to hear Stuart Hall's sonorous erudition was to be utterly captivated.

In this chapter, I take a closer look at Hall's transversal praxis—his ways of partially inhabiting, moving across, mixing-up and ultimately queering different disciplinary and geo-social spaces. In many ways it is a creolizing practice, self-consciously capturing as well as being marked by double inscription, holding what Ien Ang has identified in Hall as an "existential unsettledness of identity" (2016, 30). The unsettledness that Ang diagnoses is one that conjures the institutional and the embodied aspects of Hall's life as a postcolonial intellectual. For Homi Bhabha (2015), it was Hall's voice, as a meeting point of the material, biographical and cultural that signifies a fullness of his unsettledness as well as his capacity to unsettle. "Stuart taught the Queen's English to calypso a little and to draw breath from Bob Marley's rasping beat" (Ibid., 3), Bhabha recalls in his moving posthumous tribute, conjuring beautifully the rich acoustic hybridities of Hall's enunciation. "For it is voice that gives material form to the genres—lectures, essays, collected volumes, and more—associated with Stuart's name," Bhabha asserts. "And it is through voice—writing, speaking, listening—that these genres develop their authority and claim title to an oeuvre" (Ibid.). Bhabha goes on to identify another point of singularity in Hall's approach: his skillful transcoding of Antonio Gramsci's conjunctural analysis—as attention to the coming together of social, cultural, ideological forces with economic structures—into a critical praxis. According to Bhabha:

> A conjunctural critical practice intervenes in the multifaceted
> contingency of an emerging political moment, continually keeping
> in mind the concrete circumstances of possible political action. To
> make such a contribution, the grain of voice must extend to the
> experiences and interests of the national-popular classes and the
> domain of civil society. (Ibid.)

It was at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies that Hall and his colleagues reimagined Gramsci's "conjuncture" as a means to connect theory and academic knowledge to political struggle. Hall's ways of living his conjunctural critical practice reflexively so that it engaged with colonial legacies and the

knowledge-power regimes of the political present continue to resonate with the work of feminist of color scholar/activists. Across Europe, new nationalisms, austerity, the necropolitics of forced displacement and illegalized mobility and what Hall dubbed "authoritarian populism" have coincided with a simultaneous recoil from critical thought and an embrace of the post-factual (including the propaganda of "fake news"). It feels much like a new era of what Hall identified in Thatcherism as "The Great Moving Right Show" (1983). The latter-day show is displacing any pretense at empirically informed policy-making and political argumentation in favor of a muscular and affective performance politics that plays to and off popular fears and anxieties. At the same time, postcolonial generational and citizenship differences between racially marked Europeans and new migrants are fabricating complicated, sometimes fraught, axes of commonality and difference (see Jones et al. 2017). The demanding civic task of how intellectuals might respond to such shifting and nuanced cultural politics was outlined by Hall and his *Policing the Crisis* (1978) co-authors some thirty years ago. Then they cautioned against, "a trap of 'liberal opinion'—to split analysis from action" (Hall et al. 1978, ix).

In this broader Western European context and although Hall's analyses of postcolonial forces are in need of extension—not least with regard to post-secularism and political Islam—his critical conjunctural praxis feels more important than ever for feminist, queer and anti-racist alliances. The insidious "double entanglement" of neo-conservative values and the liberalisation of "freedom" and choice in the global economies of late capitalism, Angela McRobbie (2008) contends, have meant that feminist ideas, and those of other radical movements, have been selectively absorbed and repudiated. From the mid-1990s onwards, McRobbie believes that feminist gains have been undone in the realm of what Hall called "articulation", the coalitions built across progressive social movements. Like feminism, anti-racist politics for McRobbie have been reduced to political correctness, "and their demise is seen to usher in a new period of more enlightened and modern community politics" (Ibid., 9).

For feminists of color in Europe, the pushing back against and vilification of radical critique is inflected by spatio-temporal variations of post-race and post-feminist discourses. Depending on different geo-political formations, feminist and anti-racist critiques are deemed to be either irrelevant or redundant. In the Nordic countries, for instance, there can be a spatialized distancing from colonialism (Keskinen et al. 2009). In Britain, there is a temporalizing genre of backlash

argumentation in which racism and sexism are seen as having being addressed and resolved in the 1970s and 80s (Ahmed 2012).

Chandra Mohanty (2013) has observed some of these dynamics in the misrecognition and domestication of radical critique in its travels across national and disciplinary borders, via academic cultures. A crucial feature of the depoliticization of gender and racial justice imperatives for Mohanty concerns, "the privatization of social divisions and the individualization of experience" (Ibid., 986). The risk of individualization also applies to discussions of the postcolonial intellectual. In focusing too much on either intellectual contributions or on personal characteristics, the transversal tension between biography and social forces can evaporate. I hope to negotiate this risk by following Hall's own commitments to dialogue and putting his ideas and praxis into conversation with contemporary European postcolonial and feminist of color concerns, especially as we face them within the neoliberal university. But, for the moment, let me give more context to Hall, so as to better situate his energies and contributions.
<break>

"In, but not of, Europe"

Arguably, a critical thread in Hall's corpus is accounting for the on-goingness of colonialism in Europe, including narratives of European exceptionalizm and historiography itself. In *Familiar Stranger*, his posthumous autobiography, he describes how, "Much of human history was forced into [a]…discursive schema, which worked to justify the colonial order' (Hall and Schwarz 2017, 20). This still smouldering past continues to regenerate and return, even when existing as a selective amnesia or "negative hallucination", the not seeing of an overwhelming event, as Frédéric Neyrat has described France's "republican humanism" and apparent "colourblindness" (2010, 186). As Fatima El-Tayeb's study of France, Germany and Holland makes clear, the refusal to recognise the aftermath of colonism has produced a convoluted political terrain in which European citizens of color are forever deemed to be an alien, queer presence, "embodying an identity that is declared impossible even though lived by millions," (2011, 167).

The queering of ethnicity and citizenship that El-Tayeb highlights is one oxygenated by Islamophobic and anti-migrant sentiment. "Taking back control" of national borders is the recurring rationale behind harsh bordering practices in Europe and was a key feature of the June 2016 UK referendum vote to leave the European

Union ("Brexit"). Yet again, we are up against a "clash of civilisations" narrative, from those of "Islamic terrorism," opposition to the building of Mosques and the call to prayer, the mainstreaming of Islamophobia in Dutch "new realism" discourses that pit the rights of women and sexual minorities against those of immigrants and Muslims (Prins 2007), and cross-country "femo-nationalist" imperatives, characterized by points of convergence between right-wing nationalism, some feminist discourses and xenophobic and anti-Islamic rhetoric (Farris 2017). Amid these on-going reverberations of colonialism, Hall's efforts to denaturalize Europe, to show how colonial plundering and myth-making are central to any understanding of Western European economies, histories and ways of life, feels uncannily current.[2] It is in this area that Hall's reflexive understanding of the "double inscriptions" of colonialism is most vivid. "Europe has always represented itself as somehow autochthonous — producing itself, by itself, from within itself," he has written:

> whereas we have always been obliged to ask, "How does Europe
> imagine its "unity"? How can it be imagined, in relation to its "others"?
> What does Europe look like from its liminal edge, from what
> Ernesto Laclau or Judith Butler would call, its "constitutive outside"?
> (Hall 2003, 60)

The working out of these matters of diasporic perspective were always more than theoretical concerns for Hall. They were deeply felt and integral to the formation of his experiences of gender, class and color in Jamaica and in England. "I always knew my family occupied an intermediary social position between the wealthy white elite and the mass of poor and unemployed Jamaicans," Hall has said (Hall and Schwarz 2017, 18). Under his mother's dominance and nostalgia for the days of the Plantation, Hall's family—a hybrid mix of class, region and color—held aspirations "to be an English Victorian Family" (1987, 45). Living with the ensuing psychic displacements and splintering, Hall came to *feel* identity as a composite make-believe, long before he would theorise it psycho-socially that way.

Approaching identity through its tensions and asynchronies was a frame that was put to work and came alive in Hall's inimitable collaborations with, and support of young Black British artists from the late 1980s onwards, including Sankofa Film and Video and the Black Audio Film Collective and in his roles as the Director/Chair

of the London based organisations Iniva (Institute of International Visual Arts) and Autograph APB (Association of Black Photographers). The idea of identity as discursively fidgety and dynamic rather than mimetic and fixed has been pivotal in feminist, queer and anti-racist alliances that are based upon worked for political affinities rather than an essentialist identity politics.

A vivid example is the early mobilization of political blackness in the UK and in the Netherlands that brought together differentially racialized groups, including migrants of African Caribbean, South Asian and Surinamese heritages, under the signifier 'Black.' Hall's desconstructionist appreciation of identity worked with and against the tension of categories as being *sous ratour* or written under erasure, informing his insistence that identity categories while flawed and "impossible" were are also at times politically necessary, offering a temporary means to mobilize against inequities. As Nydia Swaby (2014) has made clear, political blackness as it was used in the 1970s and 80s among British black and brown feminist and trade union activists was performative, relational and dialogic. The category "Black" as a contingent speech act, did not signal biological or geographical origins or the sociometrics of phenotype. Rather, it acted to interpellate solidarities into being, however charged, provisional and imperfectly aligned.

What had traction and uptake in earlier decades is something that younger racialized generations have found more difficult to mobilize around in the same way. Balani et al. (2014) for instance, are among those British queer activists of color who worry about how the political epithet of "blackness" can suffocate and flatten distinctions of racialization and class—that may be contiguous but are not necessarily commensurable—while re-centering whiteness and histories of colonialism as monolithic. What characterizes these discussions is the claiming of diasporic generational difference. "It's that second generation culture, which is not tightly bound with ideas of a connection to another homeland, that feels like such a rich seam," Balani has said (Ibid., 37).

Hall addressed some of these dynamics in his paradigm-shifting work on "New Ethnicities" in the 1990s. At that time his interest in the diversity of subjectivities and contestations in the cultural politics of younger generations discerned, "the end of the innocent notion of the essential black subject" (Hall 1996a, 441). With the end of innocence came critical attention to the ambivalent psychic networks and crevices of self-other relations, whereby "fear and desire double for one

another and play across structures of otherness, complicating its politics" (Ibid.,445).
Here, Hall called for a new cultural politics, a shift "from a struggle over the relations
of representation to a politics of representation itself" (Ibid., 442). Rigorously attuned
to the workings of "double inscription," he also turned his critique to the exclusions of
critical black imagery and cultural politics at the time. "As we know," he asserted:

> black radical politics has frequently been stabilized around particular
> conceptions of black masculinity, which are only now being put into
> question by black women and black gay men. At certain points, black
> politics has also been underpinned by a deep absence or more typically
> an evasive silence with reference to class. (Ibid.,445-6)

The political challenge then and as it is now, is how to recognize the complex
attachments, resistances to, and distances from the subject positions and locations
from which to speak that are offered/demanded by coalition projects, while
interrogating the affective and political terrain in which colonial structures intrude
upon lives. The resources that Hall offered in this respect lie close to the ground, in
deciphering the specific consequences that arise from different and changing political
milieu and identifications: "We can only really understand what they are when we
tease out their specificities, their intricate complexities and contradictory effects"
(Hall 2012, 32).

One outcome of taking seriously the invitation to tease out "intricate
complexities" can be seen in the recent challenging of how certain strands of
European radical politics have "stabilized" around the dominance of discursive and
secular approaches to cultural politics. Working with Saba Mahmood's imperative to
"recognize and parochialize [our] own affective commitments" (Mahmood 2009, 91),
Mariam Motamedi-Fraser (2015) has identified how colonial residues of what reason
looks, feels and sounds like, inform the contemporary demonization of Islamic sign
systems, from words and art to religious practices and duties, such as wearing of the
headscarf.

Against this interpretive tableau, Motamedi-Fraser takes the Danish cartoon
depictions of the prophet Mohammed in the newspaper Jyllands-Posten in 2005 and
the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks in Paris in 2015 as points of analysis. At stake in both
events, albeit differentially, is the misrecognition and denigration of the sacrality of

Qur'anic sign systems as "a complex set of interdependencies, of human, divine, ethical, sensual and affective relations" (Ibid., 93), based not on "a *division* between signifier (word, image, idea) and the world divine, but rather on *assimilation*." (Ibid., 163, author's emphasis). Crucially, recognizing the material and affective distinctiveness of such relationships to signs is not to empty them of politics. As recent events demonstrate, Islamic sign-world relations and their interpretation through modern European traditions of abstract, disembodied knowledge are productive of new forms of racialization and social and political fault lines, providing the "grounds on which 'friends' and 'fanatics', 'allies' and 'enemies' are identified and constructed" (Ibid., 93).

As the positioning of being "in, but not of, Europe" extends to new migrants and exiles, and to racially marked citizens, Hall's call to search for the "absences" and the "silence" in radical inquiry must include interrogations of the epistemological and ontological assumptions and parameters of critical Northern/Western thought. As discussions of Islamic cosmologies highlight, Hall's identification of the need for radical critique to shift its attention to a politics of representation faces new challenges from changing registers of race-making.

<break>

Behind the Scenes

So far, I have concentrated mainly on Hall's scholarly and political works. For all their analytic elegance and nuance, his diverse and prolific contributions tell only part of the story of "the Du Bois of Britain," as Henry Louis Gates Jr. has described him (quoted in Edwards 2014). "No one who spent any time with him was in any doubt about the sincerity of the warmth, interest and attention that were in play in such encounters" John Clarke has written (2015, 276). Hall's filmed conversation with C.L.R. James, produced and directed by Mike Dibb (1986), is spellbinding for these reasons. The dialogue captivates in the tales and wisdom that Hall lures so gently and skillfully from James. But it is Hall's complete attentiveness that is arresting. It is as if his whole body—ever-so-slightly forward leaning, forefinger resting on his top lip—is listening.

It was this attentiveness that came to the fore in the tributes paid to Hall after his death in February 2014. I experienced some of this close-up when I convened a collaborative commemoration "Meeting Stuart Hall" (2014) for the independent writers of color digital platform, *Media Diversified*. The piece brought together

feminists who knew Hall personally and those who knew him through his work—Sara Ahmed, Gargi Bhattacharyya, Vera Jocelyn, Patricia Noxolo, Pratibha Parmar, Ann Phoenix, Nirmal Puwar, Suzanne Scafe and myself. It was clear that the ambivalence that Hall articulated and his resistance to becoming an institutionalized academic, continues to offer a lifeline as we tussle with the challenges of new "diaporic moments" and where discourses of equality and inclusion in Higher Education are being used to appropriate critiques of racism, sexism and homophobia. This is also a time when the university is becoming more brazenly commodified, where research and teaching are increasing tethered to impact agenda and league tables based largely on quantitative metrics.

At the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies when Hall was Director (1964 -1979), there was an emphasis on finding new democratic and interdisciplinary modes of academic collaboration in the pursuit of oppositional public pedagogies. However, the decentering of the heroic lone academic producer in favor of more dialogic approaches and ultimately with the aim of a radical redistribution of hermeneutic and cultural resources was not always beneficial or effective. Charlotte Brunsdon (1996) has described how attempts to democratize knowledge and to focus on scholarship as political engagement had detrimental repercussions for women at the Centre who often did not complete their doctoral projects. Hall has also discussed how efforts to respond to feminist agenda and to recruit feminist scholars were woefully inadequate and clumsy. The "ruptural" interventions of feminists in the early 1970s as Hall remembered, refused patronizing efforts to "import" feminist scholars into the Centre and he was never able to extricate himself from the position of the patriarch:

> As you might expect, many of the women in cultural studies weren't
> terribly interested in this benign project. We were opening the door
> to feminist studies, being good transformed men. And yet, when it
> broke in through the window, every single unsuspected resistance
> rose to the surface—fully installed patriarchal power, which believed
> it had disavowed itself. (Hall 1996b, 269)

The complicated dynamics of "fully installed patriarchal power" were further mediated by racialized fractures. While the decentering of male privilege at

Birmingham was challenging for Hall and something he felt he handled badly, the bridge between activism and scholarship that the Centre made possible, drew in some women of color from the institutional margins. The filmmaker Pratibha Parmer, a former postgraduate student at the Centre has spoken of her relief at finding the Centre and working with Hall. "My activist experience and biography became legitimate tools in the formation of my intellectual practice thanks to Stuart. Meeting Stuart was a major turning point in my life" (Media Diversified 2014). What several of the Media Diversified pieces had in common was how contributors spoke of various experiences of misfitting, or in Ang's (2016) terms "existential unsettledness," which throughout Hall's work whether in the community, academia or in the arts, was a critical starting point of analysis, pedagogy and dialogue.

The *Media Diversified* commemoration also brought to the fore different facets of intellectual life as women of color have felt them and continue to feel them through different, less well-illuminated spheres of academic life. The figure of the postcolonial intellectual is one that tends to be backlit, animated by the public realm. What can result is a neglect of durational, behind-the-scenes care practices (such as teaching, administration and working collaboratively) that feminists have long identified as crucial for the maintenance of both individual and collective bodies (see Baraitser 2017). Hall's front-stage self was undoubtedly commanding. But he also pulled his weight with the "house-work" of academic life—ever expanding administration, the mind-boggling tiny detail and planning that is required for designing and delivering huge long-distance learning for 'non-traditional' students, as well as the work of supporting colleagues and new scholars. In her tribute to Hall, Ann Phoenix illuminated a part of academic labour that is routinely overlooked: the work of writing references to support job applications. Phoenix recalls how Hall was often a referee for several candidates on the appointment panels that she participated in:

> No-one risks asking for a reference if they have doubts or fears that a
> senior person's asperity or insecurity might sour what needs to be a
> positive testimonial. Most important, these experiences reinforced
> my understanding of Stuart's deep integrity and intellectual facility.
> He always produced references on time and he wrote no platitudes,
> presenting evaluations that showed his engagement with the field

and a person's contribution to it. Early career and senior colleagues
alike were correct in believing that he knew their work, understood
it in context and valued it and them. My admiration for this skill and
generosity in taking time to give other scholars' work a fillip is only
one reason that I will miss him. (Media Diversified 2014)

Much of what Stuart Hall did—the exploratory teaching, community talks, chairing
panels, being a discussant, writing outside of academic journals, supporting
community campaigns—would not count in today's university research quality
control systems (presently the "Teaching Excellence Framework" and "Research
Excellence Framework" in British universities). "As the focus within the academy is
now so overwhelmingly on the competitive pursuit of 'excellence'," Ang (2016) has
suggested, "Hall's idea of intellectual work as radically open-ended, as profoundly
dialogic and collaborative, as a matter of 'going on theorizing', is very difficult to
sustain" (Ibid., 37).

Alongside the creep of such developments are attempts to selectively co-opt
and exploit relationships with marginalized groups, as a part of university impact and
community engagement agenda, in which black and brown scholars can at different
times occupy both the centre and the margins. As well as struggling against
organizational oppressions and the commoditization of teaching and learning, our
relationships with social movements—from which so many foundational ideas such
as black consciousness, institutional racism and intersectionality come into academic
knowledge—are under constant threat. Participative and action research projects, for
instance, can be turned into "impact case studies" that are ranked as part of a
university's REF score (the case studies comprised 20% of an institution's REF score
in 2014) and which determine the allocation of funding. Putting aside the politics of
measuring impact—how it is calibrated by in-house criteria rather than from the
perspective and priorities of the "beneficiaries" of research—even with the best of
intentions, this type of evaluation encourages instrumentalization, and oftentimes with
the most vulnerable communities. In other words, the contemporary postcolonial
intellectual-scholar does not transverse different spaces innocently or unencumbered.
Our social justice work and its interpellations can draw the neoliberal university into
new community spaces through discourses of engagement and empowerment,
exploiting our relationships with communities. The disturbing axes of complicity born

out of such circumstances resonate with more longstanding concerns in postcolonial scholarship about how seemingly counter-hegemonic practices and the imperative to recuperate subaltern "voice" can shore up institutional and academic authority (see Barnett 1997).

In the neoliberal classroom, the demands of emotional and intellectual labour are also differentially spread. To decolonize and radicalize curricula requires extensive work to search beyond a disciplinary canon, where the work of elite, straight white men is low hanging fruit. In the UK, such efforts have faced a press and social media backlash, with students as well as academics facing misrepresentation, ridicule and harassment (see Gopal 2017). Studies of the experiences of "Black and minority ethnic" (BAME) students in British universities make for grim reading. The non-continuation rate for undergraduate Black students is almost 1.5 times higher than for their White and Asian peers (Office for Fair Access 2017, 19). "Black and minority ethnic" are most likely to feel alienated and isolated at university (National Union of Students 2011, 40). Role models are few and far between, "If you look at the ratio of white students to professors, it's 50:1. For black students, it's 2000:1. Early on, as a BAME student you're reminded the odds are stacked against you." (McDuff quoted in Khan 2017). It is in the classroom that the tensions in my position as a feminist intellectual-activist often feel at their most acute. The sense of personal and political responsibility to my students comes up against the weight of social, institutional and disciplinary structures. It is a tension captured by Spivak's rendering of ethical responsibility as being "caught between an ungraspable call and a setting-to-work" (1998, 23).

The demand of this "setting-to-work" has different facets, depending on who you are and where you are. Inside the neoliberal academy, it is difficult to see significant improvements in the conditions of teaching and learning for black and brown and migrant colleagues and students, especially women[3]. In addition, there are the state's attempts to extend colonial legacies and machineries of racialization into the classroom through increased surveillance. Two recent British developments are exemplary of this trend. Under the government's counter-terrorism strategy "Prevent", relevant Higher Education bodies are required to support state surveillance of students (implicitly coded as Muslim). Known as the "Prevent duty," institutions must ensure that "internal mechanisms and external arrangements are in place for sharing information about vulnerable individuals when appropriate" (Higher

Education Funding Council 2017). The Prevent duty sits alongside increasing pressures on universities from the government's UK Visas and Immigration department, to check immigration status and monitor the attendance of students (initiatives seen by activists as a means through which the government can meet targets to reduce net immigration statistics). Of the requirement that university teachers should make their class registers available to the government, Les Back has concluded, "The university's role is not the German idealist notion of the university as a place to promote national culture, but rather one of border control and the policing of limits of who can belong…" (2016, 35).

In *Policing the Crisis*, Hall identified how in conditions of multiculturalism, social crises often assume a racialized form. What is significant about these recent developments is the insinuation of state surveillance into universities in ways that reconfigure networks of knowledge-power through racialization and networked bordering. The latter-day postcolonial intellectual is more than a crosser of borders. She can become the border.

<break>

Knock, knock

The articulation between European imperial projects and critique that circulate around the figure of the continent's postcolonial intellectuals is one located in an understanding of the postcolonial as simultaneously a geopolitical formation and an order of knowing. In putting Stuart Hall's contributions into conversation with the concerns and predicaments of feminist intellectuals/activists/scholars, I have wanted to engage his critical conjunctural praxis, its possibilities and limits, within contemporary Europe and in Higher Education. Such an interest acknowledges the significance of the cultural, historical and biographical registers through which Hall's critique of colonialism is situated and mounted. It also recognizes the value of how he lived and fashioned an intellectual life, including his efforts to counter the domestication of critique, to engage diverse audiences and to work collaboratively.

The examination of Hall's praxis as relevant to feminist of color concerns has also been important in addressing some of the hidden "domestic" labour of the postcolonial intellectual-scholar that can be overlooked, leading to a gendered formatting of intellectual life. To the extent that what we do and how we *are* with publics, peers and students, can subvert and transform dominant structures of subjectification is significant. It is one reason why I believe that ways of *being* an

intellectual such as Hall's, seem so distant from the cultivation of neoliberal practices in the university, characterized by discourses that are "chiefly framed by the combination of individualism and instrumentalism" (Collini 2012, 199). It is also why Stuart Hall remains a valued companion. And not only in Akomfrah's sense as "a category."

To leave Hall in this particular staging of the postcolonial intellectual feels too objectifying and disembodied when written down, far-removed from the sensuality of Akomfrah's tribute. Understood discursively, Hall the figure can be dissected and ultimately closed and put away on the representational shelf, as we might do with one of his articles, pamphlets or books. But there is more. When immersed in Hall's archive in writing this chapter an image sprang to mind that I came across some years ago in Ann Davenport's translator's preface to Jean-Louis Chretien's *The Call and the Response* (2004). The story is about the philosopher Edmund Husserl's student Edith Stein, who would later die in Auschwitz. For the *Festschrift* to mark Husserl's seventieth birthday in 1929, Stein imagined a dialogue between the philosopher and St Thomas. Here is how Davenport describes it:

> In Stein's original dialogue, Husserl is featured alone at night in
> his study, awake and restless and wishing for "a decent conversation
> on philosophy to get my mind back on track". A knock at the
> door both surprises him ("At this late hour?") and answers his
> wish. The visitor is both unexpected and desired, both making a
> call ("I thought I might still chance a visit") and responding to the
> call made to him ("I heard what you just said"). The knock on the
> door in the dead of night thus calls on the philosopher to answer
> the call that answers his own call. (Ibid., xviii)

For Davenport, Stein was hoping to engage Husserl with the conditions of speech, conditions that enable truth as a form of love to be heard. For those of us working to oppose injustices, to teach, write and research in ways that better connect the personal and political, Hall, as Gargi Bhattacharyya writes, "was a welcome reminder of the possibility of academia's better self." She continues, "I am grateful for the lesson, from his writing and his life—that intellectual endeavour is also a matter of how we conduct ourselves, as citizens, as comrades, as teachers and as colleagues in the

widest and most embracing sense. It is a hard lesson to learn and to follow, but I, and so many others, draw on Hall to sustain the daily effort of trying and failing again" (Media Diversified 2014).

For many of us, as Bhattacharyya suggests, Stuart Hall has been and continues to be a knock on the door. For me, as an academic, his knock is a demand to continually reexamine and revise the ways in which I can make a positive difference, especially to the lives of my students and to remember with a wry smile that "theory is always a detour on the way to something more important" (Hall 1991, 42). In these difficult times, we should not forget what intellectual generosity as much as resistance sounds like.

References

Ahmed, Sara. 2012. *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Akomfrah, John. 2012. *The Unfinished Conversation*. Dir. John Akomfrah. UK: Smoking Dogs Films.

Akomfrah, John. 2013. *The Stuart Hall Project: Revolution, Politics, Culture and the New Left Experience*. Dir. John Akomfrah. UK: Smoking Dogs Films.

Ang, Ien. 2016. "Stuart Hall and the tension between academic and intellectual work," *International Journal of Cultural Studies*. 19, 1: 29–41.

Back, Les. 2016. *Academic Diary: Or Why Higher Education Still Matters*. London: Goldsmiths University Press.

Baraitser, Lisa. 2017. *Enduring Time*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Barnett, Clive. (1997)."""Sing along with the common people": politics, postcolonialism, and other figures." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*. 15: 137–154.

Bernard, Jay., Balani, Sita and Gupta, Camel. 2014. "Many Voices, One Chant: 30th

Anniversary Roundtable." *Feminist Review*, 108: 26–43.

Bhabha, Homi.K. 2015. ""The Beginning of Their Real Enunciation*": Stuart Hall and the Work of Culture." Critical Inquiry*. 42, 1: 1–30.

Bhopal, Kalwant. 2015. The experiences of black and minority ethnic academics, 17 July. Accessed October 15 2017. http://www.runnymedetrust.org/blog/the-experiences-of-black-and-minority-ethnic-academics

Brunsdon, Charlotte. 1996. "A thief in the night: stories of feminism in the 1970s at CCCS." In *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues*, edited by David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen, 276–286. London: Routledge.

Clarke, John. 2015. "Stuart Hall and the theory and practice of articulation." *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*. 36, 2: 275c286.

Collini, Stefan. 2012. *What are Universities For?* London: Penguin.

Davenport, Anne. 2004. "Translator's Preface." In Chrétien, Jean-Louis, 2004. *The Call and the Response*, trans. Anne Davenport, xii-xxix. New York: Fordham University Press.

Dibb, Mike. 1986. "CLR James in conversation with Stuart Hall." *YouTube*. Posted by "Susie2010ism," April 19, 2013. Accessed October 24, 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Gf0KUxgZfI

Edwards, Breanna. 2014. "Jamaican Cultural Theorist Stuart Hall Dies at 82." *The Root*, 2 February. Accessed 16 November 2017. http://www.theroot.com/jamaican-cultural-theorist-stuart-hall-dies-at-82-1790874507

El-Tayeb, Fatima. 2011. *European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Farris, Sara. 2017. *In the Name of Women's Rights. The Rise of Femonationalism*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Gopal, Priyamvada. 2017. "Yes, we must decolonise: our teaching has to go beyond elite white men", *The Guardian*, 27 October. Accessed 6 November 2017. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/oct/27/decolonise-elite-white-men-decolonising-cambridge-university-english-curriculum-literature

Higher Education Funding Council. 2017. *Monitoring of the Prevent Duty*. Page last unpdated 4 September 2017. Accessed 16 November 2017. http://www.hefce.ac.uk/reg/prevent/

Hall, Stuart., Critcher, Chas., Jefferson, Tony., Clarke, John., and Roberts, Brian. 1978. *Policing the Crisis*: *Mugging, the State, and Law and Order*. Basingstoke: MacMillan Education.

Hall, Stuart. 1983. "The Great Moving Right Show." In *The Politics of Thatcherism*, edited by Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques, 19-39. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Hall, Stuart. 1987. "Minimal Selves." In *Black British Cultural Studies A Reader*, edited by Houston. A. Baker, Manthia Diawara and Ruth.H. Lindeborg, 114–119. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Hall, Stuart. 1990. "Cultural identity and diaspora." In *Identity: community, culture, difference*, edited by Jonathan Rutherford, 222–237. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Hall, Stuart. 1991. "Old and new identities, old and new ethnicities." In *Culture, Globalization and the World System*, edited by Anthony King, 41–68. London: Macmillan.

Hall, Stuart. 1996a. "New Ethnicities." In *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues*, edited by David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen, 441–449. London: Routledge.

Hall, Stuart. 1996b. "Cultural Studies and its theoretical legacies." In *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues*, edited by David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen, 262–275. London: Routledge.

Hall, Stuart. 2000. "Conclusion: the Multi-cultural Question." In *Un/settled Multiculturalisms: Diasporas, Entanglements, Transruptions*, edited by Barnor Hesse, 209-241. London: Zed Books.

Hall, Stuart. 2003. *"*In But Not Of Europe": Europe and Its Myths. *Soundings*. 22: *57-69.*

Hall, Stuart. 2012. "Avtar Brah's cartographies: a moment, method, meaning", *Feminist Review*. 100: 27–38.

Hall, Stuart with Schwarz, Bill. 2017. *Stuart Hall: Familiar Stranger – A life between two islands.* London: Allen Lane.

Jaggi, Maya. 2000. "Prophet at the margins." *The Guardian*. 8 July. Accessed September 8, 2017.
 www.books.guardian.co.uk/departments/politicsphilosophyandsociety/story

Keskinen, Suvi, Tuori, Salla, Irni, Sari and Mulinari, Diana, eds. 2009. *Complying with Colonialism: Gender, Race and Ethnicity in the Nordic Region*. Farnham, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

Khan, Coco. 2017. "Do universities have a problem with promoting their bame staff?" *The Guardian*. 17 November. Accessed 17 November 2017.
https://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/2017/nov/16/do-universities-have-a-problem-with-promoting-their-bame-staff

Mahmood, Saba. 2009. "Religious Reason and Secular Affect: An Incommensurable Divide?", *Critical Inquiry*. 35, 4: 836-862.

McRobbie, Angela. 2008. The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social

Change, Los Angles, London, New Delhi: Sage.

Media Diversified. 2014. "Meeting Stuart Hall." *Media Diversified*. 14 February. Accessed 18 September. https://mediadiversified.org/2014/02/14/meeting-stuart-hall/.

Mohanty, Chandra.T. 2013. "Transnational Feminist Crossings: On Neoliberalism and Radical Critique", *Signs*. 38, 4: 967–991.

Motamedi Fraser, Mariam. 2015. *Word: Beyond Language, Beyond Image*. London: Rowman and Littlefield.

National Union of Students. 2011. Race for Equality. *National Union of Students,* 11 October. Accessed 16 November 2017. https://www.nus.org.uk/en/news/race-for-equality/

Neyrat, Frédéric. 2010. "The Western relation: The politics of humanism." *In The Politics of Culture. Around the Work of Naoki Sakai* edited by Richard Calichman and John Namjun Kim, 177–192. London and New York: Routledge.

Office for Fair Access. 2017. *Outcomes of access agreement monitoring for 2015-16*. Accessed 17 November 2017. https://www.offa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/OFFA-Monitoring-Outcomes-Report-2015-16-Final.pdf

Phillips, Caryl. 1997. "Stuart Hall by Caryl Phillips", *Bomb*. January 1. Accessed 22 October. http://bombmagazine.org/article/2030/stuart-hall

Prashad, Vijay. 2017. "Third World Quarterly row: Why some western intellectuals are trying to debrutalise colonialism." *Scroll.in*. September 21. Accessed September 30.
https://scroll.in/article/851305/third-world-quarterly-row-why-some-western-intellectuals-are-trying-to-debrutalise-colonialism.

Prins, Baukje. 2007. "Beyond innocence: The genre of new realism and its

contenders." In *Citizens and Subjects: The Netherlands, for Example*, edited by Rosi
Braidotti, Charles Esche and Maria Hlavajova, 255–264. Utrecht: BAK.

Spivak*,* Gayatri Chakravorty. 1998. "Responsibility." In *Gendered Agents*: *Women
and Institutional Knowledge*, edited by Silvestra Marinello and Paul A. Bove, 19-66,
Durham: Duke University Press.

Stacey, Jackie. 2015. "The Unfinished Conversations of Cultural Studies." *Cultural
Studies*. 29, 1: 43–50. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09502386.2014.917232.

Swaby, Nydia. 2014. "Disparate in voice, sympathetic in direction: gendered political
blackness and the politics of solidarity." *Feminist Review*. 108: 11-25.

Notes

1. See also chapter xx of this volume on Akomfrah
2. These types of racialising discourse can also circulate within academic and
   intellectual cultures. They have appeared most recently in publications that
   attempt to airbrush the brutality of colonial rule and to advocate for its return
   (see Prashad 2017). Perversely, this most recent case is part of an emerging
   academic click-baiting circus implicating postcolonial intellectuals, where it
   appears that controversies were fanned to increase a journal's downloads and
   ultimately its profits.
3. I have also seen how austerity, escalating tuition fees and the proliferation of
   precarious contracts for Early Career Researchers have had a detrimental
   impact on postgraduate students of color, creating increasing disillusionment
   and alienation. A career in Higher Education is losing its appeal and black and
   brown role models are few. A 2015 study found that of a total of 17,880
   professors in the UK, less than 1% categorized themselves as Black (85
   individuals), 950 were Asian (5%), 365 were 'other' (including the 'mixed'
   category). There were only 17 professors who were black women (see Bhopal
   2015).