

# In memory of Stuart Hall

The news that our much loved co-editor Stuart Hall had died arrived as this issue was going to press. Words cannot express our sense of loss. There is no-one who can fill the gap Stuart has left - intellectually, politically or personally. What follows is a brief personal appreciation: in future issues of *Soundings* all of us will reflect further on the outstanding legacy Stuart has left behind.

Stuart was both an innovative and exciting thinker and a wonderful teacher. This is why so many of us regard him as our political lodestar. He was always a participant in debate; he was further away from an ivory tower than any other academic I have come across. For me he was the most important and formative thinker of my life.

Stuart opened up whole new worlds to so many of us through his pioneering insights about the centrality of culture to politics, a constant theme of his intellectual and political work. From the late 1970s onwards, cultural studies - under Stuart's tutelage - became an intellectual smorgasbord, as the ideas streaming out of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies helped us to make sense of some of the knotty problems we were wrestling with. This was a time when many on the left were trying to find ways out of the straitjacket into which orthodoxy had confined marxism, and to find models of change beyond the revolutionary putsch. And Stuart's ideas helped us think through these issues - to find a 'marxism without guarantees'. Not least, his readings of Gramsci gave us novel and exciting ways of thinking about politics - which found their most notable first expression in his writings on Thatcherism.

Stuart saw Thatcherism as the response of a particular political formation to longer-term trends in the British economy and society. He coined the term Thatcherism in his 1979 article 'The great moving right show', in which he discussed how this emerging political formation was constructing and articulating

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together new political forms.<sup>1</sup> He emphasised that this was a hegemonic project, which was responding to the changed political situation in an extremely radical way. He used the term authoritarian populism to describe Thatcherism, which he saw as an attempt to inaugurate a new moral order. The wide ranging nature of his analysis was something I had not seen before. And his ideas about hegemony also pointed to ideas about counter-hegemony, and thus different forms of left response.

These ideas about analysing whole formations, and their rootedness in both the specifics of the moment and longer-term trends, as well as the need to look at how they articulated together many other elements, were a completely new way of looking at politics for many of us. (Readers of *Soundings* will be aware of the way Stuart continued to develop such ideas to understand New Labour and then Cameronian Toryism - which he saw as distinct phases of the neoliberal conjuncture.) For Stuart politics always involved so much more than a narrow contest of economic interests. Although he drew inspiration for many of these ideas from Gramsci, Stuart developed them in creative ways, so that they became something new. What he shared with Gramsci, however, was an inexorable focus on the specifics of a political moment, and a drive to analyse that came from deep political commitment.

Stuart was a regular contributor to *Marxism Today* in the decade following the moving right show article, and as it progressed he kept on producing analyses of Thatcherism and its times that were unequalled anywhere else. I think this was partly because Stuart liked to be so deeply immersed in the culture he was writing about - as he once said, he liked to get up close and 'smell' Thatcherism. People sometimes mistook this for approval, but in reality it was a close critical appreciation - Stuart often used to laugh with genuine amusement as he analysed the sheer effrontery of the ploys of the powerful, but his opposition was always relentless.

And in the mean time cultural studies was transforming the ways we thought about so many aspects of politics - and especially about identity. Stuart's work here was transformative - both for my generation and those that came after. For myself this involved thinking differently about feminism, and for many other friends it opened up new and liberating ways of thinking about race and representation. For all of us the 1980s was a decade of new and horizon-widening ideas, and Stuart was the central figure within that experience.

When Stuart became one of the three founding editors of *Soundings* (with Doreen

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Massey and Michael Rustin) I was thrilled to be part of the team as publisher. And ever since then I have felt privileged to have had opportunities of being more closely involved with Stuart's work.

As I am working on *Soundings* now I am dealing with articles and projects that Stuart was involved in from the beginning - especially the Manifesto, a project which was very important to him in recent years - and I feel bereft that he is no longer here to talk with us about what happens next. We of course have to carry on the conversations, but things will never be the same without his warm, witty and wise presence.

Sally Davison

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## Notes

1. 'The Great Moving Right Show', *Marxism Today*, January 1979. Reprinted in Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques (eds), *The Politics of Thatcherism*, Lawrence & Wishart 1983, p23.

# Editorial

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We start the issue with the two most recent instalments from the Kilburn Manifesto. Beatrix Campbell writes on the ways in which patriarchy is entangled with neoliberalism, while Ben Little writes on the ways in which generational politics is articulated to its project. As Beatrix pointed out at a recent *Soundings* seminar, both pieces are attempts to *map* neoliberalism - to show how it operates in all its complexities and linkages - in order the better to understand and contest it.

Kirsten Forkert explores the culture of neoliberalism as it seeks to shape a new common sense about debt and hard work - debt morality. Stuart Hall and Alan O'Shea's manifesto instalment looked at ways in which notions of fairness are contested, and Kirsten develops this to show that debt is integral to such understandings. For some, fairness means that social rights - benefits or services - should be seen social debts; and social debtors must therefore live their lives according to the precepts of the harshest austerity. If hard workers are suffering under austerity, how much more must non-workers suffer? Kirsten traces ways in which notions of belonging and therefore worthiness have been culturally defined in relation to outsiderdom and unworthiness since at least the 1970s, when *Policing the Crisis* showed how race was deployed as a means of signifying outsider status. This cultural work is continuing as the category of the undeserving poor is constantly enlarged.

Anita Biressi and Heather Nunn explore how selfishness is of ever more frequent circulation within the political lexicon, including being increasingly validated as a virtue. As they argue, thinkers such as Friedrich Hayek and Ayn Rand actively worked to popularise individualism and self-interest (the latter being the acceptable face of selfishness); and Rand in particular shared with Margaret Thatcher the ability to 'infuse laissez-faire economics with deeply moral convictions centred on the importance of individual character' (indeed, as they point out, it was Ayn Rand who first wrote that 'there is no such entity as "society"'). For thinkers such as these, it is indeed unfair that hard workers should be legally required to support the subsistence and well-being of their fellows. Anita and Heather have been working in the tradition of Raymond Williams's keywords in order to discover how meanings

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such as these are shaped within popular culture to achieve specific political ends.

The participants in our roundtable discussion reflect on working lives, especially those of the young. As Ben argues in his manifesto contribution, it is no longer only the working-class young who are living precariously - middle-class young people too are vulnerable in a world that is pulling up the drawbridge to all outsiders, including new entrants; while Beatrix argues that welfare states are crucial for women's equality, and that the withdrawal of provision is making the lives of working mothers unbearable. Both these points are borne out in this discussion, where the problems of internship (working for nothing) and the general precarity of so many working lives, as well as the lack of social child care provision and the undervaluing of care work, are brought into relief - but the participants also reject the harshness and drudgery of many people's experience of work. And they also discuss new ways of resisting in the workplace, and of making alliances, while their creative ideas for protest point to the interesting things that can happen when committed theory meets practice.

Elsewhere in this issue Ove Sernhede discusses the ways in which Swedish outsiders - who, as in France, live in the suburbs - are finding new ways to challenge segregation and assert their right to belong; Steve Iliffe and Richard Bourne look at the challenges facing an incoming Labour government needing to rescue the health service - and put forward useful ideas on how to do so. One way, as they argue, is by making relationships more central to the workings of the NHS - something that Hilary Cottam has been arguing for some time now. Hilary writes in response to Michael Rustin's manifesto chapter on a relational society, and gives more examples of ways of working that place human relationships at their centre; and she also emphasises the importance of gender within these relationships.

Simon Garnett reports on the new Grand Coalition in Germany, and argues that there is a risk that the strong desire for stability in Germany could lead to a kind of anti-politics where antagonistic interests are not represented and negotiated. The Bundestag opposition in Germany is numerically small, and this makes it all the more important that they seek to articulate the views of the unrepresented. Debates in Germany also figure in Chris Hann's piece, which argues that, though the current German debate triggered by Wolfgang Streeck's book is interesting for what it reveals about the incompatibility of democracy and capitalism, the debate suffers from a restricted focus on narrowly defined European boundaries. Chris argues that we

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should be thinking in terms of co-operation - and a single currency - across the whole Eurasian landmass.

The intersections of politics and culture are seen through a different prism in our small selection from Reel Iraq's poetry collection. What would it mean to travel to Iraq as a poet rather than a soldier?

Our last piece looks at the present through a strong sense of political generation. Reflecting the point in history when they first became immersed in feminist and socialist politics, the authors of *Beyond the Fragments* - guest-featuring Pragna Patel - reflect on the heady days of the 1970s, and discuss what we could learn from those times. All four of them remain committed to the ideas of their youth - feminism, democracy, grassroots organising, alliances, the personal as political, even socialism! - but argue the need to learn the lessons of the past, not least from our defeats, in order to build more resilient alliances today.

I wish Stuart was still here to argue with us about all these articles and ideas. But I also know that the best way to honour his memory is to continue with these debates.