

Annie Paul

The Ironies of History: An Interview with Stuart Hall¹

Palabras clave
Entrevistas; Estudios Culturales; Hall, Stuart; Jamaica; Paul, Annie.

Keywords
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Resumen

En la presente entrevista, Annie Paul, especialista en pensamiento crítico del Caribe, dialoga con Stuart Hall, una de las figuras más representativas de los Cultural Studies y del pensamiento postcolonial, acerca de varios temas de interés para entender la realidad cultural caribeña.

Abstract

The present interview brings a conversation between Annie Paul, specialist in Caribbean criticism, and Stuart Hall, one of the main figures of Cultural Studies movement and postcolonial thought. The interview focuses on analyzing several issues of interests to understand the Caribbean cultural panorama.

In June 2004 the Centre for Caribbean Thought at the University of the West Indies held a conference called “Culture, Politics, Race & Diaspora: The Thought of Stuart Hall”. This interview was conducted (29/6/04) in the aftermath of that conference at Silver Sands in Duncans, Trelawny, where Hall vacationed with his family. For those unfamiliar with the name of Stuart Hall he has been one of the most influential thinkers in the latter quarter of

the twentieth century. According to Professor Grant Farred of Duke University: Such was Hall’s impact on the US, British, European and Australian academy via cultural studies, mainly through a range of essays he published during the 1980s, that by the 1990s he became one of the preeminent intellectuals in the world. In truth, because of the international rise of cultural studies, Hall came to be regarded as an academic star, an intellectual celebrity, and a philosophical guru: he became the incarnation of cultural studies, first in Britain and then in the United States, widely anointed as the spokesman for the politics—and the endemic politicization—

of the popular, the theorist in the fore front of politicizing (all) identity.

Stuart Hall was born in Jamaica in 1932 and left Kingston for Oxford in 1951 as a Rhodes Scholar.

The Interview

AP: Stuart, I remember someone joking that they read in the papers that Her Majesty’s government had made a bulk booking on the flight you arrived on, to send back some deportees... Yes, so you literally arrive back for this conference in your honour on board an Air Jamaica flight full of deportees from the UK.

SH: Yes, you know Annie, it was very strange because when I went to England in 1951 I thought I was escaping Jamaica and then within two years all of Jamaica (laughs) arrived in London (more laughter) so that no escape was possible and then now I come back and bring 72 deported members of the Jamaican fraternity back with me. And you know the plane was delayed for two hours but they never announced the delay which is funny ‘cause it was plainly delayed. It was only when Catherine (Professor Catherine Hall, historian and wife of Stuart Hall) started talking to somebody who turned out to be someone who advises the Jamaican govt on migration—a 31 Jamaican woman— and she said well, I can tell you why its delayed, we’re waiting for the prisoners and then when she looked out on the runway she saw the police buses arriving. So they

never even came through the exit lounge or anything like that...It was straight onto the tarmac, loaded onto the plane and they were curtained off at the back of the plane so you couldn’t see anybody. But on the other hand there were also security officers traveling with them, some sitting with them but there were some security officers in first class who as soon as we landed became very active and so on. Then we had to wait until they were taken off and when we were collecting our luggage their luggage came through first. And this was a very sad sight because first of all they had very little luggage, you know very poor—boxes, baskets, things like that – but they were also, I suppose, half of them had big plastic bags with HM Prison on it. In other words they were coming from prison to prison, you know deported from Her Majesty’s prison and the prison officers obviously pack their belongings and send them back—so it was a very sad sight. Of course I’ve since discovered that many of them have been deported from England having never lived in Jamaica or not lived in Jamaica for many years so there’s nothing to come back to; many of them don’t have any connections or active relatives in Jamaica, they don’t know Jamaica or know enough to find a job or make a living here. One of the things I’ve been told is that a lot of them very quickly fall back into the prey of the drug traffickers because they’ve done it once and those are the connections that they have.

AP: Do we know anything about

¹ Esta entrevista fue publicada por primera vez en el primer número de la revista IDEAZ, auspiciada por el campus de Mona (Jamaica) de la University of the West Indies. Dada su repercusión no sólo para el tema que aquí se trata, sino para los estudios culturales en sentido amplio, así como el hecho de que nunca ha sido publicada fuera del ámbito del Caribe inglés, la ofrecemos ahora como parte de este monográfico.

these people who were deported? Are they actually criminals? Or are they just illegal immigrants?

SH: They are of three kinds. One, they are mules—drug mules—who've been detected passing through customs.

AP: Swallowers?

SH: Swallowers, right, so they've been put in prison there as part of a drug bust and are now being deported back. Secondly there are criminals, probably belonging to posses who might also be involved in the drug trade but they're not swallowers. They're the people who are benefiting from the swallowing but they move between the drug trade in London and elsewhere in England and the drug connections here and in Colombia and so on. They are illegal transit organizers and they are part of the black posses that have been very highly publicized in Britain and they've been probably picked up there in connection with swallowers. They're the organizers of swallowers or people involved in the drug trade or people involved in crime, violent crime, or people picked up with illegal weapons—they're part of the Jamaican criminal fraternity—we can talk about that. Then there are people simply who are immigration breakers, you know they're working, paying their taxes, etc., but they never had any permission to come in the first place and they've been picked up. Every now and again the police combs the construction industry or the catering industry or the farming industry, you know trying to pick up illegal immigrants. They've

been picked up in a swoop, their papers are not in order, they don't have permission to stay and they have a right to deport them out. So they're a mixed bunch.

AP: Another issue that's been in the news here is the fact that gay groups in the UK have organized against Jamaican so-called entertainers many of whom have repertoires of anti-homosexual lyrics. The latest on that front is that Beenie Man just had a big show in London cancelled and his promoters lost a lot of money... it's a very vexed issue isn't it, what do you think, I mean how can we start to make sense of all this?

SH: Well, I think the difficulty is trying to decide what stance to take because on the one hand one knows that respectable Jamaican society whether here or living in England is not at all enthused by urban popular culture; you know they think its slack, too raucous, too over sexualized, too not respectable, you know etc. So they're down on this popular culture, I mean they were down on the music to begin with you know, roots music they didn't like... I'm talking about Jamaican immigrants in Britain now.

AP: You mean even the original music, what is thought of as classical reggae today, was disapproved of?

SH: Yeah, oh yeah, first of all it was in patois when they were trying to hide their patois, then it was about the lower classes, it was about Trenchtown etc. Popular culture expressed things that they

wanted not to be reminded of. I mean I think this is part of a very long story told in Jamaica and by the nice respectable immigrants in Britain and dancehall is only the last wave. Now of course people are very ambivalent about that. On the one hand younger Jamaicans are very into it, massively into it, and it has been a source of their—how can I put it—cultural capital because it's popular among young people and they are the people who embody it so...

AP: You mean dancehall?

SH: Yeah dancehall and the music associated with it, like a series of black music, also jungle and rap and all of those musics. Black music has played a central role in British urban popular culture for many years so of course young black people get a lot of kudos out of being black. And then you have to bring in the generational factor... you know their parents might have been against it if they were arriving in the fifties, but by now you have a generation whose parents were all brought up on Bob Marley—you know reggae—so it's the reggae generation being out raged by the dancehall generation. It's a complicated generational picture! Each generation regards the next generation as too slack and too rude, too noisy and so on but gradually they themselves grow up to be adults and look back on this music with pleasure and nostalgia while their children run away to some other music. You can see a cycle going on. It's very complicated what people feel about it but undoubtedly there is

among the most respectable residents, whether first or second generation, a feeling that this music doesn't do the cause of respectable Jamaicans living abroad any good. They think its all about drugs and crime because Jamaicans are often associated with the gun culture, you know a lot of shootings in parts of London are attributed to Jamaicans, sometimes Jamaicans shooting Jamaicans, sometimes warfare between one band and another, between one record company and another, or one area and another or between one organized group and another. But Jamaicans have been very prominent in the gun culture and very prominent in the drug culture because you know its known that dope is common in Jamaica and they're seen as being linked to the Colombia trade...

So all of these involvements of Jamaican people of one generation or another in the illegal cultures, illegal or non-respectable cultures, awakens ambivalence amongst respectable black people both in Jamaica and elsewhere. Ok, so that's one background about attitudes to the music and so on. Well, now one of the things that is said is of course homophobia... but this seems a bit ambivalent to me because a lot of respectable, Christian, adult Jamaicans are pretty homophobic, you know they don't have any sympathy at all with gay people or with gay rights, gay liberation movements etc. So they're not in any position to make a very serious case of pointing the finger. A lot of feminists are; this is a more serious

case because feminists and gay people have fought for gay rights and women's rights etc. They've been very much into this over the years and they say—Well, the trouble is this catches us on the hop because you ask us to identify with black people, with black music, with 'their' culture and we do, as an act of solidarity, but we can't excuse attitudes which are degrading to women, and homophobic, just because it's black. And this is another very complicated and interesting question. Social movements that arose in the 60s were attached to a single issue and a single constituency, you know women's rights for women, gay rights for gay people, anti-racism for black people, but these sometimes conflict because people are gay, black women. One person can embody more than one contradiction. When the different strands of these identities don't add up, they conflict with one another, what are you supposed to do? Are you supposed to say black men are right to treat black women as their possessions even though it runs counter to feminism? So what is the position of a black feminist who's required to be solidary with post colonial struggles but refuses to subordinate herself to black men just because they're black. But these are in contemporary politics which is of course more fragmented around single issue campaigns you don't have one party that embodies a position on blacks and women and gays and class and poverty—you have these different social movements. Now when you have politics more organized like that it presents real

contradictory pulls on individuals and on groups.

Then behind that there's another complicated question and that is about masculinity, about black masculinity. What is this thing that—you know—that black men are not just black men but in order to be black men they have to be super black men exaggerating the qualities of masculinity—violence, hardness, etc—and they themselves having been subordinated by whites then repeat the subordination in relation to their own women [laughs]. You know instead of learning the lesson of subordination and saying we will not do unto others as was done unto us, unthinkingly they reproduce the form of masculinity which mimics these inferior relationships that white men had to black men. Now this is not only in Jamaica; this is true of course of hip-hop which is also homophobic and therefore it's something that has happened in plantation society in the Western world. You know, a grown up black man addressed as a boy by a Southern land owner or a Jamaican plantation owner thinks that the only way in which he can become a man is to boss around somebody else!

It is—you know—it's a fantastic irony, this repetition, this blind kind of repeating itself—and this is the attachment to violence which is again a kind of exercise of brutal power, you know mimicking the brutality of the plantation regime itself, and of slavery and of the middle passage. It's like the Jews beating up the Palestin-

ians because the Germans were wicked to the Jews. Instead of the Jews saying we will never ever treat any other people like the Germans treated us they're doing exactly the same thing...

AP: ... to the Palestinians. But that's the irony...

SH: It's a deeply ironic problem, er question, about black masculinity. And this evinces itself in popular music. I mean now, of course one has to say interesting things about that too, which is that it's in popular music, it's in the popular culture that these attitudes get worked through, you know, including worked through in their dangerous forms, because further up they're suppressed first of all by Christianity...you know there's a very Christian thing which keeps a certain lid on such things although of course in the black churches female subordination, black leadership, black masculinity is repeated there too but not in such an overt mode. So it's partly because Christianity keeps a lid on it and then middle class respectability and wealth allows it another form of expression.

AP: When you talk about "keeping a lid on it" are you referring to homosexuality or...?

SH: No, I'm talking about all the things that gained repetitive expression whether violence, masculine sexuality, forms of masculine power—all of these things which I call plantation society repeating itself in the psyche of the poor and oppressed peoples of now post-plantation

society continuing to be operative in pathological form. But what I'm pointing out to you is that popular culture has—you might say the good or the bad, I don't care what it is—but it has the capacity to give expression to this in its violent and dangerous forms as well as in its attractive forms, its liberating forms and so on. So you know I mean we could talk about homophobia though I'm not really comfortable...We could talk about homophobia in relation to dancehall but we could also talk about women in relation to dancehall, you know? Because subordinate as the dancehall queens are to the men it is obvious that—it is clear that—a form of female or feminine independence has found expression here, a kind of reclaiming of sexuality, a reclaiming of the body, a turning over of respectable restraints and taboos on the pleasure of sexuality.

AP: I'm glad that you brought that up because this is something Carolyn Cooper from UWI has often talked about but she's vilified for expressing these views—you know?

SH: I know... she would be vilified because of what we talked about before—the taboo on all these things yes?

AP: She's ridiculed and...

SH: Yes, but this is the taboo on the repressed part of blackness. And the history of blackness is a tortured history of blackness and its repression in this society and where it finds expression often in distorted, even reactionary, violent, explosive, dangerous ways—it's what hap-

pens to culture in any society—it *will* out, and it will out in these forms. What I'm pointing out is that this expressiveness has its terrific side too although I know it's ambivalent because you know the women *are* subordinated in the dancehall to the men, there's no question about that and they perform dancehall in a sense to the men. You can see it in the stance and the stances; I mean to whom is this display directed? To the men, I mean to one another, but also to the men. But it is also a reclaiming. Let's just make a general point here because culture is never straight forward, it is never positively positive or wholly negative. It's always indirect, always contradictory, the positive and the negative side have to be taken together. Ok so let us come to homophobia. Given the forms which black masculinity has been obliged to take—the kind of imitative forms of black masculinity—of course homosexuality is an affront to everything about it. It's all about conquering women so what do you do about women who say well, I'm not particularly attracted to black men... its all about having twenty five children with twenty five baby mothers as a sign, a symbol, of your virility. Why? Because the white man took your virility away, he didn't even allow you to recognize your own children in slavery, your children didn't belong to you, you couldn't form a family around your own children. You were always a boy you were never a father.

In the eyes of the white plantation owners a black man could not be a father. So

when free he has twenty five children with as many women. What is he to do with a homosexual man who says I'm terribly happy not to have a child or I wouldn't mind adopting a child later on if I have a settled partner, can you imagine three males constituting one household? It violates every idea of the family, and the woman who looks after the family—I mean how could any serious male Jamaican be satisfied with being looked after by an other man, who plays the role of a woman—plays a feminine role?

So you know homophobia is inscribed in the history of Jamaica. This is not to say we need to be tolerant of it. I'm absolutely intolerant of it. I would not say that because it exists and because I understand why—to understand is not to forgive—unfortunately we have to say that just as we have an antiracist movement to stop people from discriminating against black people you have an antihomophobia campaign to stop black men abusing gay men...Because they have rights too, they're human beings etc. the argument that human rights doesn't stop at some frontier. So it's the same complicated move I was describing before where you have to have knowledge, the power, the expressiveness, the vitality of the new culture and recognize that it is a distortion of deep factors in the culture and the society which gained this distorted expression, which have very unfortunate negative consequences, one of which is homophobia. Somehow we have to foster the creativity, and the expressiveness and

the dynamism and wean it away from its own negativity.

I mean its bad enough for the people who get shot and murdered and sworn at and beaten up because they're gay but it's worse for the people who're doing it because it just confirms *that* version of masculinity. i.e. this is what maleness really is and I can demonstrate it by beating the shit out of them. And by repeating it of course you deepen it, any trend you repeat and repeat and repeat, becomes a habit.

AP: And that may be what's happening here?

SH: Exactly. And not only that, but it then becomes part of the culture. So a new boy who wants to become a DJ or a singer, what is he going to talk about? He's going to talk about 'them', about bossing the women, he's going to talk about women as whores and degrade women like his father and grandfather were degraded. He's going to talk about 'batty man' etc.

AP: You know the interesting thing is that when it becomes part of the culture—take the defence of homophobia for instance—you know part of the hypocrisy here is that while everyone focuses on dancehall lyrics as being homophobic, in fact there are many many churches on the island expressing these same sentiments, telling people that its fine to be homophobic, in fact one ought to be homophobic if

one is a selfrespecting Christian etc. There are people at the highest levels of society even in academia who are extremely homophobic—these are the people with power yet we can stantly point our fingers at dancehall DJs—I mean that's a very limited way to approach this problem because it's so widespread.

SH: No, that is a way of project ing it onto the underclass, It's in every society. Quashee or what ever is the current phrase for him has always been responsible. The uncivilized label that the whites project onto blacks, the blacks have man aged by dividing between 'us' and 'them'. Projecting the negative bits onto them and becoming respectable themselves, ascribing the values to themselves while the underpart is projected out some whereelse. That's the basic mechanism of racism. You're looking at internal racism. But going back to what we said in relation to masculinity, I mean, how could we expect that black and brown pastors of churches or that the black and the brown middle classes had escaped these processes we're talking about. Why should they have escaped them, they come from the same place, they were looked down on in the same way. Not half as much as if they were black and poor but it doesn't matter. By now they have inherited the same negative position so of course they have many of these fears, and some of the respectability is reinforced by evangelical Christianity in which it's not just disrespectful, it's sinful.

AP: The thing is I think that if we were serious about combating homophobia we should be addressing ourselves to these pastors who are disseminating this hatred for homosexuals as well and I don't see that being talked about.

SH: No, of course, and then the difficulty is that dancehall condenses everything—homophobia; masculinity; fear of sexuality; respectability; everything is in the dancehall and what is more it's very popular. So you know the masses are once again escaping from the restraints of respectability etc. Once again they've found their own forms of expression and aren't subordinating themselves to respectable forms of expression. Once again, of course Jamaicans are ambiguous about this—they loved reggae when it became a world music, they didn't like it when it was down in Trenchtown. Once it became respectable they thought it was great; no doubt dancehall is on its way to this respectable state—I mean some respect and acceptance will one day come and something else will have to replace it from underneath but meanwhile it's there and what's more it's in your face, it's not hidden away—those things used to be hidden away in the ghettos, in the deep countryside but it's not hidden away any longer, it's everywhere, everybody's talking about it, the music is blaring out, the girls can be seen going to the dances, you know where the dances are because they're beginning to advertise, they're beginning to want to fraternize the edges of it in Passa Passa and so on... so of course people are going to focus on the

dancehall.

AP: You know one of the funny things about homophobia being a so-called integral part of Jamaican culture, because this is how it's often put—we don't tolerate homosexuality here because it isn't part of our culture—but its almost, in a way, as if just like the deportees whom we started out talking about, this identity is deported from Jamaica, they would like to deport it from Jamaican culture, you know its not welcome here, you're foreign, you're alien. Very often the discourse around homosexuality is couched in such terms.

SH: Yes, there's three strategies there. One is to deport it to say that it doesn't really belong here, it belongs somewhere else—you know even somebody as wonderful as Frantz Fanon—he wrote the unforgettable sentence that there's no homosexuality in Martinique. It's in *Black Skins, White Masks*. I mean it's not that he was homophobic, he just said Martiniquans don't have it, you know black people are not subject to that etc.

AP: But another irony locally, in Jamaica, is that there are many people who are quite visible in society who are gay, I mean they can never say they are, but we all know that they are. So in a funny way there's a tolerance of homosexuality at very high levels at the same time that you have all this rhetoric...

SH: But it probably cloaks itself with

discreet behaviour..., you can't flaunt it too much; it's known but never spoken about, it's private but part of the open secret of middle class—you know this is not unknown elsewhere—the upper classes in England partly because they all went to public school—I mean they don't even know when they're doing it that it's sex at all, they just think it's how you behave when you're 14 or 15 and they all grow up and have big families etc. They all have had passions and crushes at their public schools, I mean you know its absolutely common knowledge, it's a common, common occurrence. And some people in the upper classes you know remain homosexual...and they were never outed. On the other hand there's always been the other section who've hunted it down, tried.

AP: Because you have that in England too, right?

SH: Oh yes, remember Oscar Wilde being dragged through the courts. Between Oscar Wilde and the consenting legislation of the 60s when finally, finally, Britain agreed that homosexual practices, consensual homosexual practices in private, above the age of 21, were not illegal.

AP: But isn't that ironic again? Because our laws here are based on English law. That's the law that is upheld here—the law against buggery which you're saying was repealed or altered in the 1960s in England.

SH: Yes, and there couldn't have been a gay rights, gay liberation movement

in Britain without that. Of course this doesn't mean it (homophobia) goes away. It still exists and the people who object police each boundary, as each boundary is passed they police it. So first the age limit was 21 then it was 18, so anyone having consensual sex with boys of 17 1/2 would be found guilty of buggery and probably child abuse as well. This is in the teeth of the fact that the girls are having babies at 14 and boys are having sex at 13 in England. But still you're not supposed to be able to know whether you're gay or not until you're 18. So don't imagine that because the laws are slightly more liberal and because there is a gay movement and there are now gay MPs, openly gay, I mean there are many more still in the closet, but there are many more MPs that are openly gay. The former Minister of Culture, Arts and Sports Chris Smith had a long term partner and there are several. There are a number of people in public life who are gay, the head of the National Theatre, for instance. But there was still a tremendous row in the Anglican Church about allowing gay men to become bishops.

AP: Oh yes, it made big waves here as well.

SH: It made big waves through out the Anglican Church... and the opposition is the American church which has enthroned as bishop certain gay people. The one who was about to be enthroned by the Archbishop of Canterbury—they made such a fuss that he gave it up, resigned it—but here is another interest-

ing thing, even in this sector, the leading force against this move in the Anglican Church is the African Church.

AP: And the Caribbean branch would have aligned themselves with the African Church...

SH: So this contradiction cuts through the Anglican church where the socially liberal are required to say, "Well, if necessary we will have a break with the Black Church." Repeating the point I made earlier on...where these things cross cut one another?

AP: Make the point again...

SH: Where because the liberals who would be liberal on race and sexuality now find themselves opposed by black men who are both anti-homosexual and black. And they're saying oh, are you going to oppose the Black church when you've just given the black church a voice in Anglican circles? [Laughing...] So the world I'm afraid...contradiction, contradiction. Ambivalence is the name of the game where culture and politics is concerned.

AP: One of the interesting things about the conference that just took place at UWI was that there was a whole panel on visual art. Many people may not realize that you have a central involvement with art, you're associated with the Institute of International Visual Art—inIVA for short—can you talk about that a bit, what is inIVA's mandate?

SH: Well, *inIVA* and the other organization, namely the Association of Black Photographers, which is *Autograph*—I'm chairman of the board of both these organizations—they are the product of a big wave in the late 70s and 80s among second generation black migrants, namely mainly in that period, people from the Caribbean and people from the Asian subcontinent. It was the product of an explosion of creative work in the visual arts in that generation. Now this is interesting because of course there was a generation before that, painters and artists who went from the Caribbean and from India and what is now Pakistan—India in those days—or from Sri Lanka. They went to London, part of the independence movement, almost all of them anti-imperialists. Went as practicing artists to be part of modern art which they saw not as white but as part of a modern attitude to life yeah? In modern art you were going to find the forms of expression of modern life and since as anti-colonialists they were looking forward to getting rid of colonial feudalism which had held everybody back and entering—becoming modern subjects themselves as artists—they went to where it was happening, in Paris, in London, and for a period they were part of the British avant-garde. So by the 60s—these are people like Aubrey Williams, Frank Bowling,...

AP: Rasheed Araeen?

SH: Rasheed Araeen and a whole series of South Asian artists, wonderful persons and artists...Now this generation in

the 60s—the story of British modern art moved on without them. Their place in the early British avant-garde got written out... some stopped painting. One Indian painter destroyed *all* his paintings, all his work...

AP: Who was it? Was it Souza?

SH: No, it wasn't him, it was... I'll look it up and tell you. So this man destroyed all his paintings. Frank Bowling moved to New York. It dissipated, that first wave dissipated ok? The second wave is the second generation—now these are not people coming as adult artists to England to join the movement. These are people born and bred in Britain experiencing themselves as black in the way that that first generation didn't; in contrast with Americans that first generation was preoccupied not by race but by colonialism. They were anti-colonialists and they didn't feel themselves black; black was not a term that they would've used themselves. At that time *nobody* in the Caribbean would have—but the second generation that I'm talking about are the product of indigenous anti-racism, went to British schools, went to British art schools, found their work not being recognized, no recognition of themselves, no place for themselves in the arts etc.

AP: And these are people like Keith Piper, Chambers...

SH: Keith Piper, Eddie Chambers, Sonia Boyce, Donald Rodney...And where they found a voice was in the black arts movement in America associated with

civil rights. And this generation produced a very highly politicized art, Eddie Chambers' black boy on the bicycle with the Union Jack, Keith Piper's work, they're all political protest movement art—you know, they look like early African-American art—very political. But now by the end of the '70s and '80s we're into Thatcherism and although there are big black riots in '80, '81, '85 after that the political tempo among black organizations tapers off and so the '80s generation is much more preoccupied with questions of black identity and these are—they're all the people that are in my book, in *Different?* All those artists—Sudipto Biswas, Roshini Kempadoo, Rotimi Fani-Kayode and on and on and on. Sunil Gupta—you know, there was a huge creative wave—in '82 there were 90 black shows of work, photographic or visual arts work. There are more galleries; many black art galleries started in that period, in community centres, little places in Brixton etc. The artists are themselves acting as curators, people like Eddie Chambers organized the first show. Then the black women, Sonia Boyce, Mona Hatoum, Lubina Hamid—they organized the first black women's show and on and on and on. An *explosion* of creativity, all about Who Am I? What is Blackness? What is it to be Black in Britain etc? And they—contrary to the realist, militant work of the second generation—use what I call the constructed image; they stage themselves. Even photographers. They're not shooting documentary work—there is a group of documentary photographers

which shoots—documents—the 60s, Horace Ove's in that group.

But the next generation sees the photograph as a work of art and the main thing is staging yourself, using yourself, the black body, the black face, black beauty, black physique, black longing, black desire as their subject matter, a kind of self-exploration through the visual arts. And this explosion of black creative work puts pressure on the mainstream arts organizations—asking why isn't this work being shown? Why doesn't the Photographers' Gallery have any of these photographers who are producing work like crazy? Why is there never in the Tate Gallery any exhibition either of the older generation, you know Frank Bowling has never had a London retrospective even though he has these incredible canvases, I can't describe how beautiful they are; the map paintings of Guyana, reconceiving the cosmos from the point of view of a base in Latin America, in these exquisite abstract colours, *never* shown in England. But these are the people Rasheed Araeen showed in what he called *The Other Story*.

AP: Yes, that's a famous exhibition.

SH: The famous exhibition. Then there's a second generation who can't get into these institutions and because a lot of those for art are publicly funded, supported by the Arts Council especially, a lot of pressure was put on the arts institutions and because of the success of anti-racist movements etc this had sensitized

the society to the marginality of blacks in general in society and of black artists from the art institutions. So gradually they begin to fund some of these institutions—so they fund Autograph in 1988. It was launched by Rotimi Fani Kayode who was one of the photographers, son of a West African Yoruba chief, educated in art school in New York, living in London—he was also gay. Displaced from Africa, displaced from conventional sexuality, making art out of the black body, you know, incredibly edgy marginal work—he was the first chair of Autograph and I spoke at the opening. And then a bit later than that, 1992 I think, no '94 because this is the tenth anniversary of *inIVA*, but in 1992 they attempted to form the Black Arts Centre in the old Round House in London. It didn't come off, I think some people ran away with the money. Ok, so these organizations begin. They both function as agencies, what I mean by that is that neither of them wanted a full-time gallery because they were the generation that did not want to be ghettoized, they didn't want to have to go to the black arts gallery to show black work. They wanted to be part of Britain.

AP: Part of the mainstream...

SH: Yeah, part of the mainstream or to challenge the mainstream to show more work so they didn't want to operate as galleries themselves. What they did was to put on work in the mainstream, put their artists in the mainstream, to produce exhibitions of work in the existing galleries around the country. And to supple-

ment that by producing books, producing catalogues, by organizing talks, lectures, workshops, by reviewing the work of young artists and encouraging them; by doing small monographs which made their work more accessible; by producing the catalogues of shows so that after the show was finished there was something remaining behind that students could learn from. That's what I mean—they act as multi-purpose agencies rather than...

AP: ... taking a traditional gallery approach.

SH: However, in the last two years they decided that they were losing out in this game now...

AP: Because you didn't make much head way?

SH: Well, we made quite a bit of head way, because we held lots of exhibitions and they were not all in our space, but not enough, and not fast enough. Big mainstream galleries like the Serpentine and the Whitechapel and the Tate Modern and Tate Britain, they're not going to show edgy unknown black artists. They show Chris Ofili because he's established himself over a long period of time; similarly with Steve McQueen. But they're going to show those artists who have established themselves, who have a market, who have arrived. So they're not going to pick up your new 25-year old and say we'll give you a show—What's more when these organizations finally put on shows in the mainstream places, everybody forgot that it was us who did

it. So we fought for years to put on an Aubrey Williams retrospective, *finally* we persuaded the Whitechapel Gallery and it's now known as *Whitechapel's* Aubrey Williams exhibition. No one remembers *inIVA*! Who's *inIVA*, they say. We did the research for the Aubrey Williams show, we located the paintings, we sold Aubrey Williams to the Whitechapel Gallery, we produced the catalogue (laughs), so we're losing out in this as far as visibility is concerned. So we do want a space. We want a space where —we're not going to stop knocking on the doors of the mainstream institutions—but we want a space where we *can* show young artists. If they refuse we can say ok you can see a bit of their work here. What's more we've made—the two organizations have made—enormous global international contact and we want to show young artists from Angola, young artists from Senegal, major art work is produced in West Africa, massive work from South Africa, from Johannesburg. Wonderful work from Indian artists you've never seen, Latin American artists...so the whole South, we have connections with them, we've shown people's work.

AP: What about the Caribbean?

SH: Of course the Caribbean. So we want a window in Britain for work from out side of Britain and we want a showcase in Britain for work produced in Britain, which doesn't get seen. So that's a project which I'm involved in now, which is Autograph and *inIVA* coming together, to launch the building. They've been given a Lottery grant of five million to build a

new black and—you can't just say Black and Asian anylonger because there are so many other migrant groups—but *culturally diverse* visual arts. Now of course all this doesn't tell you about my involvement with art—I don't know anything about visual art really—I've never been trained in the visual arts, I don't know art history etc. I've done a lot of work in the media and my work in the media has always been interested in the image so I wrote about news photographs at a very early stage, I wrote about the photographic image, I wrote about the television image, I'm interested in images.

AP: You've written about representation...

SH: I've written about representation generally. So of course I'm interested in various questions but I'm not a trained art historian of the old school. Of course, I don't know whether you know, but this is changing now and a new branch of visual arts study has arisen called visual culture—and visual culture is cultural studies in visual arts and this is beginning to replace the traditional history of art, you know, connoisseurship etc, of the old art history type. There's a bit of a struggle going on between art history and visual culture. I can say then I've found myself, appropriately, in the new visual culture. But then I've been interested of course in migration, interested in the fate of migrants in Britain; this work is expressive of the condition and experience of migration, you know I don't mean just documentary work, it's of the *inner* experience of the

hearts and souls and minds of migrant people, the migrant experience. So of course I've gravitated towards this work and when I retired I was already chairman of the boards of these two organizations, enjoying working with the younger artists and the constituencies around these organizations. When I retired in 1997 I thought, *don't* go on doing what you did before, get more involved in this stuff, which is what has happened. So since 1997 I've been giving more and more time to these two organizations and now to this project of building the arts centre.

AP: ... Which has been designed by a very interesting architect...

SH: It's been designed by David Adjaye who is a 40-year old Nigerian architect, who spent a long time in Kenya, educated in London, he's an up and coming architect. He works very closely with artists; he designed The Upper Room which was the Chris Ofili exhibit at the Victoria Miro Gallery. He designed the whole setting in which The Upper Room—which is Chris Ofili's work on the Last Supper...

AP: The monkeys...

SH: The monkeys in the Last Supper. He designed a room, beautifully lit, lit like a chapel, you know in which the light reflected off the paintings onto the walls so you thought you were looking at stained glass windows? It was exquisite.

AP: It's 13 panels is it?

SH: 13 panels. Yes, 12 apostles and Jesus. He's a gold monkey [laughs].

They're all beautiful monkeys...

AP: Wasn't there any out rage about this?

SH: I'm sure there was. I think people didn't like it in New York when they heard about it. Anyhow David Adjaye then designed—redesigned—the British pavilion at the Venice Biennale because Chris Ofili was chosen as the British artist for the Biennale and he redesigned the British pavilion for Chris's show in the Marcus Garvey colours, in Pan African colours. The whole pavilion was red, gold, black and green.

AP: That must've been quite a startling sight...

SH: It was astonishing, absolutely astonishing. And as you know Chris Ofili's paintings only use the Pan African colours.

AP: Oh, I didn't know that.

SH: Oh yes, the new series is done entirely in pan African colours.

AP: When did he start this series? I know Ofili's been spending a lot of time in Trinidad, did he start it before that or...

SH: The present series is influenced by Trinidad because they're about two figures which constantly recur in the paintings which are opera figures. I mean they're a man and a woman, they're lovers, then there's a devil, a devil who tempts them, he's not entirely a bad figure, he's a kind of Anancy figure, but he's

the wicked one. And these are on a journey through the forest, they're in the pan-African colours, including gold, there are gold suns and gold moons etc. Though of course the surface of the painting is encrusted in glass beads and glitter...

AP: Oh, the carnival effect!

SH: Wonderful effect. I think they're just staggering. They're completely staggering.

AP: And you said he got that couple from an ad?

SH: Well, the couple are taken from two cartoon figures on a launderette ad in Trinidad. His clothes came back from the laundry with these two figures and he's been drawing them ever since. I mean this is how Chris works you know. His earlier things, Captain Shit etc, were all drawn from African American figures. Before that they were all like Michael Jackson, they were all figures with Afros, girls with Afros, millions of them, reproduced sometimes a thousand of them on the same thing. So in each stage it's one set.

AP: Has he stopped using elephant dung?

SH: No, using the elephant dung—the elephant dung is now worked into the painting, it might be covered by glass beads right, different colours, or gold, it's not going to be a lump on the canvas, he isn't insisting on it any longer. But elephant dung was a result of a previous voyage to Africa. Because Chris of course is of African parentage but he was born

in England, in Manchester—he had never been to Africa! So the Arts Council said you know we must send this promising artist to his homeland in Africa [laughing] so you send him to Africa and he says well I'll bring back something really African for you—elephant dung! Dried elephant shit and I'll put it on all my paintings to show I've been to Africa. He's a real joker. So going back to David Adjaye, he's also built houses, he's built Chris Ofili's house and studio, he's built about four artists' houses including one which is called The Dirty House which is a *really beautiful* house. It's like a mud hut and its chocolate-coloured and it looks as if it has no windows. It's like a black square except that at the top is a raised roof so the roof seems to float, letting in the light, but actually when you go inside you realize that there are black glass windows. From inside you can see out, but from outside you can't see in. And this is David Adjaye's work.

AP: Is it in London?

SH: Yes, they're all in London.

AP: Ok so now he's designed this building for inIVA and Autograph...

SH: Well, I'll just tell you... this is what the excitement is about. Combining inspiration from African forms, third world forms with contemporary material and modern architectural ideas. So it's a kind of hybrid architecture. Ideal for us. And he's designed a building that is to go on the piece of land that we've bought in Shore ditch.

AP: You mentioned the Venice Biennale earlier and I know you were involved with...Was it the British Pavilion you were involved with?

SH: Well, I wrote a piece for Chris Ofili's catalogue. And inIVA's director, Gilane Tawadros, was the curator of the pavilion for the African Art Forum. She did the Fault lines show in this pavilion and I had a piece in the Fault lines catalogue so, you know, between Chris Ofili one day, Fault lines exhibition the next day, one or two other things—that was it so I didn't see very much. I didn't see for instance the German pavilion although the curator had a long interview with me in an interview of artists and curators which she's done. A huge compendium, a 100 interviews, and I have a long interview in there about the visual arts but I didn't even see that exhibition.

AP: I think it was the previous Venice Biennale that Jamaica took part in. Did you know that Jamaica was in it a couple of years ago?

SH: No, I didn't but I hope very much that the Caribbean is going. I mean its mainly European so the African Arts Forum is on the side lines, its not one of the main pavilions. It's in a decent building now but it is some what on the side lines so I can see that it would be difficult for Jamaica or the Caribbean to have a pavilion of its own. But you know I think its time...

AP: Now, I wanted to come back to talk about the UWI conference a bit.

Gilane Tawadros, the director of inIVA, actually gave a paper and Mark Sealy, the director of Autograph. This must have been a wonderful experience for you coming back to a conference held in your honour, at UWI, and so on. You did enjoy it didn't you?

SH: Oh yes, I enjoyed it, of course I was thrilled to be asked, to be invited, very grateful for the enormous work it takes to mount these conferences, having seen at close hand—I mean they started talking to me a year before, even before the last one had taken place. And they had to organize dialysis for me here; they had to arrange to bring me by business class 'cause I can't travel easily any more, so I'm just very grateful for the care...I mean it's a complicated question. I left in 1951 at the age of 18; I've never lived in Jamaica since then. I haven't written a lot about Jamaica, I've written a bit about the Caribbean but mainly in the context of my work on the black diaspora. I've written a lot about the black diaspora and I've been preoccupied with the black diaspora through out my life there, in fact not only is my work on the black diaspora but all of my work in cultural studies is done through the prism of the Caribbean, you know...My writing on diaspora, my thinking about culture is shaped by what I know culture is in the Caribbean. Cultural Studies was provoked for me by trying to think about Caribbean culture. What is it? What is Caribbean culture? I mean I went to England, discovered I couldn't escape and that black people from Jamaica and the Caribbean were coming to live in

England; I said to myself, well, what is the culture from which we folks are coming? Here's something, it's very distinctive, I'm part of that, what is this culture? And the second question: What is it going to be in the diaspora? Is it going to stay the same, is it going to evolve, is it going to be destroyed by racism? And one of the things that I discovered about that is that we are ourselves the diaspora, the Caribbean is a diaspora. The peoples in the Caribbean are all from somewhere else, the people who be longed here were stamped out by the Spanish conquistadores within a 100 years. Everybody else comes from somewhere else: the French, the Spanish, the Portuguese, the English, the Africans, the Lebanese, the Indians—you know, they're all from some other place so this is first a diaspora. Although there is a black diaspora in Britain, that is the diaspora of a diaspora, so I've been obliged to think about the culture of the black diaspora in Britain and the diasporized culture that has settled down and grown up in the Caribbean in diasporic terms. So it shaped my understanding of what culture is and how it works, yeah? The reason why I say culture is always a translation—there's no pure culture, it's always a translation—is because Jamaican culture is a translation of European and African and Indian cultures [laughing].

And Jamaican culture in England is a translation of that translation composed out of African, European and Indian cultures in the Caribbean now further translated in relation to twenty first century

Britain and Europe. That is what culture is; it's not something which stands still, which never moves, which is intrinsic—born inside each of us which will never change, you know, we can never be something else etc. Culture is produced with each generation; we reproduce our own identities in the future rather than simply inherit them from the past. Of course we make them in the future, out of the past. So it's not that I want people to forget the past—not at all, I want them to really remember it. For many years I lived in the Caribbean as a colonial subject in a society which did not remember Africa! So I don't want people to forget Africa but I don't want them to mistake the Africa that is alive and well in the diaspora, for the Africa that is suffering the consequences of neoliberal development in Africa where they're not waiting for us to go back there; they're suffering their own fate there.

AP: That's one of the things you mentioned in your closing address at the conference.

SH: Absolutely! So you know, return, always return, if you think of culture always as a return to roots—R-O-O-T-S—of course I love roots music but that's not the point; I think of culture as routes—R-O-U-T-E-S—the various routes by which people travel, culture travels, culture moves, culture develops, culture changes, cultures migrate etc, the ROUTES rather than the ROOTS. So—I tell you all this because I've never written about the Caribbean, I was never part of the proj-

ect of writing the national Jamaican/Caribbean story. What's more, more to my regret, I wasn't part of the political events of the last 50 years that shaped Jamaican independence. I know about them, I knew all the people involved, I went to school with half of them, you know, I've come back every two or three years, I've followed the story from the inside but I have not been part of it so when asked if I wanted to think about being a Caribbean intellectual or coming to Caribbean intellectual thought, well, this is an ambiguous thing you know. What entered my mind was—these people've never really been interested in your work, y'know—its from over there, it's from somewhere else, you're not part of us, you know, and a certain resentment.

Why didn't you come back? Why *aren't* you part of us? And a certain—dare I—dare I call it provincialism? You know—what we're preoccupied with is Jamaican things, because we're affirming that against the time when we couldn't—we don't have time to think about what is happening in England, you know, we're too occupied...so while that national moment—the moment of national independence was supreme—ds governing people's lives, ambitions, taking up their energies etc, why should people be interested in my work?

AP: Well, only because your work... people from all over the world are interested in your work.

SH: Yeah, ok—I don't deny that—but

I've explained to you why I was sanguine about the fact—when I got an honorary degree finally—which was only four or five years ago at the University of the West Indies, they said Stuart Hall has been a well-kept secret...

AP: Over here.

SH: Over here, and I felt this is quite true. But this invitation seemed to me timely because my suspicion is that that national moment is over. I don't mean that what happens in Jamaica is not important. That's not what I'm saying. But the moment when everything can be defined in terms of the territorially bounded Jamaica is finished—globalization has finished it. The fate here is being decided elsewhere; it's being decided in Washington, and it's going to be decided in Baghdad, decided in the World Trade Organization etc. What's more, migration, which is the underside of globalization, is happening everywhere—everywhere—people are landing up displaced by poverty, under development, civil war, ethnic cleansing, ecological devastation, environmental disaster, HIV...You know, millions of people are on the move inside Africa itself. Millions of people are living in transit camps, not to speak of the millions of Palestinians, millions of people on the borders between India and Pakistan that are displaced. The world is defined by displaced people, migration and domination of global capital. So the idea of the nation state, which is going to winnow out this little window for its people, and the world's going to leave it alone to prosper

in its little backyard is finished. This is a moment when this might be beginning to be understood in Jamaica and if that is so it's a moment when I can be recognized.

AP: You're absolutely right. In fact do you remember that at the same time that the conference in your honour was taking place there was a massive conference on the diaspora? Because this is the moment when the Jamaican government is beginning to woo the diaspora, I mean they've realized for some years now that...

SH: But not only that, look at the negative side as it relates to what we talked about earlier on. They realize that the reputation of Jamaica, including the tourist industry, is being forged by the Jamaican posses in Harlesden. The picture of Jamaica is being formed by what Jamaicans abroad are doing and the reputations they have. Their music, of course Bob Marley, that does Jamaica good; Jamaican posses and deportees, that does Jamaica bad; but in any case its being forged four thousand miles away. So—as tonishing to me—this is the first conference organized by the Jamaican government on the diaspora in all these years! Nearly 60 years after the HMS Windrush, which is the first boat to take Jamaican migrants to England, landed. It landed in 1948. I've described to you the art of three generations! Three generations of black people living in London. We're not just speaking of people who went much earlier on. Three generations of substantial numbers of black and African people

living in London alongside other migrants and this is the first time the Jamaican government thinks it might hear a bit from the diaspora—so I thought this is the right moment when I heard that.

AP: But it's such a coincidence because here it is they're finally recognizing the diaspora by having a huge conference about it at the same time the University of the West Indies is celebrating one of the greatest theorists of the diaspora who happens to be a local son! At the same time there was absolutely no overlap between the two conferences.

SH: No, there was no overlap, which was interesting.

AP: Ok so in your wrap-up talk you were given a window, an opportunity, to respond to the papers that had been given in the course of the conference and you touched on a number of things—there are some phrases that lingered in my mind—which I think I'd like you to elaborate on. You talked about several things—you mentioned lazy scholarship I believe? And you talked about theory being a tool box—what did you mean?

SH: Well, I mentioned lazy scholarship in the context of Marxism. But lazy scholarship you could say in the context of any 'ism'—nationalism has its lazy scholarship for instance. What I mean by that is the notion that what you want to know is given by the interest you hope the knowledge will serve. So because you

hope the knowledge will help to advance the cause of black people and their liberation and their prospering in the world, you know the answers before, because of course you must tell the story now so that all black people are heroic. And all black people have been badly done by and all white people are bad, y'know, it becomes a kind of black and white, simplified story. The phrase 'lazy scholarship' was derived from a comment by Jean Paul Sartre. In *The Question of Method* Jean Paul Sartre says the great French poet, Valéry, was a thorough bourgeois, born into a bourgeois family, remained a bourgeois all his life. What does the critic say? Should he say Valéry is a bourgeois poet? Where's the point of that? We knew that before we started, you don't need to do any research, you haven't found out anything new! That is knowledge as circular, that knowledge has brought you back to the beginning that knowledge is ideology, because what it produces is not knowledge but recognition. Oh we are just what we thought we were! Good old black people. Aha! Matter settled. Whereas Gramsci says the people who are the subordinate class, the people who are the subaltern class need to be cleverer than the rest and they need to have associated with them what are called organic intellectuals. There's a difference between organic intellectuals and traditional intellectuals. Traditional intellectuals reproduce the existing structure of knowledge. They're clever at doing that, but they are working within the framework. But the organic intellectuals who ally themselves with

the emerging forces in history, the ones which are going to disrupt the present and create the future, have to be cleverer because they're trying to get hold of the existing order and reshape it. It's no point their conducting an exercise in lazy scholarship. They have to know more than the traditional intellectuals, they have to be cleverer, more far sighted, more theoretically clued in, more cognitively complicated, more sophisticated y' know. They just have to produce real knowledge. Knowledge is what you didn't know when you started out your investigation. This is not to deny that knowledge is produced in a cause, I'm not advocating knowledge for knowledge's sake. Knowledge in a cause—but not the content of the knowledge. The content of the knowledge has to be free wheeling. That's why Gramsci's phrase was "pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will".

AP: What did he mean by that?

SH: Optimism about the future. We can manage to create a more decent, more just, more equal, more racially just society. Enter the struggle with optimism but armed with the most pessimistic knowledge—things are bad, they really are bad, they're worse than you think and they're going to get worse still. And there isn't some subject of history, the proletariat, the black masses, waiting to rise up and rescue you from the difficult business of shaping a politics which changes things slowly and generating new knowledge over time and battling, having reversals etc. That's pessimism of the intellect.

Pessimism of the intellect produces really useful knowledge which you can associate with the optimism of the political will to create a movement to put these things into effect. So that is my stance towards knowledge production. So I would say to my students, don't think that just by reproducing the best that has been thought and said by traditional intellectuals is good enough. You don't have to subvert them, you don't have to contest them, but you have to question the underlying assumptions which make explicit what they won't make explicit. So that's the sort of thing I meant when I used the phrase "lazy scholarship" and I meant, in the context of saying it here, I did have in mind, you know, nationalism. Because nationalism also has its closures and writing a national history is not only to tell yourselves the stories that flatter you; it's to tell yourself some difficult stories. For instance to go back to a previous conversation, it is to tell yourself the story about black masculinity, which is not a good story at all, it's not a wonderful story. The story of repeating what has been done to you to others, you know, of living out through repetition, through mere repetition, rather than in selfconsciousness and change, of mimicking it further down the line. This should have been tackled at the root. Before you think about building a new nation, think about building some new men to build the new nation y'know? And it hasn't been done. Why not? Well, nationalism closes it up. These are now our people. We must celebrate them, what they do, how they treat their women,

this is Jamaican masculinity, Jamaican virility, Jamaican homophobia...But nationalism also—it doesn't mean I'm not in favour of Jamaican nationalism y'know, I'm a passionate nationalist, I want Jamaica to prosper and be as good as it can be for its people—but the knowledge that organic intellectuals aligning themselves with those emergent forces, the knowledge they have to produce cannot be a selfcomplacent, selfcongratulatory kind of knowledge. It can't be just a recognition of what we already know.

AP: One of the reasons I'm asking again what you said about theory being a tool box is because there is a certain local antipathy to things theoretical and there's a suspicion of theory as being some kind of uber language which local people don't understand or have any use for—can we talk about that a bit?

SH: Yes. The phrase “theory is a tool box” is Michel Foucault's. Foucault talked about theory as a tool box by which he meant to emphasize that the purpose of theory is not to produce theory but to produce useful concepts ok? Why do we need concepts? We need concepts because the world presents itself to us in a series of appearances. Appearances do not explain how things work. They just show you the tropical landscape but this will not tell you the tropical landscape is as it is because it is where it is in the geography, because it is where people came and planted these trees, because its where they brought the bread fruit to feed the

slaves all the way from the South Seas to leaven the salt fish they were importing from Canada to feed the slaves...y'know it won't tell you all that, its just a landscape. You have to have concepts to break the apparent seamlessness of the world of appearances. As Marx said you have to desert the world of appearances to discover the explanatory concepts. But then you come back and say now I can see, now I can interpret what I'm looking at, using these concepts, so these concepts become your tools. Alright let's talk about what you talked about, namely the suspicion of and antipathy toward theory and I want to say two rather contradictory things about that. I want to say on the one hand I also have a suspicion of theory; I'm suspicious of anyone who says I want to be a theorist, you know this is like saying I want to be a thinker, well everybody's a thinker, what do you mean you want to be a thinker, you can't be a theorist—you can do theory; It's an activity, it's a practice. What being a theorist means is that you want people to worship you for being excessively clever so I'm not in favour of theory in that way. I'll explain to you why I think we need theory ok? And I'm talking really about the period of my own work, which has been shaped by really two major forces: One is structuralist-Marxism, and though it was Marxism, it was not economicist Marxism. It is only the Marxism of Althusser and Gramsci which is structuralist-Marxism—which is not reductionist and not economicist—and only in that moment could I have become really close to Marxism. And then post-

structuralism, that's the French thinkers, Foucault, Deleuze, Guattari...

AP: But Stuart this is precisely what I'm talking about because those very French thinkers that you mention are associated with very difficult language...

SH: What I'm telling you is—it's hard to get the balance right—they too have led to theoretical excess, they have been taken up in theoreticist ways, in ways which privilege them as theorists and which privilege their work as doing theory and which tries to do theory in the most obscure way. I've heard a very leading postcolonial theorist say, well, I don't mind if only three people understand it... but that should worry any serious intellectual. So there has been a kind of theoreticism. When I was teaching at the Centre for Cultural Studies I had a very very bright student who was into all the French theory and he could not write a word, he could not write a sentence. He wrote himself out of being able to write because he wrote: Really—really? But what is real ity? I can't use the word “really” because we don't know—what is the real? Well Lacan says the real is this and...y'know, he literally could not utter a word. So I know theoreticism, I really do, and I know theoretical jargon and I know people who are not saying anything that they couldn't have said in perfectly ordinary ways, but use the jargon to obfuscate their texts; and I know people who have the theory at the beginning so that you can't read the first two pages at all, then they go and

do a perfectly ordinary, empirical study which they could have done without the benefit of the tool box, I know all the excesses of theory. Nevertheless I'm committed to thinking theoretically because I don't think you can understand the world without it.

So now you come to something else. An excessive response to theoreticism itself which is a sign of provincialism. Y'know—I don't want to bother with these funny ideas that come from somewhere else—Gramsci reminded us that common sense is the residue of yesterday's theory. People who have forgotten empiricism is a theory just think empirically; they think the world is just as it is. They don't realize that they are the inheritors already of a fully elaborated theory. When they say so and so is a good man, so and so is a bad man, they don't know that they're thinking in the discourse of Christianity and Christian morals, ok? Common sense is sort of what's left over of the grand theories of the past ok? So, without recognizing that they themselves are using concepts, a lot of them are old Marxists—Marx, can you imagine! This great European thinker seems to them like common sense [laughing] but French theory seems to them like theory! So there are plenty of confusions and there is a certain provincialism, there is also a certain anti-intellectualism.

AP: Yes! A very distressing anti-intellectualism –

SH: A very distressing anti-intellectual-

ism which really...

AP: Which says that everything should be couched in “accessible” language and somehow unless masses of people can appreciate what you’re saying then you’re being obfuscatory.

SH: And this is a particular danger in the humanities and the social sciences be cause their materials are either a literary work or philosophical work or music or in the social sciences its about human life. Nobody would tell you that you don’t need concepts in mathematics or in physics. Nobody would tell you that. And speaking of jargon, mathematical jargon, mathematical symbols—you need to understand them to follow—in the sciences everybody accepts that you have to learn the language in order to understand what is being said. But in the humanities and social sciences they some how think it’s just ordinary life, common sense will take you through it and so this leads to a kind of provincialism, everything must be accessible. It’s also a kind of populism. Do it this way then the masses will come to us. A misplaced populism. *Of course* one should respect the people and one should conduct the translation of serious intellectual work into terms that ordinary people can understand—*of course*—that is what teaching is about, that’s what pedagogy is about. Gramsci says pedagogy is intrinsic to the duty of the intellectual, to make them selves understood to the widest possible audience but only when they them selves understand something.

AP: It’s also the task of informed journalists, their task is to make these ideas accessible, but it’s not the task of the intellectual necessarily...

SH: Of course it isn’t, of course not, it’s not the job of intellectuals and then they’re often not very good at making it widely understood so I do recognize that there is a trap of theoreticism to be avoided but I think that work cannot be seriously done without the benefit of theory and concepts. And therefore walking that line between the Scylla of theoreticism and the Charybdis of overpopulism, anti-intellectualism and so on is a difficult road. But I think that’s what being an organic intellectual as Gramsci described it is; I think that’s what is required.

AP: Locally there’s a great suspicion of what people refer to as postmodernism and postmodernist ideas, cultural relativism etc. But again I think that very often people because they haven’t taken the trouble to find out what exactly these ideas are—they tend to mislabel things. So would you call your self a postmodernist?

SH: I would not call myself a postmodernist.

AP: But then many people seem to think you are. Why is that?

SH: Yes, that’s because I don’t believe in first principles. I don’t derive everything from foundational philosophy. I’m not a foundationalist. I think there are no origins for thought. There are not any first principles. You’re always in the midst of

thought; you’re already in thought by the time you’re thinking about thought. You can’t go back to before thought to find truth. There’s thought and then there’s good thought and good thought is sort of truth and next year this thought won’t be good enough because the truth will have moved on you so it’s no longer true and therefore, one is bound to be, in the modern world, a certain kind of relativist. You recognize that ideas are relative to their time, relative to their place, that thinkers are defined by their location in their societies, there’s a politics of location etc. We are not subjects outside of thinking, subjects outside of place, subjects outside of time etc. So in that sense I suppose people may think I’m a postmodernist, though it’s really what I think of as poststructuralism, I think of that as poststructuralism. Now why do I say I’m not a postmodernist? Well, I’m a postmodernist descriptively, that is to say, I recognize that a lot of modern art and architecture belongs to a period called postmodernism just like a lot of art and architecture before that belonged to modernism. I think we are beyond modernism, so we are postmodernists in that sense, descriptively. This doesn’t mean that I subscribe to the particular characteristics and values ascribed to postmodernism. I’m not a campaigning postmodernist but I will say that’s a postmodernist piece of work. Take postmodernist architecture. I know postmodernist architecture. Postmodernist architecture, because it’s relativist, borrows from all the styles; it has a piece of classical architecture, and a

piece of modern architecture and a piece of...renaissance architecture, so it’s a hopeless mess. But it is postmodernism, a bric-a-brac of bits and pieces, raiding all the past—that’s a postmodernist thing to do. So I recognize that there are artists who are postmodernist, that there is work that you can call postmodernist.

AP: Like that wonderful building in Port Antonio...

SH: Absolutely! I mean that building is a completely postmodernist building. You don’t know how to get into it, you don’t know whether it has any insides, or only outsides; you don’t know whether it’s meant to be a public building or a building where any and everybody has sort of raided it and set up shop inside it. Architecturally we don’t know what period it belongs to: is it colonial, postcolonial, you don’t know. That hodge podge is a certain kind of postmodernism. The reason why I’m not a postmodernist is because you know, one of the central tenets of postmodernism is that you can raid the past because history is at an end, y’know we’ve come to the end of history...

AP: Now see a sentence like that is confusing—what do you mean when you say we’re at the end of history?

SH: Well, I don’t know. That’s why I’m not a postmodernist, postmodernists say that.

AP: Like Fukuyama...

SH: yeah, like Fukuyama. Y’know—we’ve arrived, liberal democracy is the

last ideology there will be on earth etc. It's the finale of history; all of history has been leading up to this. When Hegel talked about the moment when the real and the rational would come together, when truth and knowledge and the state would be one—It's now, ok? And its name is the United States [laughs]. Its name is US global imperialism. I mean that is what Fukuyama is saying. Well, how can I be a postmodernist in that sense? I mean half the world hasn't started its history. Jamaica only began its history 10, 50 years ago. Africa is waiting to begin history. History hasn't come to it in a proper sense yet. So what does it mean when theorists of the left bank, y'know world weary, or architects in New York or Las Vegas or Los Angeles, with a big yawn, a world weary yawn announce that we're at the end of history? I don't believe we're at the end of history at all. I believe that we've gone into a new phase, I do believe that. I think globalization is a new phase, I think it started in the 70s, you could talk about globalization in a very distinctive way. It's not the first globalization that the formation of the Caribbean was a product of, and there've been about ten globalizations since then ok? The globalization of high imperialism, the globalization of mercantile trade, y'know on and on.

But we're into a new phase of globalization now that I don't believe is the end of history. I don't believe this is the last globalization there will be, there's a globalization beyond this...So I'm not a post-modernist in that sense. I don't subscribe

to the values intrinsic in postmodernism as an epoch but I recognize there's a kind of epoch called postmodernism just like there was modernism and the reason it's called postmodernism is because the real break was in modernism; that was the real break. And postmodernism is modernism in the streets, that's what I call it. It's what the modernist artists were trying to do taken out of the museum and made into malls yeah? [laughing] It's what happens when the modernist impulse becomes popular culture. When everybody is sitting on a Duchamps-designed toilet bowl. That is postmodernism! See—modernism makes the break, it makes the break with representation. We've been in the epoch of representation since the Renaissance. Since 3-dimensional work in the visual arts we've had a form of representation which tried to mirror the real but once you get to modernism the photograph has imaged the real. So what's the point of artists going on drawing a tree like a tree? A photograph can tell you what this tree likely looks like.

So I'll draw a tree that is like the poem of a tree, so I'll draw an abstract impression of the tree. The idea is a fundamental break and it's a break not only in the visual arts, it's a break with Newtonian physics, it's the break of relativity in mathematics, it's the break of quantum physics...

AP: Which many of—which we all accept!

SH: We all live in a post-Einsteinian world which is a relative world. It's all

about relativism, it's all about y'know, you can't step out side the universe, you have to mention the universe while you're moving around in it. Relative to a moving universe there are no absolutes. That is the essence of relativism—relativity is what it's called.

AP: But scientific relativity is ok, cultural relativism isn't.

SH: Exactly. So the break which modernism makes with representation, etc. is so fundamental that I view postmodernism as the next turn in the cycle of modernism. It's what happens in the aftermath of modernism, the afterwash of modernism. It still has a lot of modernism secreted in it but it's come out of the museum, it's come out of fine arts, it's come out...

AP: But modernism is...when you say modernism you're talking about being individuals, about rationality, etc.?

SH: No, no, I'm not talking about that. By modernism I meant specifically the visual arts, I mean post-Picasso. Between Renoir—between the late impressionists and Picasso. I mean the move into abstraction in visual arts. No, modernity is different from modernism and has a much longer history. Modernity dates from the Enlightenment and that is where we begin with rationality and enlightenment, secular thought, you know the break with religious ideas. Science—the idea of science—everything being a science, the idea of individuality...

AP: And universality...

SH: Yes, so all the laws are universal laws y'know, the universal brotherhood of man, the universal rights of man, the constitution, the Lockean Constitution, the French Revolution—they're all enlightenment thinkers first shaped by Locke—he's a wonderful enlightenment thinker; the second shaped by the French Revolution, by Rousseau etc. This is the Enlightenment. This is the birth of modern social science, the birth of the scientific attitude, the birth of secularism; with Descartes, the birth of the modern individual; it's the birth of notions of self, yes? Renaissance man was preoccupied with the individual also, Shakespeare was for example, but not with a self in the way in which Descartes thinks it. That is modern—the modern; that's modernity—living in the world of modernity. Modernism is a specific aesthetic, philosophical, and cognitive movement that comes late in modernity. Really at the turn of the century. Between the 1890s and 1910. And you know modernism in that sense is an attitude of mind which is not confined to Europe although we think of them together. First of all Picasso and Braque were profoundly influenced by...

AP: Africa.

SH: By Africa. Feeling that the art of the European was running out of steam and had to be refreshed by the creativity of the world outside of Europe. So modernism already has its roots in—and outside—of Europe. But in addition to that the modern attitude to art is everywhere—it's in

the Latin American modernists—and it is why Ronald Moodie and Aubrey Williams and Frank Bowling go to England. Because they were already modernists!

AP: So they were going to the Mecca of modernism...

SH: They were going to the Mecca of modernism but this is because they were modern artists, they were already working in abstraction. Indian artists were already working in abstraction before they got to London. They only got to go to London, as the writers y'know black American writers like Richard Wright and James Baldwin went to Paris, because it was where things were being done...

AP: But isn't it ironic – I've been over-using this word "ironic" but...

SH: No, these are the ironies of history.

AP: What I find ironic in this whole discourse about art and so on here is that—or what we were just talking about, that prevalence of a certain anti-intellectual attitude –but you have people here, highly educated people who appreciate abstraction in art, who don't have a problem with it. But those same people will turn around and say that theoretical abstraction is a problem.

SH: Well, frankly, I think that's not ironic, I think that's bad faith.

AP: What do you mean?

SH: I think they won't own up to what they themselves unconsciously know; I

think it's what's called an act of disavowal.

AP: Because how can you accept abstraction in art but not in intellectual work, that's kind of contradictory.

SH: Abstraction is precisely the movement away from the appearance of things. We see the form which is a kind of concept—the idea of the real thing—so for them to be anti-theoretical, what they mean of course...This is a product of modernity. What they think is, well this idea about abstraction, it's just common sense now. What they mean is I don't like the new ideas, I don't like the ones which are coming along; I'm the product of the ones that came along last time but I don't want anymore new ones to come along and disturb the ones I already have. So they're talking about a very particular challenge or set of ideas that challenge and lead one to question the assumptions on which they've been working. Although to be fair one has to say this is a difficult process. If you're a practicing artist you work within a set of assumptions, you work within a form and you try to refine it. To be shaken at the roots in your fifties and to say, I'm sorry I'll think again y'know...to be a late impressionist and to say well, I'll try to draw like Picasso in my fifties, is a hard thing to ask. One has to appreciate how hard it is what one is asking them to do. But of course one may not be asking them to do that. One is asking them to appreciate that what happened to them in their youth when they were first fired by the ideas of modernism and ab-

straction is still happening in another way to another generation and they should be as tolerant of them as they would have liked...

AP: Or at least to be open-minded and not so closed.

SH: Yes, of course, that is a perfectly reasonable thing to ask.

AP: David Scott opened up the conference by giving a paper called Stuart Hall's Voice and in your closing remarks you said something to the effect that once we had heard that paper we could all go home. What did you mean by that?

SH: Well, the conference was subtitled "The Thought of Stuart Hall"...which given what I've said about theorists is a bit ironic. But nevertheless I can't quarrel with that. Fine. Ok. David gave a wonderful paper. What I meant by going home was not that we could have done without the many other interesting papers that were given but in so far as the subject was the thought of Stuart Hall I thought he'd pretty much got it right at the beginning.

AP: You mean he summarized you?

SH: Yes, he summarized me as I understand myself with great eloquence, great penetration and understanding. So I thought it laid to rest the question of the thought of Stuart Hall; if you want to know about the thought of Stuart Hall read David's paper. And so let us go on to talk about something else, let us talk about

the thought of Jamaica, contemporary Jamaica or the thought of dancehall etc. Now, I suppose you're going to ask me what it is about David's paper...

AP: Yes, of course...

SH: A number of things that he said. First of all he said he read me less because of my position as a cultural theorist and more because of my interventions. I was an interventionist, my writing is interventionist ok? That is to say I write in order to intervene in a situation, to shift the terms in which it's understood, to introduce a new angle, to contest how it has been understood before; it's an embattled form of writing. I don't just write a piece. So that's why I don't write books because I can't just sit down in my study and think "I'm going to write a book about X" y'know, it doesn't sort of interest me but if somebody says "This is like this" and I think "No, no, no it's not like that at all, it's like this" Well, I've written a piece in a flash ok? And probably published it in some obscure journal 'cause that's where the original piece that I'm contesting or wanting to argue with or shift the position of, appeared. So it's a kind of intellectual interventionism. This is a kind of politics in theory, because it's interested in struggling thought—struggling in thought. Not interested in the production of pure truth, absolute truth, universal truth. It's interested in the production of better ideas than the ones we used to have. So it's a kind of struggle in thought, a struggle with thought and a struggle inside thought, struggle inside thinking to change the

terms of reference with which we're thinking. There's also a politics of thought in the sense that it wants to make the ideas useful for some purpose; it wants to help people think more clearly about their situation or to help to advance nationalism in a more progressive direction or to help the world become a more equal and just place. Or be less racist, less homophobic etc. It's tied to a longterm political project, not as I've said before, that the project defines the content of the thinking but the thinking is not happening in some absolute outer space. It's located in a space and time and responding to a set of conjectures, a set of conditions. The second thing that is said is that therefore I'm not a philosopher. And what is meant by that is that I'm not in search of absolute truth and I don't derive things from first principles so if I'm a theorist I don't begin with the first principles and deduce everything from it in a Platonic way yeah? Y'know—the ideal of justice and then these are the actual systems of justice derived from the ideal of justice. I really don't go back to the ideal of justice at all. What I would say is the ideal of justice exists in all the systems of justice there ever have been. You add them all up, you get the ideal of justice. It's only justice in so far as it's a system of judging people and trying to be just towards them. And the ideas which guide that system are the ideas of justice for that moment. Next week we might have the French Revolution and the ideas of justice will be different. They'll chop off every counter-revolutionary's head. That's another system of justice, you've

to choose between them. But you don't go back and say "That is not justice but this is justice" because there's some ideal abstract Platonic universal conception of justice which everybody should share from the beginning of time to the end of time, from one society to every other society ok?

So I don't derive things from first principles. I don't think he means I'm not philosophical because y'know I'm interested in general ideas, I am interested in theory as you know. Now behind this I think, as far as David is concerned, is another kind of argument going on. First of all it's an argument derived from Foucault who engaged in an argument always with philosophers, but never called himself a philosopher. There's no Foucauldian philosophy. There's Foucauldian method, there's Foucauldian history, Foucauldian accounts of institutions, there are Foucauldian theories about practice but there's no Foucauldian philosophy. There's an engagement with Nietzsche, there's an engagement with Descartes, there's an engagement with Rousseau, there's an engagement with Sartre, there's an engagement with the existentialists.

There's a second contestation involving David's—I'm talking about David now y'know, I'm not talking about me. I'm talking about why David *himself* is an interventionist or why he responds to the interventionism in my work. He's not so much an interventionist, but he is *not* a philosopher like he says I'm not a phi-

losopher. And that is one of the things we share. Now there's another way in which he is not a philosopher and neither am I but he really is the key leading figure here and why this was what he was talking about. He does not subscribe to the new attempt to found an African philosophy. Paget Henry, Lewis Gordon, that school of thought—y'know—there must be distinctively African ways of thinking and that must add up to a general philosophy with the same kinds of universality as Western philosophy.

And I think that David is not in favour of that project; it's not that Paget Henry's book is not a serious book or that he isn't a serious scholar. No, he's a very serious—I like him very much, he's a very nice person, he's a very serious thinker. But the project of founding an African philosophy and of Jamaican thought as an outpost of African philosophy is—I'm critical of that because it's a kind of essentialism and David is critical of that because it goes back to first principles. It tries to erect African first principles and he's not in favour of erecting any first principles. We both more than David—are sort of Derridean, we're in the era of deconstruction ok? Now, I'm a Derridean in this sense that Derrida says I'm trained in Western European philosophy ok? I cannot reason philosophically without the benefit of Western philosophical ideas and concepts, however, I can no longer think with them because the circumstances in which they arose have changed. So all I can do is to deconstruct

it. So I think with the concepts but I know they can't take me very far and I know I can't assume what they assume so I think with the concept undererasure. This is the concept with the mark through it—so I'm not yet founding a new philosophy, I'm still in the ground of the old philosophy but I'm thinking the "a-fter", the "post-"

AP: I think Appadurai or someone talks about ideas whose shelf life is over, whose expiry date has passed.

SH: Yes, exactly! Y'know the important thing is you're still thinking with the old ideas but no longer as they were used. They were valorized positively in the past; you are using them in their deconstructed state. So when people in the past said "identity" they meant the inner core of the being which is unchanged through life. I also talk about identity but I mean the opposite of that—I mean that self which is being produced from time to time. I'm thinking identity under erasure. I'm thinking identity in its deconstructed form. So I cannot be a philosopher of a first principle because that would be to found a new Hallian philosophy and go about making converts to Hallian philosophy but I don't have a philosophy like that. I have a method—you can be associated with the method by practicing the method yourself. But you can't become a convert to my philosophy because I don't have one like that. Incidentally this is why almost all the movements of any value now are called "post"—because they're post-the moment when the ideas were in their positive form. Modernism is its positive

form, what is left over of that – postmodernism. Colonialism is its positive form, what is left over from that—postcolonialism. Structuralism in its Althusserian form—deconstructed—what is left over from that—post-structuralism. Feminism in its first pristine form, then people began to say well, are you a black woman or a white woman, you can't be feminist in that universalist way, you can't talk about universal womanhood any longer 'cause the category of women is itself divided between upper class women and lower class women, black women and white women, so your feminism is deconstructed—post-feminism. I'm not a Marxist in that old classical Marxist sense but I use Marxist ideas in their erased form; I'm a post-Marxist. We live in a post-period. This is why I can describe postmodernism and understand what I mean by that though I don't particularly subscribe to those values ok? So in that sense I'm not a philosopher and David makes this very lucidly clear.

Ok that's the second thing. He says a third thing. Incidentally David himself is thinking, is developing this idea of thinking within a problematic—in a very wonderful way so his new book on tragedy which is about CLR James is about why the questions that guided James to write the *Black Jacobins* cannot be the questions that we pose now. We can understand James's achievement by understanding the problematic in which he was working but we are working in a different problematic. That's kind of the relativiza-

tion of philosophy. Ok now the third thing that David said is about ethics. He said that I'm concerned with ethics, questions of ethics. This is also in Foucault incidentally, Foucault talks about ethics a great deal. So does Baumann, so do a number of contemporary philosophers. But the question about ethics is this—If you don't derive everything from first principles—God or materialism or the demiurge or nature, something like that—what guides your life? What guides how you intervene in situations? What shapes your values? In a relativist world you have to make up your ethics everytime you take a decision, because there's no first principles you can invoke. You can't say, Why do I think—oh God told me that—it's written in the book. Ok, fine, but I don't have a book, I don't have a God, I don't have a first principle so I have to decide what am I going to do about the homophobia in dancehall which is a very dynamic form of contemporary urban culture that repeats an ancient form of masculinity and black nationalism? What am I going to think about that? I have to develop an ethical form of conduct, conduct has to be shaped by ethical considerations towards this complex, contradictory phenomenon; I've got finally to say I take up a position here, I see all the way around it, I think it's going to get me into trouble, it's going to get me into trouble with all the wrong people and even some of the right ones, but I have to state my position – that is to live the ethical life.

AP: Is that what you meant by speak-

ing the truth to power?

SH: That's a slightly different thing. I'll come to that if you want me to...But this is to live the ethical life; a life in which morality is not abandoned but morality isn't derived from some prior universal system or philosophy, religion or first principles. Speaking truth to power is something different, speaking truth to power is about being an intellectual and its really a phrase which has been used many times but which Edward Said has made most his own in recent times. And what he means is that the true intellectual is always at odds with the reigning, prevailing system of power. He is what Gramsci called an organic intellectual; he aligned him self with the emerging forces, with the resistance, with the forces that are not yet encapsulated in the given structure of power.

AP: Not part of the status quo...

SH: Not part of the status quo or the given system and so for that reason it is his or her duty to speak what truth he has been able to discover by the application of his conceptual, theoretical tool box, his analysis of the conjuncture—to speak that truth to power at the risk of being locked up, as intellectuals who speak truth to power have been locked up, as Gramsci was locked up, as Copernicus was locked up, as Galileo was locked up for telling the Church that the earth is not flat, it is round and it is one of many other round planets in the universe many of which are bigger than earth! And they locked him up, of course they locked him

up, God created it flat and if you walk to the edge you'll fall off—you know, into his arms! And on and on and on and on, including what you might think of as progressive regimes. Much as I was in favour of the Cuban revolution especially in its early days, not so much in its Leninist days, but in its early days when they emerged in the Sierra Maestre when they weren't communist at all, in its precommunist days—the Castro regime has been awful to dissident intellectuals. Of course it's driven out people who never believed in it but it's driven out people who believed in it as well. People who were saying things like "You shouldn't lock up the homosexuals, you shouldn't lock up the prostitutes, Fidel! You of all people should know—you were in prison yourself for speaking truth to power. Battista put you in jail, put you in the Moncada prison so how come you don't know that to speak truth to power is a dangerous thing and you've got to tolerate it even if you don't like it because otherwise you're unconsciously repeating the pattern of doing to somebody else what was done to you!" So even in good regimes, intellectuals have to speak truth to power. Edward Said you know has been passionately in favour of the Palestinian cause but he is not afraid of saying Arafat is a lousy leader, he's very corrupt, extremely corrupt. He has not encouraged the democratization of the Palestinian cause. He's played a sort of double role etc, he's not a good thing. Of course he's in favour of Arafat winning, he is in favour of the Palestinians winning but he became a member

of Arafat's movement and left! He said—I cannot stand the corruption in there—so he was willing to speak truth to power including the power of his own side.

AP: Did you know Edward Said?

SH: Yes, I knew Edward well and I got to know him very very well just before his death in the years before his death. He was a very wonderful man, very inspiring, he inspired my life really in many important respects in the period of postcolonial thinking. I miss him very much. His death is a great loss, a profound loss I think,

and one of the most wonderful things that Edward did at the end was to write his book on Freud and the Jewish people. He asks—In what way was Freud Jewish? And he re-reads Moses and Monotheism, which is a Freud text, in order to remind people that monotheism did not begin in the tribes of Palestine. It was a shared cause with Egypt. Moses, of course, comes out of Egypt—though he is a great Jewish leader who leads the Jews out of captivity—but he is formed, born, as an Egyptian.



He's a parable of how in the ultimate cause the Israelis and Palestinians are one people, one Semitic people, all derived from the same effing book if you'll excuse my language, the same Bible that the Jews read the first part of, which is the history of their people; the Christians read that part plus the other part while the Jews are waiting for the other part to happen. They're waiting for their Messiah etc. y'know, these are part and parcel of the idea that Jews and Palestinians cannot live in the same country; but they've lived together since the Bible was written! It's just a monstrosity. So Said is passionately against Sharon and his Zionism and the Israeli treatment of the Palestinian people but he's not against Jews, he's not an anti-Semite! So in that way he speaks a kind of truth to the Muslim brotherhood; so to speak truth to power is to always maintain

a certain distance between yourself and the powers that be, including progressive powers, progressive governments and people who are doing the best for the people and are going to do the best for you – they're going to lock up somebody and somebody is going to have to say: Don't lock them up, tolerate them, more tolerance please, more justice here, more equality here... and that is the function of the intellectual. The privilege of being slightly removed from the everyday thrust of making a living in the market place, the great tache and privilege that intellectuals have, of writing, thinking, teaching at one step removed from the immediate sources and play of power, is their freedom to speak truth back to power. Not to live in the ivory tower but to speak truth back to power.