



ARTICLE

Stuart Hall, Development Theory, and Thatcher's Britain

Efthimios Karayiannides*

Magdalene College, University of Cambridge

*Corresponding author. E-mail: ek468@cam.ac.uk

(Received 2 November 2021; revised 22 September 2022; accepted 27 September 2022)

This article traces the influence of theories of Third World underdevelopment on Stuart Hall's understanding of the nature of historical transitions. I show Hall's notion of "articulation," central to his social theory, is indebted to ideas about development originating in the global South, rather than to the thinking of "Western Marxists." By arguing that Antonio Gramsci was a theorist of "articulation," Hall read Gramsci as a thinker comparable to development theorists he was engaging with in the same period. This had important implications, I suggest, for Hall's "Gramscian" analyses of British politics in the 1980s. Specifically, I show that by describing Thatcherism as a form of "regressive modernization," Hall adopted the idiom of several theories of economic development to argue that the uneven development of capitalist relations of production is the key to understanding how advanced forms of capitalist accumulation can accommodate seemingly archaic and reactionary social relations and institutions.

David Edgerton recently lamented that, from around the mid-1960s, "The United Kingdom came to be written about as if it were Argentina" by prominent thinkers of the British New Left.¹ Edgerton noted the striking similarity between New Left critiques of British capitalism's internationalism—spearheaded by Tom Nairn, Perry Anderson, and Eric Hobsbawm—and *dependista* critiques of the political economy of postcolonial societies.² Both drew a distinction between a modernizing national bourgeoisie and a cosmopolitan one more connected to global capital than to the nation. Both argued that global markets represented an obstacle to national productivity and prosperity, and both pinned their hopes on the emergence a new, modernizing national bourgeoisie to unlock national productive possibilities.

According to Edgerton, this led several members of the New Left to advance a "declinist" interpretation of British economy and society: the notion that Britain's industrial predominance has steadily receded and the size of its economy

¹David Edgerton, *The Rise and Fall of the British Nation* (London, 2018), 392.

²See Eric Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire: From 1750 to the Present Day* (London, 1999); Perry Anderson, "Components of the National Culture," *New Left Review* 1/50 (1968), 3–58; Tom Nairn, "The Nature of the Labour Party (Part II)," *New Left Review* 1/28 (1964), 38–64; Nairn, "The British Political Elite," *New Left Review* 1/23 (1964), 19–25.

© The Author(s), 2022. Published by Cambridge University Press. This is an Open Access article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution licence (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted re-use, distribution and reproduction, provided the original article is properly cited.

contracted relative to other capitalist powers, not because of fundamental shifts in global capitalism in the twentieth century, but because of pathological features of British society which have resulted in profound failings in several areas—economic, technological, political, and cultural.

Edgerton deployed the analogy between New Left thinking and dependency theory polemically to suggest that the New Left employed narratives about Britain, one of the most advanced capitalist economies in the world, which were more appropriate to developing nations in the global South. This article suggests that there is more than an analogy to be drawn between the thinking of the New Left and theorists of underdevelopment in the global South. It shows that at least one prominent member of the New Left's interpretation of British politics in the 1980s was powerfully influenced by theories of underdevelopment. In what follows, I reconstruct Stuart Hall's extensive engagement with theories of Third World underdevelopment in a series of contributions to UNESCO conferences on the relationship between class and race in postcolonial societies in the 1970s and 1980s. I show how these engagements with development theory profoundly shaped Hall's understanding of historical transitions.

Specifically, I show how ideas originating from the global South influenced both Hall's reading of Gramsci and, consequently, his "Gramscian" analyses of British politics in the 1980s. I argue that Hall read Gramsci as a theorist of underdevelopment comparable to the Anglo-Caribbean, South African, and Latin American thinkers he was engaging with in the same period. I demonstrate how Hall's reading of Gramsci as a theorist of underdevelopment was particularly pronounced in his characterization of Thatcherism as a form of "regressive modernization." Here, viewed in the context of his engagement with development theory, Hall deployed some of the New Left narratives about the peculiarity of British capitalism that Edgerton has labeled "declinist," not so much to lament Britain's flagging economic fortunes and its belated modernization, as to stress the national characteristics of British capitalism, its uneven development, and its specific labor requirements. Following the idiom of several theories of economic development he was engaging with in the period, Hall argued that these factors are key to understanding how advanced forms of capitalist accumulation could accommodate seemingly archaic and reactionary social relations and institutions.

I trace the influence of theories of economic underdevelopment on Hall's thinking to the development of his concept of "articulation" in the 1970s. Hall argued that a social formation is composed of a multiplicity of heterogeneous elements, each with their own logic and their own histories. These elements, Hall argued, have no immediate or necessary correspondence with other elements comprising a social formation. Hall used the term "articulation" to describe the process through which, under specific historical conditions, these various elements are drawn together so that relations of dependency and determination begin to form, and eventually solidify, between them.

The concept is usually understood in the context of Hall's efforts to complicate the Marxist base–superstructure model of social formations. According to this model, contradictions in the economic base are reflected in corresponding contradictions in political structures and dominant ideologies. Articulation is therefore usually associated—erroneously, I argue—with the influence of "Western

Marxists” like Louis Althusser and Antonio Gramsci on Hall’s thinking. I demonstrate that “articulation” was not merely an attempt to theorize the autonomy of politics and ideology in Hall’s writing. It was also meant to specify the nature of historical developments and transitions. I show this by situating the development of Hall’s notion of articulation in two global contexts: debates about the relative significance of class versus ethnicity for patterns of stratification in Caribbean societies, and sociological theories about the relationship between race and class in apartheid South Africa.

This contextualization stresses the political-economic and sociological, rather than literary or philosophical, basis for Hall’s concept of articulation. The development theory that Hall drew on argued, against modernization theory and orthodox Marxist development theories, that the development of capitalism did not inevitably produce societies with political institutions and labor markets approximating those in Western societies. Rather, they suggested that the nature of capitalism in a given society is shaped both by its precapitalist modes of production and the specific needs of capitalists during the process of industrialization. Anomalies from the metropolitan capitalist norm were explained not as hangovers of a precapitalist past due to a failure to modernize, but as the outcome of historically and regionally specific modernization processes.

While dealing with a later period, the approach of this article dovetails with those of historians who have sought to shift away from an overwhelming focus on the literary and cultural sources of the New Left’s political thought and to excavate the New Left’s explicitly economic arguments, and the sociological ideas they drew on to make them.³ While some of these accounts have stressed the global context for the dissemination of these ideas, they focus primarily on transatlantic and cross-Channel circuits of exchange and influence. This article stresses the importance of New Left engagements with various ideas and theorists from the global South. It does so, in part, by focusing on contexts for Hall’s thinking in the 1970s which are typically overlooked by surveys of his thought: his contribution to UNESCO seminars on race and colonialism in the 1970s, and his connection to networks of émigré thinkers in Britain.

Additionally, intellectual historians have long stressed the global networks of European think tanks and US economists that produced Thatcherism and the New Right in the 1980s and 1990s.⁴ We are less familiar with the various global genealogies that produced Thatcherism’s more sophisticated left critiques.⁵

³Michael Kenny, *The First New Left* (London, 1995), 139–58; Freddy Foks, “The Sociological Imagination of the British New Left,” *Modern Intellectual History* 15/3 (2018), 801–20; Mark Wickham-Jones, “The New Left’s Economic Model: Challenge to Labour Party Orthodoxy,” *Renewal: A Journal of Labour Politics* 21/1 (2013), 24–32.

⁴Richard Cockett, *Thinking the Unthinkable: Think-Tanks and the Economic Counter-revolution, 1931–83* (London, 1994); Philip Mirowski and Dieter Plehwe, eds., *The Road from Mont Pèlerin: The Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective* (Cambridge, MA, 2012); Angus Burgin, *The Great Persuasion* (Cambridge, MA, 2012); Quinn Slobodian, *Globalists: The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism* (Cambridge, MA, 2018); Guy Ortolano, *Thatcher’s Progress* (Cambridge, 2019).

⁵Aled Davies, Ben Jackson, and Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, eds., *The Neoliberal Age? Britain since the 1970s* (London, 2021), for instance, is practically organized around problematizing the analysis of neoliberalism that Hall, amongst others, advanced in the 1980s, but includes no attempt at historical contextualization of these ideas.

The aim of this article is to elaborate one small chapter in this global exchange of ideas. This global framing, I suggest, highlights argumentative strategies adopted by Hall that are missed if we focus solely on European and North American debates of the period.

I begin by suggesting that it is limiting to focus on the Althusserian influence on Hall's concept of articulation, given that the concept is first elaborated by Hall as part of a wide-ranging critique of Althusser's reading of Marx. I then go on to show how Hall's involvement with UNESCO antiracism programmes from the mid-1970s exposed him to the thinking of underdevelopment theorists. I highlight how some of these ideas found their way into Hall's interpretation of Gramsci and, consequently, his ideas about historical transitions. Finally, I demonstrate how Hall's reading of Gramsci as a theorist of underdevelopment led him to describe Thatcherism as a form of "regressive modernization." I argue that Hall arrived at his interpretation of Thatcherism via the sociological and political-economic arguments about economic development that were deeply infused into his understanding of historical transitions. Hall ascribed an epochal significance to Thatcherism not only because he focused on ideological factors, to the relative neglect of underlying economic forces, as his Marxist critics often suggest, but also because he read Thatcherism as a similar kind of economic transition to those of societies in the global South undergoing capitalist modernization.

The limits of Althusser's reading of Marx

The centrality of the "articulation" concept to Hall's Marxism is stressed in several theoretical accounts of Hall's work, but its provenance is consistently attributed to the work of "Western Marxists" like Gramsci and Althusser at the expense of the development theory that Hall also extensively drew on when developing the concept.⁶ Kobena Mercer has recently argued that the "U.S. reception of Hall's scholarship tended to overlook the key concept of 'articulation' in his sociological texts" and cites two papers in which Hall engages with theories of non-Western societies.⁷ Gregor McLennan has stressed that the concept of articulation was "everywhere in Marxist theoretical analysis" in the 1970s, not just in the writing of Western Marxists who foreground analyses of political and ideological "superstructures," but also in more specifically political economic analyses of the "articulation of the forces and relations of production within the mode of production" and the "articulation of different modes of production within a given social formation."⁸

⁶Jameson, for instance, goes so far as to claim that articulation is the "central theoretical problem" of cultural studies. Fredric Jameson, "On 'Cultural Studies,'" *Social Text* 30 (1993), 17–52, at 31. For accounts of the concept which foreground the influence of Gramsci and Althusser see Jennifer Slack, "The Theory and Method of Articulation in Cultural Studies," in David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen, eds., *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* (London, 1996), 112–27; and John Clarke, "Stuart Hall and the Theory and Practice of Articulation," *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 36/2 (2015), 275–86. Campsie curiously claims that the concept has its origins in the work of psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. Alexandre Campsie, "'Socialism Will Never Be the Same Again': Reimagining British Left-Wing Ideas for the 'New Times,'" *Contemporary British History* 31/2 (2017), 166–88, at 170.

⁷Kobena Mercer, "Introduction," in Stuart Hall, *The Fateful Triangle* (Cambridge, MA, 2017), 1–31, at 8.

⁸Gregor McLennan, "Editor's Discussion of the Part I Writings," in Stuart Hall, *Selected Writings on Marxism* (Durham, NC and London, 2021), 158–79, at 165.

Hall's engagement with South African thinkers and debates is frequently invoked by South African social scientists and theorists pursuing theoretical extensions of Hall's work.⁹ Notwithstanding these acknowledgments of Hall's engagement with theories of underdevelopment in the global South, there has yet to be systematic engagement by historians with the non-European influences on Hall's thinking.

As Aidan Foster Carter pointed out as early as 1978, the concept of "articulation"—as it was widely used by development theorists in the 1970s—was completely absent from Louis Althusser and Étienne Balibar's writing.¹⁰ The term is used frequently in *Reading Capital*, but as a translation of Marx's concept *Gliederung*.¹¹ Marx uses the term in the *Grundrisse* to convey the idea that different elements of a social formation are related to one another as a body is to its limbs—*Glied* being the German for "limb." Althusser and Balibar use "articulation" in the same way, as an anatomical metaphor to capture the relations of linkage and effectivity which exist between the various levels—economic, political, and ideological—of a social formation.¹² This metaphor was deployed against the pervasive "base–superstructure" metaphor where superstructural phenomena are understood as "expressions" of more fundamental economic relations.

For development theorists in the period, articulation had a much more specific, sociological meaning.¹³ They spoke of the *articulation of modes of production* as a phenomenon in which capitalist relations of production exist alongside and in relation to social relations from precapitalist modes of production. "Articulation" described the relation between capitalist and precapitalist modes of production within a single social formation. Specifically, the articulation concept was meant to capture situations in which precapitalist relations of production were subordinated and made functional to capitalist relations without being fully undermined or transcended in the course of a society's economic development. It is this latter usage of articulation, rather than Althusser's, that Hall's notion is closest to and in conversation with.

Hall's distance from Althusser's usage of the term is registered in critical engagement with that latter's thought in a series of seminar papers presented at the Centre for Contemporary Culture Studies' "Theory Seminar" in the early 1970s. In these papers, Hall strongly approved of Althusser's theory of "overdetermination" according to which historical change is driven by the accumulation and coalescence of a

⁹Gillian Hart, "Changing Concepts of Articulation: Political Stakes in South Africa Today," *Review of African Political Economy* 111 (2007), 85–101; Sharad Chari, "Three Moments of Stuart Hall in South Africa: Post-colonial–Post-socialist Marxisms of the Future," *Critical Sociology* 43/6 (2015), 831–45; David Theo Goldberg, "A Political Theology of Race: Articulating Racial Southafricanization," in Claire Alexander, ed., *Stuart Hall and "Race"* (London, 2011), 65–89; Keyan G. Tomaselli, "Reading Stuart Hall in Southern Africa," in Paul Gilroy, Lawrence Grossberg, and Angela McRobbie, eds., *Without Guarantee: In Honour of Stuart Hall* (London, 2000), 375–88.

¹⁰Aidan Foster Carter, "The Mode of Production Controversy," *New Left Review* 1/107 (1978), 47–77, at 54.

¹¹In the English translations of the *Grundrisse* it is translated variously as "organization" or "organic connection"—see David McLellan, *Marx's Grundrisse* (London, 1971), 39, 42—and as "structure" or "order"—see Martin Nicolaus, *Grundrisse* (London, 1973), 105, 108.

¹²See Louis Althusser and Étienne Balibar, *Reading Capital* (London, 1970), 100, 108.

¹³Foster-Carter traces the origins of the developmentalist usage of the term to the work of French anthropologist Pierre-Philippe Rey. See his "Mode of Production Controversy," 55–67.

multiplicity of contradictions, economic and noneconomic, peculiar to each practice constituting a social formation, rather than by a simple economic determinism.

However, Hall argues that this complex view of the movement of history was not followed through in Althusser's theory of articulation. While Althusser's analysis began by showing the complexity of historical change, Hall argues that in his subsequent elaboration of "structural causality" in his paper "On the Materialist Dialectic," Althusser abandons the plane of history entirely and investigates, in purely epistemological terms, the nature of structures in general.¹⁴ That is, the relationship between a structure and its elements abstracted from any historical or empirical reality. Here we have an elaboration of a structure with complex relations between its constitutive elements, but the structure itself is relatively inert. Hall writes that he approves of Althusser's analysis in his essay "Contradiction and Overdetermination," which is "grounded in a historically specific analysis using the effective concept of a *conjuncture*." He rejects, however, Althusser's elaboration of the notion of structural causality in *Reading Capital*, where 'the real qualitative discontinuities between the different levels of the social formation ... are dispersed into the formal elements which enable us to 'think' the structural unity of an 'ever pre-given' complex whole.'¹⁵

It is only through an analysis of history, claims Hall, that we can understand how a particular social formation is "structured in dominance." That is, how certain elements are endowed with greater significance and causal efficacy than others at a given historical moment. Reading Marx's notes on method in the 1857 Introduction to the *Grundrisse* faithfully, Hall argues, means acknowledging that while Marx breaks with the idea of a simple evolutionism, he categorically does not abandon the problem of accounting for the significance of empirical historical developments. To demonstrate his point, Hall takes the example of the development of "money" through history:

Peru was relatively developed but had no "money". In the Roman Empire, "money" existed, but was "subordinate": to other payment relations, e.g., taxes, payments-in-kind. Money only makes a historic appearance "in its full intensity" in bourgeois society. There is thus no linear progression of this relation and the category which expresses it through each succeeding historical stage. Money does not "wade its way through each historical stage". It may appear, or not appear, in different modes be developed or simple, dominant or subordinate. What matters is not the mere appearance of the relation sequentially through time, but its position within the configuration of productive relations which make each mode an ensemble. Modes of production thus form the discontinuous structural sets through which history articulates itself.¹⁶

¹⁴Louis Althusser, *For Marx* (London, 1969), 161–219.

¹⁵Stuart Hall, "Settling Accounts with Althusser," in Stuart Hall Archive US121, Box 10, Cadbury Research Library: Special Collections, University of Birmingham, original emphasis. See Althusser, *For Marx*, 87–129.

¹⁶Stuart Hall, "A 'Reading' of Marx's 1857 Introduction to the *Grundrisse*," discussion paper, University of Birmingham (1973), available at http://epapers.bham.ac.uk/2956/1/Hall_SOP01_1973.pdf (accessed 22 October 2022), 42. This discussion seems to be drawn from Pierre Vilar, "Marxist History, a History in the Making: Towards a Dialogue with Althusser," *New Left Review* 1/80 (1973), 65–106, at 69–71.

Here, Hall argues that Marx elaborated a “law of uneven development” in which the historical emergence of a particular social or productive relation is not evolutionary—that is, merely embryonic in earlier stages, developing progressively, before fully realizing itself in the capitalist mode of production. Marx’s analysis, according to Hall, investigates how a relation or element present in previous historical moments is recast and transformed by political struggles and economic processes which “articulate” it with various other relations in a given mode of production. Historical development is thus studied by charting qualitative variations in a particular relation based on its differential articulation in successive modes of production through history.

Hall’s concept of articulation is concerned with capitalism’s uneven development and how elements from previous modes of production are recast in subsequent modes. It aims to account for more than the complex relation between base and superstructure theorized by Althusser and Balibar. It is a theory of historical development and transition, sensitive to the historical and social context in which certain productive relations emerge. In what follows, I will show that Hall develops this embryonic idea with the help of theories of uneven development. These theories are primarily sociological and political-economic in nature, rather than philosophical. UNESCO conferences on race and colonialism, which Hall contributed to from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, provided the fora for this engagement with development theory.

Hall and the shift in UNESCO’s antiracism campaigns

Before his contributions to UNESCO seminars on the nature of postcolonial societies and on sociological theories of race, Hall exhibits little sustained interest in sociological and economic theories of underdevelopment. It is the nature of the publications, the themes which they explored, and the contributions they elicited that produced the encounter between Hall’s heterodox Marxism and empirical studies of Third World societies. While this encounter was relatively transitory, it constitutes a fascinating chapter in Hall’s intellectual trajectory because it forced him to develop his more abstract reflections on Marxist method into more systematic sociological protocols for analyzing specific societies and historical contexts. The seminars in question reflected a reorientation in UNESCO’S antiracism campaigns following the publication of their revised Statement on Racism published in 1967.

UNESCO’S first two statements on race—published in 1950 and 1951—focused on refuting scientific racism. Both statements challenged typological conceptions of race—the notion that human behavior is determined by a set of stable characteristics inherited from separate racial stocks—by showing that such views were contradicted both by anthropologist’s understanding of cultural difference and by geneticists’ understandings of variation within human populations.¹⁷

¹⁷All four UNESCO statements are republished in Jean Hiernaux and Michael Banton, *Four Statements on the Race Question* (Paris, 1969); see 30–36 and 36–44 for the 1950 and 1951 statements respectively. The literature on the UNESCO’s race statements, particularly those of the 1950s, is voluminous, but some useful recent critical surveys include Michelle Brittain, “Race, Racism and Antiracism: UNESCO and the Politics

In response to a rise in anti-Semitic incidents in Europe between 1950 and 1960, the intensification of the civil rights movement in the United States, and the stifling of opposition to the apartheid regime in South Africa, UNESCO officials decided to issue an updated statement on race in 1967. The 1967 statement urged that greater attention be paid to history—particularly the history of slavery, colonialism, and anti-Semitism—and to “the social structure” in which racial prejudice operates. Given that the causes of racial prejudice were overwhelmingly social and historical, the statement argued that eliminating racial discrimination required more than education and publicizing scientific research which undermined the presuppositions of racist beliefs and doctrines. It stressed the social and historical context in which racism emerges, noting that racial discrimination is most virulent in

settler societies wherein are found conditions of great disparity of power and property, in certain urban areas where there have emerged ghettos in which individuals are deprived of equal access to employment, housing, political participation, education, and the administration of justice, and in many societies where social and economic tasks which are deemed to be contrary to the ethics or beneath the dignity of its members are assigned to a group of different origins who are derided, blamed, and punished for taking on these tasks.¹⁸

This new sociological emphasis of UNESCO’s antiracism efforts was reflected in several conferences and publications sponsored by UNESCO in the course of the 1970s. The publications focused on bringing both the history of colonialism and social and economic factors into the study of contemporary race relations. Hall, on the invitation of the director of the Social Science Programmes at UNESCO, Marion Glean O’Callaghan, participated in several conferences and colloquia dedicated to race, colonialism, and antiracist struggles in this period.¹⁹ In these papers, Hall puts his thought in conversation with economic and sociological theories of Third World social and political formations.

The “nonstandard” conditions of the class struggle in these societies—the close overlap between racial and class divisions, the total or partial absence of “free” labor markets, and the coexistence of highly capitalized industrial sectors and precapitalist agrarian sectors within a single national economy—allowed Hall to deepen his

of Presenting Science to the Postwar Public,” *American Historical Review* 112/5 (2007), 1386–1413; Anthony Q. Hazard Jr., *Postwar Anti-racism: The United States, UNESCO and “Race,” 1945–1968* (New York, 2012); Sebastián Gil-Riaño, “Relocating Anti-racist Science: The 1950 UNESCO Statement on Race and Economic Development in the Global South,” *British Journal of the History of Science* 51/2 (2018), 281–303.

¹⁸Hiernaux and Banton, *Four Statements on the Race Question*, 52.

¹⁹See Stuart Hall, “Africa’ Is Alive and Well in the Diaspora: Cultures of Resistance, Slavery and Religious Revival and Political Cultism in Jamaica,” paper presented at UNESCO Seminar on Social Structure, Revolutionary Change and Culture in Southern Africa, Maputo, Mozambique, July 1976; Hall, “Pluralism, Race and Class in Caribbean Societies,” in John Rex, ed., *Race and Class in Post-colonial Society: A Study of Ethnic Group Relations in the English-Speaking Caribbean, Bolivia, Chile and Mexico* (Paris, 1977), 150–84; Hall, “Race, Articulation and Societies Structured in Dominance,” in Marion O’Callaghan, ed., *Sociological Theories: Race and Colonialism* (Paris, 1980), 305–45. All three papers have recently been reprinted in Paul Gilroy and Ruth Wilson Gilmore, eds., *Selected Writings on Race and Difference* (Durham, NC and London, 2021), 161–95, 136–61, and 195–246 respectively.

anti-teleological account of capitalist development and his antireductionist account of class struggle. In what follows, I will focus on two of the UNESCO publications in which the development of the notion of articulation is explicitly pursued.

The critique of plural society

In his essay 1977 “Pluralism, Race and Class in Caribbean Societies,” Hall applies the concept of articulation he developed in critical dialogue with Althusser’s theory of structural causality to Caribbean social formations. Hall takes as his target “pluralist” theories of Caribbean and African societies. These theories have their origin in J. S. Furnivall’s studies of colonial Burma and the Dutch East Indies.²⁰ Thinkers like Leo Kuper and M. G. Smith drew on Furnivall’s work to argue that postcolonial African and Caribbean societies were “plural societies” in which “culture,” rather than class, was constitutive of the major patterns of social stratification.²¹

They argued that plural societies, unlike societies where various population groups share a set of basic institutions, are characterized by cultural sectors with their own distinctive and exclusive institutions. These institutions function parallel to one another, rarely overlap, and often stand in antagonistic relation to one another. Unlike more culturally homogeneous societies, “plural societies” lack a central value system that can integrate these mutually exclusive social institutions. The “unity” of plural societies is thus typically achieved by one of the cultural segments holding a monopoly of power and exercising control and coercion over the other sections. The class structure of these societies is transposed onto their cultural heterogeneity, with a high level of coincidence between class stratification and racial/cultural stratification. Moreover, plural-society theorists like M. G. Smith and Leo Kuper argued that the limited manifestation of class-based solidarities across cultural segments meant that class analyses could not explain social stratification in African and Caribbean societies.²² It was therefore argued that the relationship between mutually exclusive cultural institutions is constitutive of all other social relations in these societies, including class relations.

Hall credited the plural-society theorists with recognizing a crucial distinguishing feature of societies of the Caribbean vis-à-vis other class societies, namely that there is a much sharper cultural or racial homogeneity of various social classes than in other societies. However, in stressing the extent to which various cultural institutions function parallel to one another, Hall argued that the model of the “plural society” fails to come to terms with how the hierarchy of cultural sections is legitimized and maintained.²³ According to Hall, a sociological model adequate to Caribbean societies needed to specify “not simply the plurality of their internal structures, but the *articulated* relation between their differences.”²⁴

²⁰See John Sydenham Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice: A Comparative Study of Burma and the Netherlands India* (Cambridge, 1948).

²¹Michael G. Smith, *A Framework for Caribbean Studies* (Mona, 1955); Leo Kuper and M. G. Smith, eds., *Pluralism in Africa* (Berkeley, 1969); Leo Kuper, *Pluralism, Part I* (Paris, 1971); Leo Kuper, *Pluralism, Part II: Theories of Race Relations* (Paris, 1971).

²²Michael G. Smith, *The Plural Society in the British West Indies* (Berkeley, 1965); Kuper, *Pluralism, Part I*; Kuper, *Pluralism, Part II*.

²³Hall, “Pluralism, Race and Class in Caribbean Societies,” 140.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 146, my emphasis.

Hall drew on theorists of “plantation society” and social stratification to sketch such a model. His main references were the work of George Beckford and Lloyd Braithwaite. Beckford, a member of the New World Group at the University of the West Indies, argued that the near total destruction of indigenous social forms during colonial conquest had produced a social *tabula rasa* upon which economic, political, and social life on the island colonies could be fundamentally reshaped.²⁵ In this context, the slave plantation emerges as a “total institution” in the Caribbean colonies, fully determining economic and political policy. Braithwaite, on the other hand, argued in a series of publications that Furnivall’s theories of “plural society” stressed pluralism over the processes of legitimization which maintain patterns of stratification among the cultural segments of these societies.²⁶ For Braithwaite, the model of the “plural society” blurs the distinction between parallel or horizontal relationships of cultural segments and the hierarchies which exist between them.

Hall, drawing on Beckford, notes that the various European, African, Latin American, and South Asian elements that constitute Caribbean societies are not “pure” because, historically, they are all mediated through, and thoroughly transformed by, a distinct Caribbean institution—the slave plantation. It is plantation production that first draws together the different social groups which compose Caribbean societies. And it is slavery which institutes mutually exclusive institutions by distributing population groups along racial, colour, and status lines into two dichotomous social spheres. It is also the conditions of slave production which institute the domination of white planter cultural forms and institutions over the cultures and institutions of the enslaved. The plural-society model is misleading, according to Hall, because it fails to acknowledge the extent to which the cultural segments that make up Caribbean societies are not primordial, or inherited from Europe, Africa, or South Asia, but are produced by the conditions of slave production—“the differentiation between the cultural institutions which arise within slave society is a differentiation of slave society itself.”²⁷

For Hall, contra the plural-society theorists, it is not cultural differences that produce class differences in the Caribbean. Rather, it is the peculiarity of the Caribbean mode of production which first institutes the patterns of cultural segmentation and stratification. The abolition of slavery, according to Hall, leads to the termination of legally enforced caste barriers between “slave” and “master” society, but the foundational divisions produced by the plantation determine the nature of the class society which follows. The abolition of slavery leads to a degree of social mobility across racial frontiers, but “the symbolism of race, colour and status” remains the “idiom of social stratification and mobility.”²⁸ This is evidenced by the fact that

²⁵George Beckford, *Persistent Poverty: Underdevelopment in Plantation Economies of the Third World* (Oxford, 1972). For a detailed account and contextualization of the work of Beckford and other New World Group thinkers see Adom Getachew, “The Plantation’s Colonial Modernity in Comparative Perspective,” in Leigh K. Jenco, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Political Theory* (Oxford, 2019), 41–60.

²⁶Lloyd Braithwaite, “Social Stratification and Cultural Pluralism,” *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 83 (1960), 816–36.

²⁷Hall, “Pluralism, Race and Class in Caribbean Societies,” 145.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 149.

social mobility is reserved for those sections of the black and colored communities able to assimilate closest to the culture of the white plantocracy. According to Hall, this is not evidence, however, that these societies are not properly class societies. He insists that Caribbean society is “not, usefully, considered as an ethnic or race-based or even race-colour-based social system, but a social-class stratification system in which the race-colour elements in the stratification matrix constitute the visible index of a more complex structure.”²⁹

Hall explains that this form of class society is complex, “but no more so—though in a different way—than modern industrial social structures.”³⁰ He argues that the transition of Caribbean societies to capitalism is not all that distinct from the transition of Western societies to capitalism. One needs to distinguish, explains Hall, the “modal” distribution of classes between those who possess and those who do not possess the means of production from “the actual distribution of classes and class fractions into empirical groups in specific societies.”³¹ Hall explains that in England, for instance, capitalist industrialization was achieved on the basis of an alliance between the emerging bourgeoisie and the precapitalist feudal aristocracy. Similarly, in Caribbean societies, Hall observed a transition to capitalism based on an alliance between an emerging black “national bourgeoisie” and sections of the precapitalist planter class in the emerging commercial sector. Moreover, Hall notes how ostensible “ethnic” or “racial” forms of political mobilization like the black power movement in Jamaica mobilize a notion of blackness aimed at fermenting forms of *class* solidarity between the urban and the rural poor.³²

Hall draws his narrative about Britain’s transition to capitalism from Perry Anderson.³³ This is the first time Hall compares the development of British capitalism to the development of capitalism in the global South. Here the comparison is deployed to make sense of race and class in the Caribbean. Later we will see Hall make a reciprocal comparison; theories originating in the global South will be used to make sense of the class struggle in Britain. Crucially, however, Hall does not draw the comparison in order to lament Britain’s “decline.” Rather, the comparison serves to stress the importance of turning to the history of development to understand seemingly aberrant aspects of the class struggle in the present—in this case, the contemporary salience of social categories like race that are ostensibly incompatible with the advanced forms of production and “free” capitalist labor markets.

The idea here is that the nature of society’s precapitalist modes of production shapes, in part, the nature of the capitalist society which follows. The transition to capitalism does not immediately sweep away precapitalist social relations. The nascent capitalist class may, for instance, pragmatically ally itself with precapitalist classes during the process of transition. Moreover, certain precapitalist institutions may be preserved if they prove functional to capitalist interests. These are themes we see Hall pursue further in his subsequent UNESCO paper.

²⁹Ibid., 152.

³⁰Ibid., 156.

³¹Hall, “Pluralism, Race and Class in Caribbean Societies,” 157.

³²Ibid., 156.

³³Hall cites Perry Anderson, “Origins of the Present Crisis”; Hall, “Pluralism, Race and Class in Caribbean Societies,” 154.

Hall's engagement with theories of apartheid's "modernity"

Hall tackled the question of the relationship between race and capitalism beyond historical legacies of slavery in his subsequent UNESCO publication, "Race, Articulation and Societies Structured in Dominance."³⁴ Hall explains that he is concerned with determining "how different racial and ethnic groups were inserted historically, and the relations which have tended to erode and transform, or to preserve these distinctions through time—not simply as residues of previous modes, but as active structuring principles of the present organization of society."³⁵ His central references shift from theorists of Caribbean societies to neo-Marxist accounts of apartheid South Africa.

Throughout the 1970s, South African émigré neo-Marxist scholars in Britain were engaged in a fiery debate with liberal historians and social scientists about the nature of apartheid ideology.³⁶ There was a diversity of perspectives within both the "liberal" and "Marxist"—or, as they were labeled at the time, "revisionist"—camps. Some of the liberals, inspired by W. W. Rostow's modernization and stages-of-growth theory, argued that with increasing industrialization and economic growth, policies of racial segregation in South Africa would gradually be undermined.³⁷ Industrialization and technological advancement would usher in fundamental changes in the divisions of labor and a more complex allocation of resources to production. This, in turn, would lead to rationalization of the production process. Economic and social relations would be pushed in an egalitarian direction as firms recruited workers based on their technical qualifications, rather than ascribed ideological criteria like race. Moreover, the locations of plants would be chosen based on the resource requirements of industry, and not according to the arbitrary territorial segregation of racial groups.

The neo-Marxist "revisionists" sought, in various ways, to challenge the idea that industrialization and apartheid ideology were incompatible. The dominant approach of these revisionist scholars was to challenge what they saw as the central tenet of the liberal interpretation of apartheid: the notion that racial ideology was extra-economic or, more precisely, precapitalist or preindustrial. They sought to show that the formative context for the emergence of apartheid was the rise of industry: the emergence of the gold mining on the Witwatersrand in the late nineteenth century and the rise of secondary manufacturing industries from the 1940s onwards. Apartheid, according to the South African Marxists, was a modernist

³⁴The paper was published in 1980, but near-complete versions of it in Hall's archive date back to at least the mid-1970s. See Stuart Hall, "Race, Articulation and Societies Structured in Dominance," Stuart Hall Archive US121, Box 20, Cadbury Research Library: Special Collections, University of Birmingham.

³⁵Hall, "Race, Articulation and Societies Structured In Dominance," 258.

³⁶For useful surveys of these debates see David Yudelman, "Industrialisation, Race Relations and Change in South Africa: An Ideological and Academic Debate," *African Affairs* 74/294 (1975), 82–96; and Christopher Saunders, *The Making of the South African Past: Major Historians on Race and Class* (Cape Town, 1988).

³⁷See, for instance, W. H. Hutt, *Economics of the Colour Bar* (London, 1964); Ralph Horwitz, *The Political Economy of South Africa* (London, 1967); Hobart Houghton, "White Prosperity and White Supremacy: A Comment," *African Affairs* 69/277 (1970), 379–80; and, especially, Michael O'Dowd, "South Africa in Light of the Stages of Economic Growth," in Adrian Leftwich, ed., *South Africa: Economic Growth and Political Change* (London, 1974), 29–43.

doctrine, born out of the labor requirements and production processes of industry, not a premodern reaction to industrialization.³⁸

Hall clearly had the stakes of the debate among South African émigrés in mind when he argued that South Africa constituted the “test case” for examining the relationship between race and class in contemporary capitalist societies because “South Africa is the ‘exceptional’ case of an industrial capitalist social formation, where race is an articulating principle of the social, political and ideological structures.”³⁹ He engaged with two important contributors to the revisionist challenge to the liberal notion that apartheid and industrialization were incompatible: the neo-Weberian perspective of John Rex and the neo-Marxist perspective of Harold Wolpe. For the purposes of this article, I will focus on Hall’s engagement with Wolpe and the theorists Wolpe drew on to develop his analyses of apartheid. It is in relation to these ideas that Hall develops his notion of articulation.

In developing his theorization of apartheid, Wolpe critically engaged contemporary Marxist critiques of modernization theory. The most influential was that developed by Andre Gunder Frank in a series of articles dealing with economic underdevelopment in Latin America.⁴⁰ Based on a series of radical deductions from the work of Latin American structuralist development economists, Frank rejected the claim, expressed by both liberal modernization theorists and several Latin American communist parties, that there remained significant remnants of feudalism in Latin America.

Frank rejected teleological conceptions of economic development according to which countries pass through the same succession of developmental stages. On this account, underdeveloped countries are considered to occupy a stage that developed countries have already transcended. Frank argued that developed countries had never been underdeveloped in the manner in which Third World countries were in the present. This is because underdeveloped countries were the product not merely of their own economic, political, cultural, and social structures, but also of their relationship with core capitalist powers. According to Frank, “the metropolis destroyed and/or totally transformed the earlier viable social and economic systems of these societies, incorporated them into the metropolitan dominated world-wide capitalist system, and converted them into sources for its own metropolitan capital accumulation and development.”⁴¹

³⁸Martin Legassick, “The Frontier Tradition in South African Historiography,” in *Collected Seminar Papers: Institute of Commonwealth Studies* 12 (1972), 1–33; Legassick, “British Hegemony and the Origins of Segregation, 1900–1914” (mimeo, London, 1972), reprinted in William Beinart and Saul Dubow, eds., *Segregation and Apartheid in Twentieth-Century South Africa* (London, 1995), 43–60; Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido, “Lord Milner and the South African State,” in *History Workshop Journal* 8/1 (1979), 50–8; Stanley Trapido, “South Africa in a Comparative Study of Industrialization,” *Journal of Development Studies* 7/1 (1971), 309–20; Frederick A. Johnstone, “White Prosperity and White Supremacy in South Africa Today,” *African Affairs* 69/275 (1971), 124–40; Harold Wolpe, “Industrialism and Race in South Africa,” in Sami Zubaida, ed., *Race and Racialism* (London, 1970), 151–80.

³⁹Hall, “Race, Articulation and Societies Structured in Dominance,” 199.

⁴⁰These are collected in Andre Gunder Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America* (New York, 1967); and Frank, *Latin America: Underdevelopment and Revolution* (New York, 1969).

⁴¹Frank, *Latin America: Underdevelopment and Revolution*, 225.

Countries are underdeveloped, therefore, not because they have not yet successfully “modernized,” but because their economic interests are subordinated to the capitalist accumulation of metropolitan powers. Frank argued that even the most remote and isolated regions of Latin America had, since the time of colonization, participated in commodity exchange and other processes which have their source in capitalist accumulation by the metropole. Even the seemingly most “archaic” economic processes present in Latin America were thus thoroughly integrated into the worldwide capitalist economic system. Frank thus argued that it made little sense to speak about feudalism in contemporary Latin America.

In the British context, Ernesto Laclau, who had recently moved to England from Argentina to pursue graduate study at Oxford on Eric Hobsbawm’s invitation in 1969, published an influential critique of Frank’s theory of underdevelopment in the *New Left Review* in 1971.⁴² He argued that Frank’s analysis had the implausible implication of subsuming the radically different forms of exploitation experienced by the Chilean *inquilinos*, the Ecuadorian *huasipungueros*, the slave of the West Indian sugar plantation, and the textile workers of Manchester to a single form of relation termed “capitalist.”⁴³

According to Laclau, this lack of historical and social specificity in Frank’s work stemmed from his failure to distinguish an “economic system” from an economic “mode of production.”⁴⁴ An economic system, according to Laclau, designates relations between different economic sectors and productive units, whether on a regional, national, or world scale. An economic system, explains Laclau, can be capitalist while incorporating several different modes of production. Therefore we can simultaneously acknowledge that substantial feudal relations of production exist in Latin America, while also insisting that these do not exist as exogenous to capital, or as declining sectors of the economy, but as integral to the broader economic system.

The declining rate of profit at the metropole, explains Laclau, forces Western capitalists to seek productive units in which either the organic composition of capital is low or super-exploitation of labor is possible—or both. A feudal mode of production meets these requirements and, therefore, at certain historical moments, it is in the interests of Western capitalists to maintain feudalism in the periphery to combat the tendency of the rate of profit to fall at the core. Laclau insisted that dependence be traced to concrete modes of production, rather than to the omnipresence of capitalism. “It seems to me more useful,” writes Laclau, “to underline these difference and discontinuities than to attempt to show the continuity and identity of the process, from Herman Cortes to General Motors.”⁴⁵

Wolpe combined Laclau’s theory of the preservation of feudalism within a broader capitalist economic system with the work of French Marxist anthropologists who specialized in precapitalist economic systems in French West and Equatorial Africa. Claude Meillassoux and other members of the Paris–Brazzaville school of French economic anthropology argued that exploitation in precolonial, precapitalist economic systems in sub-Saharan Africa was not

⁴²Ernesto Laclau, “Feudalism and Capitalism in Latin America,” *New Left Review* 1/67 (1971), 19–38.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 25.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 33–8.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 37.

characterized by the extraction of surplus value. Rather, these societies were characterized by a “lineage mode of production” where elders achieved their dominant position not through the accumulation of commodities, but by controlling—through their monopoly over social knowledge and elite goods—rates of marriage and levels of fertility, and thus the size and distribution of the labor force.⁴⁶ Meillassoux’s core theoretical takeaway from his studies of these “lineage modes of production” in West Africa was that an adequate Marxist account of a particular social formation cannot focus purely on production but must also address the issue of social reproduction: how social groups and particular social classes are maintained from generation to generation.

Wolpe, using the language of some of the French anthropologists, argued that South African industrialization was achieved on the basis of an articulation—or complex combination—of precapitalist and capitalist modes of production, rather than the latter merely supplanting the former.⁴⁷ He followed Laclau by suggesting that the conditions of industrialization in South Africa, particularly the mining sector’s demand for a large supply of cheap labor, meant that it was in the interests of capitalists for the precapitalist modes of production to be maintained and subordinated to capitalist accumulation, rather than simply destroyed. This is because the nascent capitalist sector could not fulfill all the material needs of workers. The maintenance of precapitalist communities thus plays a crucial role in the cheap reproduction of the labor force by essentially subsidizing the cost of workers’ means of subsistence—a cost that would have otherwise been incurred by the capitalist. Through low wages and precarious employment, workers are periodically expelled by the capitalist sector to rural areas where a subsistence economy could provide for their basic needs.

Wolpe argued that as capitalism expanded to become the dominant mode of production in South Africa, it tended to erode the economic viability of communal rural social formations that were a source of cheap labor for South Africa’s mining industry. Apartheid, according to Wolpe, emerges, in part, as a response to this undermining of the material basis of the cheap migrant labor system. On the one hand, the apartheid regime engaged in various policies to bolster the economic viability of rural homelands and to strengthen the legitimacy of “traditional authorities.” On the other hand, it involved the establishment of an elaborate system of domination and control to maintain the periodic expulsion of black migrant laborers back into the rural areas where their material needs could be met by precapitalist communal forms of economic and social organization. This allowed the South African labor force to continue to be “reproduced” at little expense to South African capital.

⁴⁶See Claude Meillassoux, “The Social Organization of the Peasantry: The Economic Basis of Kinship,” *Journal of Peasant Studies* 1/1 (1972), 81–90; Meillassoux, “From Production to Reproduction: A Marxist Approach to Economic Anthropology,” *Economy and Society* 1/1 (1972), 93–105; George Dupré and Pierre-Philippe Rey, “Reflections on the Pertinence of a Theory and History of Exchange,” *Economy and Society* 2/2 (1973), 131–63.

⁴⁷See Pierre Philippe Rey, “Sur l’articulation des modes de production,” *Problème de planification* 13 (1971), 1–163; Rey, *Colonialisme, néo-colonialisme et transition au capitalisme* (Paris, 1971); Rey, *Les alliances de classes* (Paris, 1973).

Hall approved of Wolpe, Laclau, and the French Africanists' general approach. He credits Wolpe and the French Africanists with approaching the phenomenon of racism "not by deserting the level of analysis of economic relations (i.e. the mode of production) but by posing it in its correct, necessary complex form."⁴⁸ First, this involved identifying how different racial groups stand in different relations to capital—in terms of both the functions they are assigned in the productive process and how their labor power is reproduced.⁴⁹ Second, it produces a more complex understanding of the relationship between racial groups. It demonstrates that racial groups are not homogeneous in their class composition, as we saw plural-society theorists argue.⁵⁰ This disturbs the notion that black political organizations necessarily express the interests of the working class, or that all fractions of white labor necessarily have an interest in the preservation of the status quo. However, the fact that an overwhelming majority of the white working class *do* support apartheid points to the fact that ideological positions cannot be ascribed as a bloc to classes defined at the economic level.

Hall followed the Africanists and Laclau by insisting on the importance of the history of the development of capitalism for the analysis of race in the present. Here Hall was not arguing that racism is merely a hangover from a previous mode of production or a bygone epoch. He explains that while "Britain's long imperial hegemony" may have "laid the trace of an active racism in British popular consciousness," this was not sufficient for understanding the operation of racism in the present.⁵¹ This would require understanding how the nature and function of racism have been transformed by "the contact between black and white workers in the conditions of postwar migration."⁵²

Hall thus follows the South African émigrés by trying to find the roots of contemporary racism, not in the residues of previous modes of production that will be progressively undermined in the course of capitalist industrialization, but as the outcome of fundamental transitions which reshape and reconfigure social classes in the long-term interests of a new mode of production. Such a process involves both an incorporation of elements of previous modes of production and a fundamental transformation of them. Hall is not invoking the idea of uneven development to argue that Britain's "decaying imperial state" is to be blamed for contemporary racism.⁵³ Rather he is claiming that only through an appreciation of the distinctive features of a society's development, with close attention paid to

⁴⁸Hall, "Race, Articulation and Societies Structured in Dominance," 322.

⁴⁹Ibid., 200.

⁵⁰Hall draws here on Wolpe's paper "The Theory of Internal Colonialism," in Ivar Oxall, Tony Barnett, and David Booth, eds., *Beyond the Sociology of Development: Economy and Society in Latin America and Africa* (London, 1975), 229–52; Hall "Race, Articulation and Societies Structured in Dominance," 208. In his paper, Wolpe draws on the work of Guglielmo Carchedi to describe the class differentiations emerging within both white and black labor in South Africa in the 1970s.

⁵¹Hall, "Race, Articulation and Societies Structured in Dominance," 338.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³See David Edgerton, "Why the Left Must Abandon the Myth of British Decline," *New Statesman* (online) (2021), at www.newstatesman.com/ideas/2021/10/why-the-left-must-abandon-the-myth-of-british-decline (accessed 10 Aug. 2022).

moments of transition and discontinuity, can we understand the economic and social significance of racism in the present.

For Hall, transitions are brought about by a combination of both ideological and economic factors. While Wolpe hints at the force of ideological factors in the formation of South Africa's racialized social order, his analysis, according to Hall, tends to suggest that the crisis in capitalist accumulation *necessarily* produces apartheid's systematic forms of racial discrimination. South Africa's class structure, underpinned by an "articulation of modes of production," is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for the virulence of apartheid's racist practices and ideology, according to Hall. To understand why a society develops a particular kind of racialized structure, one must examine how ideological and economic factors work in tandem. Here Hall draws on Ernesto Laclau's early theorization of populism.

In his first book *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*, Laclau argued that while class struggle is determined by articulations at the level of the mode of production, the particular character the class struggle will take—the popular-democratic struggle—depends on the articulation between the class struggle and ideological elements and interpellations like "the People" and "the Nation."⁵⁴ These interpellations, Laclau insists, have no necessary class character. The particular class connotation that gets ascribed to them depends on how they "articulate" diverse and contradictory class interests and ideologies to forge various class alliances. "Articulation requires," according to Laclau, "the existence of non-class contents—interpellations and contradictions—which constitute the raw materials on which class ideological practices operate. The ideology of the dominant class, precisely because it is dominant, interpellates not only the members of that class but also members of the dominated class."⁵⁵

Hall, echoing Laclau, suggests that the nature of the broader social formation should be understood as a complex articulation of economic, political, and ideological levels. This means that ideologies cannot be reduced to coherent, transparent class interests. Therefore it needs to be determined how the interests of heterogeneous social classes are reconciled by the hegemonic ideology. Hall, however, stops short of describing race as an "empty signifier" which becomes contingently attached to different class practices, as Laclau presented interpellations like "the Nation" and "the People." Hall presents articulation of race and class as a much more multifaceted process than the discursive struggle over the connotation of a particular nonclass interpellation. Hall draws on Laclau here, not in order to stress ideological factors over economic ones, but in order to nuance the accounts of economic development that he is critically engaging in the paper.

He describes three distinct levels at which the articulation of race and class should be sought. First, at the economic level, race can become a pertinent category in the division of the labor and distribution of functions in a capital mode of production. Second, on the ideological level, fractions of the working class come to "live' their relations to other fractions and through them to capital itself."⁵⁶ Finally, on the important level of political struggles, racist interpellations are

⁵⁴Ernesto Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory* (London, 1977), 166.

⁵⁵Ibid., 162.

⁵⁶Hall, "Race, Articulation and Societies Structured in Dominance," 231.

“occupied and redefined to become the elementary forms of an oppositional formation—for instance, where ‘white racism’ is vigorously contested through the symbolic inversions of ‘black power’.”⁵⁷

The role played by race at each of these levels, explains Hall, has broader implications for the development of capitalism and the class struggle in a given society. It influences the nature of capital accumulation and the extraction of surplus value through racial divisions of labor influencing such processes as “the domestic reproduction of labour power ‘below its value’, the supply of cheap labour, the regulation of the ‘reserve army of labour’, the supply of raw materials, of subsistence agriculture, the hidden costs of social reproduction.”⁵⁸ Racialized social relations also enter into the nature of the class struggle, thwarting “attempts to construct alternative means of representation which could more adequately represent the class as a whole, or which are capable of effecting the unity of the class as a result,” and contribute to the “cementing ideology which secures the whole social formation under a dominant class.”⁵⁹

Gramsci as a theorist of underdevelopment and “regressive modernization”

Beyond the articulations of modes-of-production literature influencing Hall’s thinking about the relationship between race and class, it also significantly shaped his interpretation of the work of Antonio Gramsci. As David Forgacs points out in his analysis of the reception of Gramsci’s thought in Britain from the late 1950s, Gramsci was “creatively readapted” to the British context by his disciples there.⁶⁰ Hall’s specific “creative readaptation” involved figuring Gramsci as a theorist of articulation and underdevelopment.

What is striking about Hall’s invocation of Gramsci’s thought in his 1980 UNESCO paper is that it is not lauded as a representative of a more nuanced “Western Marxism” developed on the Continent. Rather, Gramsci’s thought is valued because it was developed in a European power, Italy, which was, more than any other, “brutally marked by the law of uneven development: with massive underdevelopment in the South. This raises the question of how the contradictions of the Italian social formation are articulated through different modes of production (capitalist and feudal), and through class alliances which combine elements from different social orders.”⁶¹ According to Hall, it is in the context of the particularly glaring class contradictions of Italian social formation that Gramsci was led to pose the problem of how economic relations of production are reproduced socially, technically, and ideologically.

In the UNESCO paper, Hall thus read the articulation literature in terms of Gramsci but he also read Gramsci in terms of the articulation literature. Gramsci was figured here as a theorist of how elements from distinct social orders or modes of production combine at particular moments to form the basis for different

⁵⁷Ibid., 241.

⁵⁸Ibid., 238.

⁵⁹Ibid., 240.

⁶⁰David Forgacs, “Gramsci and Marxism in Britain,” *New Left Review* 1/176 (1989), 70–88, at 72.

⁶¹Hall “Race, Articulation and Societies Structured in Dominance,” 334.

class alliances. Gramsci is also credited with extending the idea of articulation beyond the economic sphere by laying the foundation for an analysis of the complex relationship between economic, political, and ideological levels of the social formation and thus overcoming the residual functionalism of more orthodox Althusserian accounts of the process of reproduction.

This reading of Gramsci as a proto-underdevelopment theorist was echoed in another contribution to a UNESCO colloquium in 1985. Hall notes that Gramsci's first contact with socialist ideas was in the context of the growth of the Sardinian nationalist movement at a time when "Sardinia stood in a 'colonial' relationship to the Italian mainland."⁶² The influence of Wolpe's analyses of apartheid South Africa and Laclau's analyses of Latin America are clear when Hall likens Gramsci's sensitivity to the way in which the "backward" South and "advanced" North are combined within the Italian social formation to contemporary neo-Marxist studies of the "peasant" economies of the hinterland in Asian and Latin American countries on the path to dependent capitalist development," and of "migrant" labour forces within domestic labour markets; 'Bantustans' within so-called sophisticated capitalist economies."⁶³

Gramsci, like these underdevelopment theorists, recognized, according to Hall, that the general law of value has not had the tendency to homogenize labor power across the capitalist epoch. Rather, Gramsci's thought lays stress on the fact that the law of value "operates through and *because* of the specific character of labour power rather than—as the classical theory would have us believe—by systematically eroding those distinction as an inevitable part of a worldwide, epochal historical tendency."⁶⁴

Hall explains that this coexistence between "backward" and "advanced" sectors within the Italian social formation, and the way in which the former incorporates the latter, was a major theme of Gramsci's analyses of Italian fascism. Gramsci was conscious of how Catholicism in Italy represented a formidable alternative to the development of a secular and progressive national capitalism. Gramsci highlighted, according to Hall, the role that "fascism played in Italy in 'hegemonizing' the backward character of the national-popular culture in Italy and refashioning it into a reactionary national formation, with a genuine popular basis and support."⁶⁵ Fascism is described here as successfully incorporating precapitalist ideologies and social forms into a modernizing capitalist developmental agenda. While Hall categorically refused the label "fascist" to describe Thatcher's ideology, his contemporary analyses of Thatcherism are strikingly similar to how he describes Gramsci's analysis of fascist ideology as emerging from the "uneven" character of capitalist development in Italy.⁶⁶

⁶²Stuart Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity," *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 10/2 (1986), 5–27, at 9. Originally delivered as a paper entitled "Gramsci's Relevance to the Analysis of Racism and Ethnicity" to a colloquium titled *Theoretical Perspectives in the analysis of Racism and Ethnicity* organized in 1985 by the Division of Human Rights and Peace, UNESCO, Paris.

⁶³*Ibid.*, 25.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 24.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 26.

⁶⁶See Stuart Hall, "The Great Moving Right Show," *Marxism Today* (1979), 14–20, at 14.

Hall's analyses of Thatcherism in the 1980s drew inspiration from a wide range of sources. I don't mean to suggest here that underdevelopment theory was the only, or even the most important, influence on his thinking. However, there are aspects of his analysis, generally neglected in engagements with his thinking, where Hall's reading of Gramsci as a theorist of underdevelopment clearly shaped his interpretation. It is only when we highlight the background of some of Hall's thinking in development theory that his choice of certain lines of argument and his deployment of specific narratives make sense.

In a well-known analysis, Hall describes the crisis of postwar social democracy in the late 1970s as the context for the emergence of Thatcherism. He characterizes the nature of successive postwar governments in Britain—whether Conservative or Labour—as essentially corporatist.⁶⁷ The state intervened in British society to secure a compromise between organized labor and British capital. By the end of the 1970s, he argued, deepening economic crises and increasing working-class militancy meant that the state could no longer effectively intervene in British society to secure concessions from the working class to prevent a crisis in capitalist accumulation.⁶⁸ Amid this crisis, Thatcher and other populist figures in the Conservative Party attempted to reconfigure the role of the state as part of their broader ideology which Hall describes as “authoritarian populist.” Hall coined this term to reflect the fact Thatcherism does not merely secure its legitimacy through force or coercion but also by successfully condensing a wide range of popular discontents with the postwar economic and political order and mobilizing them around an authoritarian, right-wing and radical free-market political agenda.⁶⁹

Hall describes Thatcherism as playing on the contradictions underlying British economy and society to build a popular consensus. Hall's description of these contradictions is strikingly similar to the contradictions we saw between the “backward” South and “advanced” North in his reading of Gramsci, and between the various modes of production in underdeveloped societies. As early as 1978, Hall and his collaborators in their *Policing the Crisis* explained that postwar capitalism only survived on the basis of a major reconstruction of capital and the labor process. They argued that, in the British case, this reconstruction was achieved on the basis of on “an extremely weak and post-imperial economic base” which rendered British capitalism “unevenly developed, permanently stuck in transition.”⁷⁰

This notion of an unevenly developed British capitalism was recapitulated in Hall's interpretation of Thatcherism. Hall explains that

Thatcherism had its beady eye fixed on one of the most profound historical facts about the British social formation: that it had never, ever, properly entered the era of modern bourgeois civilization ... it never made the transfer to modernity. It never institutionalized, in a proper sense, the civilization and structures of advanced capitalism ... it never became a second

⁶⁷Ibid., 16.

⁶⁸See Stuart Hall, Chas Critcher, Tony Jefferson, John Clarke, and Brian Roberts, *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order* (London, 1978), 215–68.

⁶⁹See Stuart Hall “Popular-Democratic vs. Authoritarian-Populism: Two Ways of ‘Taking Democracy Seriously’” (1980), in Alan Hunt, ed., *Marxism and Democracy* (London, 1980), 157–85.

⁷⁰Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis*, 317.

capitalist-industrial-revolution power, in the way that the US did, and, by another route (the “Prussian route”), Germany and Japan did.⁷¹

There are clear and powerful echoes of the Andersonian declinist characterization of British capitalism in this passage. But viewed through the lenses of the development theory on which Hall drew to deepen his understanding of historical transitions, we can see that Hall is deploying these familiar arguments about Britain’s failure to modernize for reasons that have little to do with promoting the idea of British decline. Rather, he is following a strategy akin to that employed by UNESCO and South African theorists of apartheid to account for the persistence of seemingly archaic social relations like racism, namely turning to the history of the uneven development of capitalism to identify the distinctive features of a given society’s capitalist modernization.

We see Hall argue that Thatcherism emerges, first and foremost, as a project of “modernization.” It seeks to sweep away the archaic social institutions and cultural habits that it perceives to be at the root of Britain’s decline and replace them with modern bourgeois values—self-interest, competitive individualism, and antistatism. But just like fascist modernization, or the development of capitalism in countries in the global South, it does so through incorporating aspects of the archaic institutions that precede it. It is therefore a project of “regressive modernization”—“drawing on the past, looking backwards to former glories rather than forwards to a new epoch.”⁷²

The social basis for this paradoxical hegemonic project, Hall argues, is the petty bourgeoisie. Thatcherism takes as its paradigmatic social model the “hard-faced, utilitarian, petty-bourgeois businessmen” rather than “the grouse-shooting, hunting and fishing classes.”⁷³ The petty bourgeoisie, economically squeezed by the growing power of corporate enterprise, the state, and multinationals in the postwar years, represents the most likely ally to the modernizing free-market agenda of Thatcherism. At the same time, it is also a social class with organic ties to the more archaic elements of the British social order, deeply attached to conservative values of tradition, family, and nation. Through the petty bourgeoisie, Thatcherism is able to mobilize the backward elements of the English social formation around its modernizing agenda by presenting itself as the defender of “Englishness” under threat by immigration and moral degradation. Thatcherism thus represents “[m]ultinational capital ‘lived’ through the prism of petty-bourgeois ideology.”⁷⁴

The petty bourgeoisie as the principle social ally of a reactionary political project is drawn directly from Gramsci’s analyses of fascism. However, Hall gives the Gramscian analysis a distinctly “underdevelopmentalist” cast by describing the petty bourgeoisie as a point of articulation between a declining industrial mode of production and an emerging multinational form of capitalism. Thatcherism, for Hall, cannot straightforwardly be said to represent the petty bourgeoisie.

⁷¹Stuart Hall, “Gramsci and Us,” *Marxism Today* 6/16 (1987), 16–21, at 17.

⁷²*Ibid.*, 19.

⁷³*Ibid.*, 16.

⁷⁴Stuart Hall, *Hard Road to Renewal* (London, 1988), 5.

Rather, it is a petty-bourgeois ideology which “represents’ and is helping to reconstruct both national and international capital” insofar as it “articulates into a configuration different subject, different identities, different project, different aspirations. It does not reflect, it constructs a ‘unity’ out of difference.”⁷⁵

Hall’s analyses of Thatcherism attracted contemporary criticism from Marxist scholars for giving Thatcherism a coherence and epochal significance that, they argued, it lacked.⁷⁶ Hall’s Marxist critics attributed this misdiagnosis to Hall’s overwhelming focus on Thatcherite ideology, and to his neglect of underlying economic forces. This led Hall, these critics claimed, to emphasize discontinuities over continuities in British capitalism. They suggested that a careful political economic analysis, both of British society at large and of Thatcher’s policies in government, reveal that there was not as large a gulf as Hall suggest between the so-called social-democratic containment of capitalist crises and Thatcherism.

What these critiques miss is that it is not merely Hall’s “ideologism” that leads him to argue that Thatcherism represents an epochal shift in British capitalism. It is also his reliance on theories of development that focus specifically on moments of transition which issue in a reshaping of the class configuration of a given society. Hall, following the approach of these theorists of development, constructs a narrative about the distinctiveness of Britain’s modernization process. This process is punctuated by moments of crisis and transition that are the key to understanding how elements from previous historical epochs are recast. Reconstructing this process of development, according to this approach, allows one to appreciate the important function that seemingly archaic elements play in reproducing the relations of production of the contemporary mode of production and in solidifying the hegemony of the ruling classes.

I don’t mean to suggest that the preceding contextualization completely invalidates the criticisms of Hall’s analyses of Thatcherism. I merely seek to emphasize the extent to which it is not merely Hall’s overwhelming focus on superstructural elements that produces his interpretation, but also the sociological and political-economic arguments that are deeply infused into his understanding of historical transitions. Future critical scrutiny of Hall’s analyses of Thatcherism might consider engaging these elements. Specifically, future studies of Hall’s thought could fruitfully interrogate the extent to which the kinds of transition described by the development theorists that Hall draws on are in fact comparable to the transition that Thatcherism represents.

Conclusion

Historians and social theorists’ failure to acknowledge Hall’s substantial theoretical debts to development theory might have something to do with significant shifts in Hall’s thinking in the last two decades of the twentieth century. In the early 1980s,

⁷⁵Ibid., 19.

⁷⁶See Kevin Bonnett, Simon Bromley, Bob Jessop, and Tom Ling, “Authoritarian Populism, Two Nations, and Thatcherism,” *New Left Review* 1/147 (1984), 32–60; Alex Callinicos, “The Politics of Marxism Today,” *International Socialism* 2/29 (1985) (online), at www.marxists.org/history/etol/writers/callinicos/1985/xx/marxtoday.html (accessed 11 Aug. 2021).

Hall became a member of a “Hegemony” reading group at the University of Essex led by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. In a text entitled “The Essex Manifesto,” Laclau explained that the group emerged in the context of the crisis of European Marxism in the late 1970s. Laclau diagnoses this as “a crisis of economism” and explains that the group aimed to supersede the limits of “economic reductionism” by advancing a theory of hegemony “as the establishment of an articulating principle among heterogeneous ideological elements.”⁷⁷ He went on to explain that the group would engage with “theoretical tendencies in linguistics, psychoanalysis and related disciplines which are also developing a non-reductionist analysis of social relations and practices.”⁷⁸

While Hall explicitly takes his distance, on various occasions, from the overwhelming discursive focus of Laclau and Mouffe’s post-Marxism, the “Essex Manifesto” is an index of a general shift in the theoretical center of gravity going into the 1980s.⁷⁹ While both Laclau and Hall were deeply engaged in debates about the sociology of development in the 1970s, this interest would wane in subsequent decades. This shift is more rapid in Laclau’s case. As I have shown, theories of development continued to influence Hall’s reading of Gramsci and theorizations of Thatcherism well into the 1980s. However, it is in his writings on race in the late 1980s and the 1990s—curiously, given the sociological and political-economic nature of his writings on the subject in the late 1970s—that the shift is most pronounced in Hall’s thinking.

Towards the end of the 1980s, Hall’s thinking moves progressively away from the sociological “thick” account of race’s articulation with economic, political, and ideological practices within a particular historical conjuncture or mode of production. He now approaches the question in primarily discursive terms. In his paper on “New Ethnicities,” Hall insisted that he did not wish “to expand the territorial claims of the discursive infinitely”; however, he now granted “regimes of representation in culture” a “constitutive” and “formative” place in the constitution of social and political life.⁸⁰

By 1995, Hall was treating almost exclusively the discursive and ideological determinations of race. In his W. E. B. Du Bois lectures he employs the language of Laclau and Mouffe to explain that he is concerned with examining the “work science has performed in the eighteenth century and onward to establish ... a chain of equivalence between nature and culture that thus makes race function discursively as a system of representation.”⁸¹ History and historical development, to be sure, are an integral part of his analysis, yet this is no longer a history moving discontinuously between different modes of production but an examination of the

⁷⁷Ernesto Laclau, “Essex Manifesto,” in Stuart Hall Archive US121, Box 52, Cadbury Research Library: Special Collections. University of Birmingham.

⁷⁸Laclau, “Essex Manifesto.”

⁷⁹For a succinct statement of how Hall thought his work related to, and differed from, the post-Marxism of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe see Lawrence Grossberg, “On Postmodernism and Articulation: An Interview with Stuart Hall,” *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 10/2 (1986), 45–60, at 56–9.

⁸⁰Stuart Hall, “New Ethnicities,” in Hall, *Selected Writings on Race and Difference* (Durham, NC, 2021), 248, originally published as Hall, “New Ethnicities,” in Kobena Mercer, ed., *ICA Documents 7: Black Film, British Cinema* (London, 1989), 27–31.

⁸¹Stuart Hall, *The Fateful Triangle* (Cambridge, MA, 2017), 17.

different historical moments in which racial categories have been naturalized by being articulated with religious, anthropological, and scientific discourses.

The vogue of post-structuralism and postmodernism in the 1980s has something to do with the relative neglect of political-economic analysis in the thinking of sections of the New Left at the close of the twentieth century. However, what is missing from most historical and theoretical accounts of the abandonment of economic analysis by some New Left thinkers is the relative decline, from the early 1980s onwards, in engagements on the British academic left with theories concerning the political economy of development. This is not only true of Hall and Laclau, but also of several thinkers associated with the New Left.

It is infrequently remarked that the British New Left's critique of rigid, mechanistic, and teleological economic determinism after 1956 was directed not only to the Stalinist orthodoxy within mainstream communist parties, but also to modernization theory. For instance, E. P. Thompson identified as one of the central targets of his retrieval of the "moral economy" of the English crowds of the eighteenth century the "abbreviated view of economic man" put forward by "our growth historians." Foremost among these historians, according to Thompson, was the "dean of the spasmodic school," W. W. Rostow.⁸² Eric Hobsbawm cowrote an early critical review of Rostow's *Stages of Economic Growth* with Paul Baran, and the notion of self-sustaining economic "take-off" is a major theme of his *Age of Revolution*.⁸³ A general history of New Left engagements with development theories remains to be written. For its part, this short chapter in that history suggests that British New Left thinkers drew on development theory for a number of compelling reasons that had little to do with lamenting Britain's "decline."

Acknowledgments. My thanks go to Lawrence Hamilton, Duncan Kelly, Gillian Hart, Luke Ilott, Abraham De Maupeou, Jess Breakey, and the participants of the Department of Politics and International Studies work-in-progress seminar at the University of Cambridge—Tomas Larsson, Rachel Sittoni, Niyousha Bastani, Jack Brake, and Reetika Subramanian—for their invaluable feedback on earlier drafts of this article. This article has its origins in stimulating discussions with participants in the Spaza Writing Workshop at the University of the Witwatersrand—Ahmed Veriava, Prishani Naidoo, Michael Hart, Tasneem Essop, Tokelo Nhlapo, Tumi Mogorosi, Daniel Hutchinson, Maya Bhardwaj, Shibu Motimele, Zackary Levenson, Bridget Kenny, Ulrike Kistner, and Asher Gamedze—and the Ships in the Proletarian Night conference organized by the Reading Marx Seminar at the University of Cambridge. To the editors of *Modern Intellectual History* and the three anonymous reviewers, many thanks for their time and for their constructive and collegial feedback. This research was made possible by a Magdalene Leslie Wilson Cambridge Trust Research Scholarship.

⁸²E. P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crown in the Eighteenth Century," *Past and Present* 50 (1971), 76–136, at 77–8. See also his *Making of the English Working Class* (London, 1963), 195.

⁸³Paul A. Baran and E. J. Hobsbawm, "The Stages of Economic Growth," in *Kyklos* 14/2 (1961), 234–42; Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution, 1899–1848* (London, 1962), 44–74.

Cite this article: Karayiannides E (2023). Stuart Hall, Development Theory, and Thatcher's Britain. *Modern Intellectual History* 20, 1273–1296. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244322000555>