Title
Thinking “Diaspora” with Stuart Hall

Journal
Qui Parle, 27(1)

ISSN
1041-8385

Author
Sharpe, Jenny

Publication Date
2018-06-01

DOI
10.1215/10418385-4382974

Peer reviewed

Thinking "Diaspora" with Stuart Hall

JENNY SHARPE

In my twenty-five years of teaching Caribbean literature at American universities, I have found that the most difficult concept for students to grasp is the different historical formations of identities across the African diaspora. They are often perplexed when confronted with Afro-Caribbean characters of the colonial era who do not identify themselves as black. "But how can they not think of themselves as black?" declared one student with indignation. "I have always known I'm black." The answer to her question leads us, as does Stuart Hall's work, to the power of language, narrative, and culture. "Although everyone perfectly understood what 'black' meant," he explains in his posthumously published memoir, *Familiar Stranger*, "the very word was taboo, unsayable, especially for the middle classes in Jamaica in the 1930s and 1940s."[1] Caribbean novels written on the cusp of decolonization, like George Lamming's classic *In the Castle of My Skin*, describe the damaging effects of an educational system that promoted Englishness to instill in the colonized an identification with the white ruling class. Settled in 1605, Lamming's island home of Barbados was known as Little England because culturally it was the most English of all Britain's West Indian colonies.

QUI PARLE Vol. 27, No. 1, June 2018
DOI 10.1215/10418385-4382974

Even after decolonization, the new nation continued to take pride in its Little England identity.[2]

In the Castle of My Skin recounts the process of what Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o calls a colonization of the mind, of black people's alienation from themselves, their culture, and their own race, but it does so to introduce the potential for change at a future point in time. There is a beautiful and moving moment near the novel's end when Trumper, a friend of the protagonist, returns from the United States with a Paul Robeson recording. As the two youths lean in to listen to the baritone voice singing "Let My People Go," Trumper explains how he learned about his race during a visit to the United States. He goes on to say, "'Course the blacks here are my people too, but they don't know it yet. You don't know it yourself. None o' you here on this islan' know what it mean to fin' race."[3] Trumper's words describe how he discovered his racial identity from encountering civil rights in the United States. The *yet* predicts a future that would come to pass, and it did as one by one the islands threw off the mantle of colonization and race consciousness spread through the transnational connections of pan-Africanism and Black Power.

Hall similarly introduces a future that would come to pass when he describes growing up in a lower-middle-class family when Jamaica was still a British colony. He explains how the island existed as a black-and-brown society without explicitly identifying itself as black until the late sixties: "Blackness had not yet become a positive term to be claimed, or a leading category for group identification, or for collective political organization—although this was changing fast, especially among the emerging Pan-African minority" (*FS*, 99). Since Hall left for England in 1951, he missed that moment of change in Jamaica but claimed his blackness through activism in the seat of empire. "Civil rights made me accept being a black intellectual," he plainly states in an interview. Feeling the need to explain what he means, he adds with a smile, "There was no such thing before, but then it was something . . . so I became one."[4] While the phrasing of "there was no such thing before" might appear strange to those of us who can think of any number of black intellectuals prior to the late sixties, Hall's words have to be contextualized by an era in which blacks in Britain were more likely identified as "immigrants"

or "coloured" than as "black," which was an identity that had to be fought for and claimed.

Yet the black identity that emerged in Britain, while influenced by American black nationalism, assumed a form unique to the British experience. "'Black,'" Hall explains about the usage of the term in Britain, "came to provide the organizing category of a new politics of resistance, among groups and communities with, in fact, very different histories, traditions and ethnic identities."[5] He is alluding to how "black" was a political rather than racial identity assumed by people of African *and* Asian descent for combating a racism that positioned both groups as outsiders to a white-identified nation. This usage was not the same as in the ethnic coalition building in the United States, and perhaps the greater flexibility of *black* in Britain had to do with the first wave of South Asian immigrants coming from East Africa and the Caribbean. Ambalavaner Sivanandan describes how the Radical Action Adjustment Society (RAAS), while inspired by Malcolm X's visit to London in 1965, took its antiracist form from places like Trinidad and Guyana, whose Indo-Caribbean populations outnumber their Afro-Caribbean ones. "RAAS's 'nationalism,'" Sivanandan explains, "stemming as it did from the West Indian experience, combined an understanding of how colonialism had divided the Asian and African and Caribbean peoples (coolie, savage and slave) with an awareness of how that same colonialism made them one people now: they were all blacks."[6] Expressing a specific moment of antiracism contingent on the memory of colonialism and identification with anticolonial struggles overseas, the usage of *black* for Afro-Asian unity did not last beyond the mid-eighties, particularly as the cultural identities of South Asian immigrants began to change.[7] However, the fact that the beginnings of black Britain can be traced to people of African and Asian descent is a dramatic instance of its divergence from the historical formation of black America. These divergent histories show that the time of "blackness" is not synchronized across the diaspora. As Hall indicates, black Americans adopted the "dignified, often hyphenated, ethnicized national designation 'African American'" around the same time that people of African and Asian descent in Britain abandoned their political usage of *black* in favor of "the racialized national identity 'black

British'" that excluded Asians.[8] Through his description of colonial Jamaica and his own experience as an immigrant, he is asking us to consider "black" as a historical rather than a historically transcendent category.

My purpose in opening an essay on "diaspora" with the reception of a classic Caribbean novel in the United States alongside Hall's description of his experiences of blackness in Jamaica and Britain is to highlight differences in identity formations across a diaspora that shares the same history of slavery, which are differences that a diaspora frame can allow us to see but also hide. Tiffany Ruby Patterson and Robin D. G. Kelley observe in their expansive review of African diaspora scholarship that taking "diaspora" as a single unit of analysis involves abstracting from particular experiences to make them conform to more generalizable forms of racism and antiracism. This critical move, they argue, has enabled the omission of entire parts of the African diaspora, especially in places where English is not spoken, or else has allowed an African American experience to serve as a norm for black experiences outside the United States.[9]

In "What Is This 'Black' in Black Popular Culture?" Hall warns against using *black* in an ahistorical and essentializing way, even as he acknowledges popular culture as a site of black vernacular expression. He introduces heterogeneity into the idea of "the black experience" to account for a range of differences having to do with not only class, gender, and sexuality but also place, nation, and even diasporas, which he pluralizes. "But it is to the diversity, not the homogeneity, of black experience that we must now give our undivided creative attention," he declares before listing some of these differences. "This is not simply to appreciate the historical and experiential differences within and between communities, regions, country and city, across national cultures, between diasporas, but also to recognize the other kinds of differences that place, position, and locate black people."[10] If the *black* that qualifies *culture* and *experience* risks overlooking the heterogeneity of place and nation, does it run the same risk when used in conjunction with *diaspora*? Hall would answer in the affirmative. He follows the phrase *across national cultures*, a transnational approach suggesting diaspora, with *between diasporas*, thereby indicating that there are more than one black diaspora or that a black diaspora potentially intersects with other

ones. While he does not say what he means by historical and experiential differences between diasporas in this essay, an explanation can be derived from those works in which he uses "diaspora" as a conceptual frame. Hall's antiessentialist approach to diasporic cultures also involves refining and reformulating statements made at earlier points in time. By examining his diaspora model across three overlapping essays, I demonstrate how its parameters as a category for describing Caribbean and black British cultures shift and change.[11]

Now that Hall's legacy is being commemorated and his intellectual stature recognized, it is important that we not lose sight of what I consider his most important contribution to black diaspora studies: his attention to geographically specific formations of black cultural identities across the diaspora. He warns against generalizing from national or regional histories of racism or viewing the rest of the world from the perspective of the West. It is a point to which he would return again and again, restated in different contexts, but one that has not gained the traction it deserves, especially as his work moved from Britain to the United States. Hall was always careful to qualify his use of *diaspora* with *Caribbean*, both in terms of its African origins and as the diaspora of a diaspora (what he calls "twice diasporized") of Caribbean immigrants in Britain. He has been faulted for excluding modern Africa in his discussions of "Africa" as a proper name for cultural authenticity in the diaspora or in its transformed and creolized diasporic form. However, as this essay demonstrates, modern Africa is not absent from his writings, and his attention to the diverse historical formations of race and racism allows for an inclusion of African modernity.[12] Since Hall's diaspora aesthetics is derived from black visual culture, my reassessment of his work concludes with a consideration of the Beninese artist Romuald Hazoumè's *La Bouche du Roi* (fig. 1).[13] This room-size multimedia slave ship installation links transatlantic slavery to the colonization of West Africa to make a statement about African identities, both in the past and in the present. I present the artwork as a visualization of Hall's idea that "diaspora" has geographically dispersed centers, each with its own relationship to and perspective on slavery, colonialism, and globalization.

❮ ❮ ❮

Fig. 1. Romuald Hazoumè, *La Bouche du Roi*, 1997–2005. Installation with sound and mixed media. Courtesy of Trustees of the British Museum. Photo by Georges Hixson.

Hall's characterization of "the post-colonial" as an episteme-information in "When Was 'the Post-colonial'?" can be usefully applied to African diaspora studies.[14] The question with which the essay opens—"when was 'the post-colonial'?"—refers to the emergence of postcolonial studies as a field designed to break with colonial systems of knowledge. In reviewing how scholars challenged and redrew the parameters of the world that the category was intended to describe, Hall credits postcolonial studies with renarrativizing capitalist modernity as "transverse, transnational, transcultural movements" that were overwritten as a series of binary narratives: colonizer and colonized, the West and the rest, First World and Third World, North and South. But he also faults the field for its failure to account for the complex articulations of culture with the socioeconomic sphere. To ask the question—"when was 'the black diaspora'?"—then, is not to return to its beginnings in slavery so

much as to understand the context in which the term emerged and the questions that it was intended to address.

In "The Uses of *Diaspora*" Brent Hayes Edwards identifies a greater frequency in the usage of *diaspora* during the fifties and sixties in black studies scholarship attempting to understand pan-African movements and black internationalism during an era of civil rights and anticolonial struggles.[15] He explains that the category was introduced for addressing the question of whether the idea of pan-Africanism had outlived its relevance for describing political movements in the United States. Edwards traces the emergence of *diaspora* as a scholarly term to George Shepperson's 1965 paper "The African Abroad or the African Diaspora," with its systematic borrowing from Jewish studies, beyond earlier metaphoric readings of Old Testament Exodus stories. In the paper Shepperson extends the central components of "classic" diasporas (Jewish, Greek, and Armenian) to people of African descent in the New World. These components are a violent uprooting and forced transportation of a people, a history of trauma, and the idea of a homeland to which the scattered race might one day return. Edwards argues that Shepperson introduces the language of diaspora, which distinguishes Africans living abroad from those living on the African continent, to address the limitations of a universal black experience belonging to pan-Africanism (UD, 51–53). Beginnings, as Edward Said informs us, are always strategic, and the one Edwards provides emphasizes how "the turn to *diaspora* as a term of analysis allows for an account of black transnational formations that attends to their constitutive differences" (UD, 54). The initial usage of *Africa diaspora* during the sixties was for distinguishing an African experience of racism and antiracism from a black American experience that is inseparable from its history of slavery.

Patterson and Kelley indicate a renewed interest in African diaspora studies during the nineties as part of a wider intellectual response to changing conditions of globalization, transnationalism, and migration (UM, 12–13). It was a period of increased migration, especially of people from the global South to the global North, which resulted in *diaspora* being used more broadly for migrants who remained culturally and emotionally connected to their homelands. Since improved travel and telecommunications permit migrants to

maintain closer ties with their home countries, they constitute transnational diasporas that are not disconnected from their homelands as are the traditional diasporas of Shepperson's essay. Hall's writings on diaspora belong to this latter period, one in which Caribbean migrants in Britain were claiming a stake in the nation through what he calls a "diaspora aesthetics" that disrupted the normative functioning of Englishness (CI, 236). His work articulates this later historical moment with the earlier one of a slave diaspora within the Caribbean.

Hall's widely anthologized "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," along with Paul Gilroy's *Black Atlantic*, have become representative of a British cultural studies approach that fueled a renewed interest in "diaspora," particularly within black studies in the United States. Hall was instrumental in the formation of the University of Birmingham's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), which he directed from 1968 to 1978. His talks and writings during the subsequent decades entered into conversation with American intellectuals as his work crossed the Atlantic and he was invited to speak at numerous conferences and events. Gilroy was a CCCS graduate, and his *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (1987) uses "diaspora" for opening a hermetically sealed English nation, and its accompanying Anglo-Saxon definition of citizenship, to black communities in Britain. The transnational approach of his subsequent book, *Black Atlantic*, with its suggestion that we "take the Atlantic as one, single, complex unit of analysis," ushered in a new paradigm for studying black cultures.[16] However, as Edwards observes, a shift from "diaspora" to "black Atlantic" had the effect of narrowing the focus of African diaspora studies (UD, 63).

Since the nineties there has emerged a body of scholarship critical of a marginalization of Africa in black Atlantic studies, which it considers an outcome of a black British cultural studies approach.[17] These works argue that Hall addresses "Africa" only in its imaginary diasporic form, while Gilroy's replacement of African "roots" with transatlantic "routes" licenses an ignoring of continental Africa. They point to Gilroy's equation of black modernity with slavery as overlooking the transformation of African cultures that was taking place on the continent at the same time. African studies scholars raise an important question about whether modern Africa can be included in

a diaspora frame in a way other than as a point of departure and lost homeland. In "Atlantic Aporias" Charles Piot suggests an approach that replaces the unidirectionality of Africa as origin with an account of the "crosshatched histories of the black modern."[18] Based on his research of northern Togo located between Ghana and Benin, he uses *diaspora-derivative* for designating how a European slave-trading history and its accompanying modernity radically altered West African cultures. In her introduction to "Africa and the Black Atlantic," a special issue of *Research in African Literatures*, Yogita Goyal promotes "a continuing rethinking of time and space" of diaspora through reassessments of the place of African nations in pan-Africanism, slavery, and colonialism.[19] She suggests bringing African writers into conversation with black writers in the diaspora. In *The Predicament of Blackness* Jemima Pierre takes black diaspora studies to task for not recognizing that African people also have racialized identities resulting from global structures of race and racism. She holds Hall's positing of an imaginary "Africa" responsible for subsequent scholarship in which the African continent "is stripped of its worldliness, modernity, and hybridity; its history of slavery and colonialism is subsumed under the slavery experience of diaspora populations of the western Atlantic; and the long history of Afro-Atlantic dialogue and mutual transformation is obscured."[20]

Modern Africa is marginalized but not overlooked in Hall's and Gilroy's work. Hall keeps the African continent on the horizon through his constant reminder that the Africa existing in a diasporic imaginary is not the same as the Africa transformed by colonialism and neocolonialism. Although he does not explicitly include African modernity within diasporic cultures, his historical and geographic approach to black cultural identities allows for its inclusion. Gilroy alludes to African modernity when he mentions James Brown's recognition of his own funky sound in the rhythm of Nigerian Fela Ransome Kuti's Afro-beat and the even earlier hybridized music of returning Brazilian slaves who settled in Nigeria during the 1840s. "There has been (at least) a two-way traffic," he explains, "between African cultural forms and the political cultures of diaspora blacks over a long period" (*BA*, 199). While the focus of their explanations is on the creolizations and hybridizations of black diasporic cultures,

there is one crucial difference in their approaches that tends to be overlooked.

Despite the centrality of Afro-Caribbean culture to Gilroy's counterculture of black modernity, the Caribbean as a space of intellectual and cultural production is absent. In his preface to *The Black Atlantic*, he admits to having "said virtually nothing about the lives, theories, and political activities of Frantz Fanon and C. L. R. James, the two best-known black Atlantic thinkers" (*BA*, xi).[21] When Hall engages questions of diaspora, he does so from the perspective of having one foot in Jamaica and being informed by Caribbean culture and intellectual history. His explanation of black diasporic cultures as syncretic and creolized, more so than Gilroy's, is indebted to aesthetic debates on Caribbean literature and culture following decolonization.

An identification of Caribbean creolizations first appeared in Barbadian Edward (Kamau) Brathwaite's 1971 book *Folk Culture of the Slaves in Jamaica*. Brathwaite was a founding member of the Caribbean Artists Movement (CAM), which was a forum for Caribbean artists, writers, intellectuals, and musicians in London during the late 1960s and early 1970s. The movement that would become instrumental in defining Caribbean cultures began with informal meetings in Brathwaite's Bloomsbury basement flat.[22] Despite its location in the metropolitan center, which allowed West Indians separated by their island topography and colonial histories to come together, CAM placed the Caribbean at the center of its aesthetic and political debates. Looking back on that time, Hall characterizes his association with CAM and immersion in the work of Caribbean intellectuals as a "commitment to the Caribbean" and an era when he "first began to practise a diasporic West Indian identity" (*FS*, 164). He delivered the opening address for CAM's second conference at Canterbury in 1968 (*CA*, 162). Its theme, "Cultural Cross-Currents in the Caribbean," was intended to establish the wider influence of the Caribbean arts, beyond the English-speaking islands and even the Caribbean region to black American literature and West Indian culture in Britain (*CA*, 157–58). The conference's postcolonial perspective reversed the colonial one in which cultural flows were defined more unidirectionally with the Caribbean on the receiving end—in terms of both

Britain and the United States—rather than as a space of creativity and cultural transformation in its own right. Although the term *diasporic cultures* was not used, *cultural cross-currents* was intended to capture a similar meaning of transnational influences and connections. The idea was to bring recognition and visibility to Afro-Caribbean cultures that had been suppressed under colonialism as well as to demonstrate a united front of resistance.

I mention Hall's participation in CAM during this earlier period to foreground his contribution to intellectual efforts to define Caribbean cultures and not just black British ones. He began theorizing "diaspora" around the same time he started drawing on his own experience as an immigrant to explain the changing identities of blacks in Britain. His objective was to show connections between people in the Caribbean and those who migrated to Britain, on the one hand, and England and its Empire, on the other. To Grant Farred, merging public and private spheres through a "quasi-confessional" form of writing allowed Hall to develop a diasporic model that moves between Britain and the Caribbean. He also sees Hall's early years in colonial Jamaica as so formative of his thinking that he characterizes him as a "black postcolonial intellectual."[23]

As a black *postcolonial* intellectual, Hall introduces into diaspora theory a critical imperative that it break with colonial systems of knowledge—the same systems that led Fanon and Ngũgĩ to call for decolonizing the mind. This is why his "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" essay is so insistent that Caribbean cultures be described as operating through a similarity and a difference that do not exist in a binary relationship to each other, which is the logic belonging to colonial regimes of power and knowledge. Hall opens his essay with two Caribbean cross-cultural acts of "imaginary reunification" of black people dispersed across the diaspora (CI, 224). The first is Négritude as a "pan-African political project" that established connections to Africa through narratives of continuity and a shared experience of racism and oppression. Aimé Césaire, a founder of Négritude, belonged to an educated class of Martinicans who were taught to think of themselves as black Frenchmen and, as such, superior to Africans. Only when he met Africans in Paris did he realize that he had more in common with them than with the French.

During the 1930s Césaire, together with Léopold Senghor of Senegal and Léon Damas of French Guiana, transformed the negative connotations of *nègre* into a cultural and political movement affirming a pan-African identity. Hall explains that "it [Négritude] continues to be a very powerful and creative force in emergent forms of representation amongst hitherto marginalised peoples" (CI, 223). The second example he provides is from the photographic artwork of the Jamaican-born, black British visual artist, Armet Francis, whose images of people living in the Black Triangle—Africa, the Caribbean, the United States, and the United Kingdom—reveal the "hidden history" of the unity of a scattered people. To this axis of "similarity and continuity" Hall introduces a second axis of "difference and rupture." The two axes are not opposed to each other as in a binary logic but interact in a relationship he characterizes as "dialogic" (CI, 226).

The dialogic relationship of continuity and rupture allows Hall to account for the paradox of an African identity being formed in the diaspora. During the early modern period, which is the era of the transatlantic slave trade, African societies consisted of ethnic groups numbering in the thousands. Far from homogeneous, Africa had, and continues to have, enormously diverse sociolinguistic groups of people, who self-identify by their ethnic affiliations. Only after being forcibly removed from their homelands did slaves begin to identify themselves as "African," which is an identity that did not exist on the African continent. "The paradox," Hall explains, "is that it was the uprooting of slavery and transportation and the insertion into the plantation economy (as well as the symbolic economy) of the Western world that 'unified' these peoples across their differences, in the same moment as it cut them off from direct access to their past" (CI, 227). This new diasporic identity can be detected in *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African* (1781), in which Equiano describes himself as having been born in Eboe (land of the Igbo people) but calls himself "the African" on the slave narrative's title page. The Africa of diverse ethnicities and colonization is the Africa that Hall's critics identify as an omission in his work. However, he does explain that, while African cultures exist in a transformed and creolized form in the Caribbean,

there is no return to the land that nourished these cultures, because it too has been "transformed" and "history is, in that sense, irreversible" (CI, 231). Hall concludes by issuing the warning that to act as if the African continent does not have its own history adheres to a Western conception of modernity within which a precolonial African past exists as a perpetual present: "We must not collude with the West, which, precisely, normalizes and appropriates Africa by freezing it into some timeless zone of the primitive, unchanging past" (CI, 231). The axis of difference breaks with this colonial logic because it allows Hall to differentiate the Africa of a diasporic imaginary from the Africa that exists today.

The axis of "difference and rupture" also explains differences across a diaspora resulting from the same history of transatlantic slavery—differences that exist within the Caribbean itself. When explaining the axis of difference, Hall distinguishes a difference that attends to the specificities of historical and social formations from a difference that involves othering a group of people. He describes visiting Martinique for the first time and noticing how different it was from Jamaica, owing to Martinique's status as an overseas department of France, even though both Jamaica and Martinique are former slave colonies in the Caribbean region:

> It is a profound difference of culture and history. And the difference *matters*. It positions Martiniquains and Jamaicans as *both* the same *and* different. Moreover, the boundaries of difference are continually repositioned in relation to different points of reference. Vis-à-vis the developed West, we are very much "the same." We belong to the marginal, the underdeveloped, the periphery, the "Other." We are at the outer edge, the "rim," of the metropolitan world—always "South" to someone else's *El Norte*. (CI, 227–28)

The axis of similarity breaks with a colonial logic in which *different* can mean inferior, which is how Antilleans like Césaire and Fanon were taught by their French colonial teachers to view Africans. However, since the othering that belongs to a Western perspective overlooks the differences among black people in different parts of the Caribbean, a diaspora model needs to attend to sociohistorical differences, no matter how small or subtle they might be.

What Hall says about boundaries of difference shifting according to points of reference equally applies to differences between the "here" and the "there" of migrancy. He sometimes speaks as a Jamaican and other times as a black Briton, but living in the diaspora means not being at home in either place, which is a condition he describes in *Familiar Stranger.* I consider the "between" perspective a space of insight in Hall's shifting and mobile model of "diaspora." His constant emphasis on how the West views Africa or the Caribbean is in the interest of establishing a field of study that disrupts its logic rather than simply valorize the negative terms of the *North-South*, *European-African*, *white-black* binarisms. This is why he introduces into his usage of *difference* Jacques Derrida's philosophy of *différance*, which invites us to think in terms of "neither/nor" alongside "both/and" in the place of "either/or" (CI, 229). Jamaicans, Jamaican Americans, and British Jamaicans may all share a national origin, but it is the historical and experiential differences of living in Jamaica, the United States, and Britain that matter, to invoke Hall's words.

A Derridean *différance* as the continual deferring of a final meaning through a horizon that is always moving also informs Hall's changing definition of diasporic cultures, the horizon of which is reshaped by the experimental films, photography, and visual art informing his work. One of these new horizons concerns the relationship between the African and Asian diasporas in the Caribbean and not only in the formation of black Britain during the seventies and early eighties. In "Negotiating Caribbean Identities," the published version of a lecture given five years after the paper on which "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" is based, Hall talks more extensively about "the ethnic and cultural diversity" he encountered while making the 1991 BBC television series *Redemption Song*, which took him from Jamaica to Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Martinique, Trinidad, and Guyana.[24] He mentions the striking difference between Haiti as "the symbolic island of black culture" and the Dominican Republic with its strong Spanish traditions and denial of blackness, even though the two nations share the same island. In the TV episode called "Paradise Lost," Hall interviews a civil rights

worker who speaks of the slavelike conditions under which Haitians labor in Dominican cane fields, which points to a south-on-south relationship of racism and exploitation that a shared diasporic history alone cannot explain. His essay pluralizes the diaspora resulting from transatlantic slavery as "African diasporas of the New World" and "black people of the New World diasporas" (NC, 10, 12) to signal the differences he describes.

Maintaining a plurality of black diasporas permits Hall to identify the specificities of national cultures despite transnational influences. But it also allows him to account for the intersection of a black diaspora with other diasporas. He informs his audience that they might be surprised to hear of places in the Caribbean where black people do not constitute the majority of the population (NC, 5–6). He is referring to Guyana and Trinidad, where much larger numbers of indentured workers from India and China were imported than any of the other British West Indian colonies. In "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," Hall does mention the Asian diaspora resulting from indentured labor but immediately follows it with a statement about the singularity of slavery. "In the history of the modern world," he declares, "there are few more traumatic ruptures to match these enforced separations from Africa" (CI, 227). When he returns to the same question several years later, he considers how a declaration of that kind fails to break with the logic of the divide-and-rule strategy of colonialism.

In "Thinking the Diaspora," a 1998 lecture presented for the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the University of the West Indies at its Cave Hill campus in Barbados, Hall more explicitly addresses the oversight of viewing the Caribbean through a black diaspora frame alone. After acknowledging the importance of Rastafarianism to the identity formation of a second generation of Caribbean migrants in Britain, he mentions "the awkward fact that the 'naturalization' of the descriptive term 'black' for the whole of the Caribbean, or the equivalent, 'Afro-Caribbean' for all West Indian migrants abroad, performs its own kind of silencing" (TD, 15). He then quotes from the online diary of self-identified "Indian Trinidadian West Indian Creole" artist, Steve Ouditt, whose work was exhibited at

London's Institute for International Visual Arts (InIVA) under Hall's directorship. In the quoted section of the diary, Ouditt says that he can accept Afro-Caribbean as a marker for "fragmentation and loss of 'culture'" but not slavery as the measure for all other forms of exploitation and oppression (TD, 16). While scholars continue to debate whether the term *slavery* should be extended to the transportation of Asian and African indentured workers to plantations in such far-flung places as Fiji, Natal, Mauritius, and the West Indies, what is indisputable is that a new global labor system was built on the ruins of plantation slavery.[25] Hall recognizes this relationship when he says that "'Africa' has since been joined by the East Indians and the Chinese: indenture enters alongside slavery" and breaks the European-African dualism of his prior articulation of creolization by including Asian "cultural elements" (TD, 6). When he follows this statement with the observation that culture is "production" and "becoming" rather than "archeology" and "being," he is indicating how definitions of culture, including his own of Caribbean creolizations, can be revised (TD, 16).

Due to his reframing of diasporic cultures, it is possible to say that Hall's conceptualization of identity as process applies to his diaspora model as well. How we understand "diaspora" is contingent on the perspective, history, or cultural frame being used, and foregrounding this relationship allows us to identify its limits instead of presuming that the entire story is being told. One of the missing stories, as African studies scholars have taught us, involves the transatlantic slave trade from the perspective of the places where it originated and what happened to those places once the slave ships left their shores for the Americas.

More so than his earlier essays, Hall's "Thinking the Diaspora" distinguishes modern Africa from the Africa serving as a metaphor or name for the blackness that was suppressed and denigrated under slavery and colonialism in the diaspora. He describes Africa as consisting of "at least four or five 'continents' rolled into one" as a way of refusing a conflation of its diverse nations and peoples into a homogeneous place suggested by the singularity of the name Africa. He also draws attention to how modern Africa suffers the effects of

neocolonialism and globalization through "its forms of subsistence destroyed, its people structurally adjusted into a devastating modern poverty" (TD, 13). Can *this* Africa be included in the parameters of "diaspora"? Only if we are attentive to the colonization on the African continent that went hand in hand with transatlantic slavery, which is a relationship that is present in Hazoumè's large multimedia installation *La Bouche du Roi.* Meaning "the mouth of the king," La Bouche du Roi designates the mouth of the Mono River, from which slave ships left the former kingdom of Dahomey, which became the French colony of Dahomey in 1904 and the Republic of Benin in 1960. Hazoumè's assemblage of closely arranged black plastic petroleum canisters into the outline of tightly packed Africans inside a slave ship's hold invokes the 1788 diagram of the slave ship *Brooks* that was widely circulated by abolitionists (who misspelled the name as *Brookes* in their broadsheets). As a drawing intended to show the brutality of transporting slaves as cargo, the diagram had the unintended effect of negating their humanity.

In *La Bouche du Roi* each of the 304 sawed-off canisters representing a slave has been personalized and individualized through signs of their religions and ethnicities, and some of them are broken to represent those who died en route. Each canister is not fashioned in the shape of the slave's entire body, as in the *Brookes* diagram, but only his or her face in the semblance of an African mask with the container's spout serving as a gaping mouth. Accompanying the installation is an audio track listing each slave's name followed by lamentations in the five languages of central and southern Benin. Unlike the *Brookes* diagram, Hazoumè's installation reveals the ship's storerooms to be filled with traded goods: empty gin bottles, tobacco, spices, cowrie shells, mirrors, cloth, glass beads, and agates. In this way, it references not only the ships that transported slaves to the Americas in chains but also the coastal areas where Africans traded with Europeans.

At the ship's base is a yellow petroleum canister representing the king of France and a black one signifying the king of Dahomey, while behind them is a musket and scales as tools of the trade, revealing a second meaning to the phrase *La Bouche du Roi*—the complicity of

African and European leaders. Hazoumè's restaging of the *Brooks* stowage plan superimposes an image of African betrayal onto that of enslavement through the shared name of rulers and river, thereby recalling a past that modern West African nations would rather forget. It reconfigures the space at the beginning of a slave diaspora to show both transatlantic slavery and African colonization. But it also reconfigures the time of slavery for making a statement about conditions in Africa today. The black canister representing the ancient Dahomey kings who profited from selling slaves simultaneously represents today's Beninese leaders who have "sold out" their own people to globalization.

La Bouche du Roi identifies the beginning of African modernity in European trade with coastal areas and its accompanying structures of collaboration and exploitation that are repeated in colonialism, neocolonialism, and globalization. Hall makes a similar point from a Caribbean perspective when he writes that the Africa that lives in diasporic cultures is "*neither* the Africa of those territories, now obscured by the postcolonial map maker, from which slaves were snatched for transportation *nor* the Africa of today" (TD, 13; emphasis added). Owing to West Africa's complex history of colonial contact, its modernity is related but not reducible to the ruptured temporality of black diasporic modernity that James Clifford identifies as beginning with the middle passage and repeated in the racialized structures of slavery and its aftermath.[26] Hazoumè's installation is also a postmodern commentary on European modernity, as the canisters are made to resemble the African masks that early twentieth-century modernists incorporated into their art, the most famous of these being Pablo Picasso's 1907 *Les demoiselles d'Avignon*. The Beninese artist signals the imperial history through which African tribal objects entered Western galleries and museums by returning to these institutions his masks made from industrial waste or, to use Hazoumè's own words, "the rubbish people send us from Europe."[27]

The industrial material of the installation references a different kind of commodity than slaves, as the plastic containers are used in the highly exploitative trafficking of contraband petroleum or

kpayo from oil-rich Nigeria to Benin. Expanded to the breaking point to maximize their content, the oil-filled containers are suspended on motorbikes driven by teenaged boys. The installation's raw material alerts us that Africa's "black gold" is no longer slaves but oil, the uncontrolled extraction of which is devastating African peoples' lives and their environment. *La Bouche du Roi* was initially exhibited in Cotonou, Benin, in 1999 and updated in 2005 when it toured to Houston, Texas, a center of the oil industry. To ensure that its contemporary reference was not overlooked, Hazoumè added a video loop showing the boys on motorbikes weighed down with their dangerous cargo, which often explodes before reaching its final destination. He describes how he is using the commodity status of slaves in the *Brookes* diagram as a metaphor for the continued exploitation of Africa's human resources: "Both the boys and containers are faceless units within commercial systems, dangerously worked to breaking point" (RM).

By invoking "slavery" as a concept-metaphor for the superexploitation of Africans, Hazoumè reverses the perspective of "Africa" as a concept-metaphor for cultural authenticity in the diaspora. His installation simultaneously references the dehumanization of slaves in the past and the continued dehumanization of poor, rural Africans in the present. However, he insists on distinguishing the Africans who were transported as slaves from the boys who "choose" to transport oil, because their smuggling is the desperate act of farmers who have lost their livelihood. "These traders aren't robbers, not even new slaves," Hazoumè explains; "they have to survive, and like everyone else they need proper support" (RM). His words bring to mind Hall's characterization of today's Africa as having "its forms of subsistence destroyed, its people structurally adjusted into a devastating modern poverty" (TD, 13). This Africa exists outside a black diasporic imaginary that envisions the continent as an idyllic place of cultural authenticity.

Hazoumè, who is Yoruba, indicates differences between the Africa that serves as a touchstone for cultural authenticity in the diaspora and the African cultures that are at risk of disappearance today. His endowing of the slaves in the *Brookes* drawing with their ethnic and religious markings not only restores the identities that the

diagram withholds; it also makes a statement about modern Africans being disconnected from their heritage through what he calls globalization's "Coca-Cola culture." In other words, the slave's loss of identity in the diaspora figures the African nations that lack a clear sense of direction for their future. Comparing the Africans who voyaged across the Atlantic into the unknown to those who remained behind, he states, "They didn't know where they were going, but they knew where they had come from. Today they still don't know where they are going, and they have forgotten where they come from" (RM). His words point to the damaging effects of slavery, colonization, and globalization on the African continent and not just within its diaspora. Hall did not go so far as to articulate together the two different but related histories, as Hazoumè's installation does. However, the reading I have provided is enabled by his theorization of the dialogic relationship of "similarity and continuity" with "difference and rupture" through the "and/both" articulated with "neither/nor" of *différance*.

Hazoumè is not a diasporic African, as he still works and resides in Benin. *La Bouche du Roi*, however, journeyed along the triangular route of the slave trade when it traveled from Benin to the United States and finally to England. The "slave ship" found its resting place in the country of origin of the *Brookes* diagram when the British Museum purchased the installation for its bicentenary commemoration of Britain's 1807 abolition of the slave trade. Due to its large-scale rendition of the antislavery woodcut print, a copy of which is in the British Museum's permanent collection and was exhibited alongside, the artwork served as a centerpiece for the 2007 commemoration. After its London display, *La Bouche du Roi* toured Hull, Liverpool, Bristol, and Newcastle, all centers of the slave trade and its abolition. Yet Hazoumè's use of the middle passage as a concept-metaphor for present-day conditions in Benin is not mentioned in the exhibition notes at the Merseyside Maritime Museum in the shipping port of Liverpool, where the *Brooks* slave ship was built for an English merchant.[28] This might have to do with the bicentenary commemoration itself, which, by celebrating the end of Britain's participation in the slave trade, consigns its role in exploitative labor practices to the past. Nigeria is a former British colony, and the United Kingdom

continues to have investments in its economy, particularly its oil industry. The omission in the exhibition notes indicates how a narrow focus on the artwork as only restoring slave identities risks overlooking its message about Africa today.

The makeup of black Britain has changed since Hall was writing on black diasporic cultures and identities, as there are now twice as many people from African nations as from the Caribbean. When asked how blacks in Britain might join Black Lives Matter activists in their antiracist protests in the United States, Gilroy observes that in Britain "blackness is clearly in transition," because "talking about the middle passage or the history of struggles against slavery cannot mean the same to people who have migrated or fled from Somalia, Nigeria or Ghana."[29] His words remind us that transatlantic slavery is but one of several beginnings to African diasporas, especially during an era of mass migration resulting from neoliberal economic policies and civil wars.

The viewpoint that *La Bouche du Roi* provides on the transatlantic slave diaspora is centered in West Africa rather than in Britain, the Caribbean, or the United States. In its transformation of the *Brookes* diagram, Hazoumè's installation restores the culture and humanity of the Africans depicted as cargo. In its usage of industrial materials referencing a black market in which African lives are equally disposable, it tells a middle-passage story from the perspective of what happened in West Africa after the slave ships departed. Its dual message suggests a diaspora model that is agile and mobile and not necessarily centered on the final destinations of the Africans transported as slaves. Hazoumè uses the symbolic value of an iconic middle-passage image for bringing visibility to the complexities of African identities existing on the margins of its diasporas—complexities that cannot be explained by a simple racism/antiracism opposition. By showing these identities to be influenced by the cultures of globalization, his slave ship installation reveals that even Africans are not at home in their world. With its double space and time reference, it introduces a new horizon to a transatlantic black diaspora frame and its accompanying conditions of modernity. In this way, the artwork enables us to visualize Hall's mobile conceptualization of "diaspora" with its shifting perspectives, geographically dispersed centers, and unsynchronized temporalities.

JENNY SHARPE is professor of English, comparative literature, and gender studies at the University of California, Los Angeles. She is author of *Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text* (1993) and *Ghosts of Slavery: A Literary Archaeology of Black Women's Lives* (2002). She is completing a book tentatively titled *Immaterial Archives: Lost Pasts, Salvaged Futures*, which brings greater visibility to the presence of Afro-Caribbean epistemologies within the circuits of Atlantic modernity. She studied with Stuart Hall at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in the summer of 1983 and was the 2017–18 Stuart Hall Fellow at the W. E. B. DuBois Research Institute at the Hutchins Center, Harvard University. This article is a tribute to Hall's work.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful for critical responses to earlier drafts of this essay from Jeffrey Decker, Yogita Goyal, Catherine Hall, Michael Meranze, Samantha Pinto, and the *Qui Parle* editors, particularly Donna Honarpisheh.

Notes

1. Hall and Schwarz, *Familiar Stranger*, 14. Hereafter cited as FS.
2. Barbados was called Little England because, unlike Britain's other West Indian colonies, it was not captured from or traded to the French, Spanish, or Dutch, and as a result its colonial culture did not have continental European influences.
3. Lamming, *In the Castle of My Skin*, 295.
4. Adams, "Interview with Stuart Hall," 8.
5. Hall, "New Ethnicities," 27–31.
6. Sivanandan, "From Resistance to Rebellion," 127.
7. Modood, "'Black,' Racial Equality, and Asian Identity."
8. Hall, *Fateful Triangle*, 99.
9. Patterson and Kelley, "Unfinished Migrations." Hereafter cited as UM.
10. Hall, "What Is This 'Black' in Black Popular Culture?," 30. Hall's essay serves as a starting point for Michelle Stephens's discussion of intraracial differences, particularly between African Americans and black immigrants in the United States, in "What Is This *Black* in Black Diaspora?"

11. The three essays are "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," hereafter cited as CI; "Negotiating Caribbean Identities," hereafter cited as NC; and "Thinking the Diaspora," hereafter cited as TD.
12. In "Race, Articulation, and Societies" Hall posits that "one must start . . . from the concrete historical 'work' which racism accomplishes under specific historical conditions—as a set of economic, political and ideological practices, of a distinctive kind, concretely articulated with other practices in a social formation" (338).
13. In "Stuart Hall and the Visual Arts" Kobena Mercer explains the centrality of visual culture (art, photography, and film) to Hall's diaspora theory.
14. Hall, "When Was 'the Post-colonial?'"
15. Edwards, "Uses of *Diaspora*." Hereafter cited as UD.
16. Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, 15. Hereafter cited as *BA*.
17. Masilela, "'Black Atlantic' and African Modernity"; Piot, "Atlantic Aporias"; Chrisman, *Postcolonial Contraventions*; Olver and Meyer, "Introduction"; Korang, *Writing Ghana, Imagining Africa*; Pierre, *Predicament of Blackness*; Goyal, "Introduction."
18. Piot, "Atlantic Aporias," 168.
19. Goyal, "Introduction," x.
20. Pierre, *Predicament of Blackness*, 213–14.
21. For an assessment of Gilroy's ignoring of the Caribbean, see Edwards, "Roots, and Some Routes Not Taken."
22. Brathwaite, "Caribbean Artists Movement"; Walmsley, *Caribbean Artists Movement*, 89, hereafter cited as *CA*.
23. Farred, "You Can Go Home Again," 29.
24. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" first appeared as "Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation" in *Framework* 36 (1989): 68–81 and was based on a paper Hall presented at a film conference the previous year. "Negotiating Caribbean Identities" is the published text of Hall's 1993 Walter Rodney Memorial Lecture at the Centre for Caribbean Studies, University of Warwick.
25. In *Fragments of Empire* Madhavi Kale makes a case for considering "overseas Indian indentured labor in terms of imperial labor reallocation rather than labor migration" (5).
26. Clifford, *Routes*, 264.
27. Quoted in Highet, "Romuald Hazoume's [*sic*] World." Hereafter cited as RM.
28. See www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/maritime/exhibitions/hazoume.
29. Yancy and Gilroy, "What 'Black Lives' Means in Britain."

References

Adams, Tim. "Interview with Stuart Hall." *Guardian*, September 23, 2007. www.theguardian.com/society/2007/sep/23/communities.politicsphilosophyandsociety.

Brathwaite, Edward (Kamau). "The Caribbean Artists Movement." *Caribbean Quarterly* 14, nos. 1–2 (1968): 57–59.

Chrisman, Laura. *Postcolonial Contraventions: Cultural Readings of Race, Imperialism, and Transnationalism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003.

Clifford, James. *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997.

Edwards, Brent Hayes. "The Uses of *Diaspora*." *Social Text* 19, no. 1 (2001): 45–73.

Edwards, Norval (Nadi). "Roots, and Some Routes Not Taken: A Caribcentric Reading of *The Black Atlantic*." *Found Object*, no. 4 (1994): 27–35.

Farred, Grant. "You Can Go Home Again, You Just Can't Stay: Stuart Hall and the Caribbean Diaspora." *Research in African Literatures* 27, no. 4 (1996): 28–48.

Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993.

Goyal, Yogita. "Introduction: Africa and the Black Atlantic." *Research in African Literatures* 45, no. 3 (2014): v–xxv.

Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." In *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, edited by Jonathan Rutherford, 222–37. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990.

Hall, Stuart. *The Fateful Triangle: Race, Ethnicity, Nation*, edited by Kobena Mercer. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017.

Hall, Stuart. "Negotiating Caribbean Identities." *New Left Review*, no. 209 (1995): 3–14.

Hall, Stuart. "New Ethnicities." In *ICA Documents 7: Black Film, British Cinema*, edited by Kobena Mercer, 27–31. London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1989.

Hall, Stuart. "Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance." In *Sociological Theories: Race and Colonialism*, by UNESCO, 305–45. Paris: UNESCO, 1980.

Hall, Stuart. "Thinking the Diaspora: Home-Thoughts from Abroad." *Small Axe* 3, no. 2 (1999): 1–18.

Hall, Stuart. "What Is This 'Black' in Black Popular Culture?" In *Black Popular Culture: A Project by Michele Wallace*, edited by Gina Dent, 21–33. Seattle, WA: Bay, 1992.

Hall, Stuart. "When Was 'the Post-colonial'? Thinking at the Limit." In *The Post-colonial Question*, edited by Ian Chambers and Lidia Curtis, 242–60. London: Routledge, 1996.

Hall, Stuart, and Bill Schwarz. *Familiar Stranger: A Life between Two Islands*. London: Lane, 2017.

Highet, Juliet. "Romuald Hazoume's [*sic*] World." *New African*, March 19, 2013. newafricanmagazine.com/hazoumes-world.

Kale, Madhavi. *Fragments of Empire: Capital, Slavery, and Indian Indentured Labor in the British Caribbean*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011.

Korang, Kwaku Larbi. *Writing Ghana, Imagining Africa: Nation and African Modernity*. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2004.

Lamming, George. *In the Castle of My Skin*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991.

Masilela, Ntongela. "The 'Black Atlantic' and African Modernity in South Africa." *Research in African Literatures* 27, no. 4 (1996): 88–96.

Mercer, Kobena. "Stuart Hall and the Visual Arts." *Small Axe* 19, no. 1 (2015): 76–87.

Modood, Tariq. "'Black,' Racial Equality, and Asian Identity." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 14, no. 3 (1988): 397–404.

Olver, Thomas, and Stephen Meyer. "Introduction: African Shores and Transatlantic Interlocutions." *Current Writing: Text and Reception in Southern Africa* 16, no. 2 (2004): 1–17.

Patterson, Tiffany Ruby, and Robin D. G. Kelley. "Unfinished Migrations: Reflections on the African Diaspora and the Making of the Modern World." *African Studies Review* 43, no. 1 (2000): 11–45.

Pierre, Jemima. *The Predicament of Blackness: Postcolonial Ghana and the Politics of Race*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.

Piot, Charles. "Atlantic Aporias: Africa and Gilroy's Black Atlantic." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 100, no. 1 (2001): 155–70.

Sivanandan, Ambalavaner. "From Resistance to Rebellion: Asian and Afro-Caribbean Struggles in Britain." *Race and Class* 23, nos. 2–3 (1981–82): 111–52.

Stephens, Michelle. "What Is This *Black* in Black Diaspora?" *Small Axe* 13, no. 2 (2009): 26–38.

Walmsley, Anne. *The Caribbean Artists Movement, 1966–1972: A Literary and Cultural History.* London: New Beacon, 1992.

Yancy, George, and Paul Gilroy. "What 'Black Lives' Means in Britain." The Stone, October 1, 2015. opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/10/01/paul-gilroy-what-black-means-in-britain/?partner=bloomberg.