



THE  
**POPULAR**  
**CULTURE**  
STUDIES **JOURNAL**

2014  
Volume 2  
Numbers 1 & 2

**Midwest**PCA/ACA

# THE **POPULAR CULTURE STUDIES JOURNAL**

**VOLUME 2**

**NUMBERS 1 & 2**

**2014**

**Editor**

**BOB BATCHELOR**

*Thiel College*

**Associate Editor**

**NORMA JONES**

*Kent State University*

**Associate Editor**

**KATHLEEN TURNER**

*Aurora University*

**Book Review Editor**

**JENNIFER C. DUNN**

*Dominican University*

**Assistant Editor**

**MYC WIATROWSKI**

*Indiana University*

**Assistant Editor**

**MAJA BAJAC-CARTER**

*Kent State University*

**Please visit the *PCSJ* at:**

**<http://mpcaaca.org/the-popular-culture-studies-journal/>**

**The Popular Culture Studies Journal is the official journal of the Midwest Popular and American Culture Association. Copyright © 2014 Midwest Popular and American Culture Association. All rights reserved.**

Cover photo credits

Cover Artwork "Living Popular Culture" by Brent Jones © 2014

"Selfie for Peace" by Savannah Jones © 2014

"Party People" by Roob9 licensed by PhotoDune

iPhone frame: Creative Commons "iPhone 5S" by Karlis Dambrans is licensed under CC BY 2.0

# EDITORIAL **ADVISORY** BOARD

**ANTHONY ADAH**

*Minnesota State University, Moorhead*

**AARON BARLOW**

*New York City College of Technology (CUNY)  
Faculty Editor, Academe, the magazine of the AAUP*

**JOSEF BENSON**

*University of Wisconsin Parkside*

**PAUL BOOTH**

*DePaul University*

**GARY BURNS**

*Northern Illinois University*

**KELLI S. BURNS**

*University of South Florida*

**ANNE M. CANAVAN**

*Emporia State University*

**ERIN MAE CLARK**

*Saint Mary's University of Minnesota*

**BRIAN COGAN**

*Molloy College*

**ASHLEY M. DONNELLY**

*Ball State University*

**LEIGH H. EDWARDS**

*Florida State University*

**VICTOR EVANS**

*Thiel College*

**JUSTIN GARCIA**

*Millersville University*

**ART HERBIG**

*Indiana University -  
Purdue University, Fort Wayne*

**ANDREW F. HERRMANN**

*East Tennessee State University*

**JARED JOHNSON**

*Thiel College*

**JESSE KAVADLO**

*Maryville University of St. Louis*

**KATHLEEN A. KENNEDY**

*Missouri State University*

**WILLIAM KIST**

*Kent State University*

**LARRY Z. LESLIE**

*University of South Florida*

**MATTHEW MIHALKA**

*University of Arkansas - Fayetteville*

**LAURIE MOROCO**

*Thiel College*

**CARLOS D. MORRISON**

*Alabama State University*

**SALVADOR MURGUIA**

*Akita International University*

**ANGELA M. NELSON**  
*Bowling Green State University*

**PAUL PETROVIC**  
*Independent Scholar*

**LAUREANO RALON**  
*Figure/Ground Communication*

**PHIL SIMPSON**  
*Eastern Florida State College*

**SARAH MCFARLAND TAYLOR**  
*Northwestern University*

**KATHLEEN TURNER**  
*Aurora University*

**MARYAN WHERRY**  
*Western Illinois University Quad-Cities*

**SHAWN DAVID YOUNG**  
*York College of Pennsylvania*

# THE **POPULAR CULTURE STUDIES** JOURNAL

VOLUME 2

NUMBERS 1 & 2

2014

## CONTENTS

**Editorial: All Me...All the Time** 1  
Bob Batchelor

## ARTICLES

**Relational Aggression on Film: An Intersectional Analysis of Mean Girls** 5

Michaela D. E. Meyer, Linda M. Waldron, and Danielle M. Stern

**No Face: Implied Author and Masculine Construct in the Fiction of Junot Díaz** 35

Josef Benson

***Frankenstein* Performed: The Monster Who Will Not Die** 65

Jeanne Tiehen

**Discipline and Policing: HBO's *The Wire* as a Critique of Modern American Culture** 87

Morgan Shipley and Jack Taylor

**Performing Ordinary: Politicians, Celebrity, & the Politics of Representation on Entertainment Talk** 109

Sue Collins

**Communication Deficiencies Provide Incongruities for Humor: The Asperger's-like Case of *The Big Bang Theory*'s Sheldon Cooper** 140

Karen McGrath

**Influence of Popular Television Programming on Students' Perception about Course Selection, Major, and Career** 172

Kristy Tucciarone

**Partisan Pop Cultural Awareness: Disclosing the Metaphoric Rhetoric of the “Culture Wars”** 193  
Jeremy V. Adolphson

**‘Social’ TV: *Pretty Little Liars*, Casual Fandom, Celebrity Instagramming, and Media Life** 215  
Cory Barker

## **INTERVIEW**

***The Popular Culture Studies Journal* Interview with GEORGE EDWARD CHENEY** 243

## **BOOK REVIEWS**

**THE STUART HALL FORUM** 256  
Stuart Hall: Relevance and Remembrance  
Jennifer C. Dunn

Considering Hall and Reconsidering Foundations of the Popular  
“Notes On Deconstructing ‘The Popular’”  
Jules Wight

Still Getting Us a Little Further Down the Road  
“The Narrative Construction of Reality: An Interview with Stuart Hall”  
Linda Baughman

Reviewing and Reflecting: *Representations*  
Adam W. Tyma

***THE POPULAR CULTURE STUDIES JOURNAL* BOOK REVIEWS** 274  
Introductions  
Jennifer C. Dunn

*Where the Aunts Are: Family, Feminism & Kinship in Popular Culture*  
Rachel E. Silverman

*Love and Money: Queers, Class, and Cultural Production*  
Vanessa Campagna

*Pranksters: Making Mischief in the Modern World*  
Aaron Barlow

*Renegade Hero or Faux Rogue: The Secret Traditionalism of  
Television Bad Boys*  
Bob Batchelor

*Cable Guys: Television and Masculinities in the 21st Century*  
CarrieLynn D. Reinhard

*Motorsports and American Culture: From Demolition Derbies to  
NASCAR*  
Norma Jones

*Words Will Break Cement: The Passion of Pussy Riot*  
Adam Perry

*Feeling Mediated: A History of Media Technology and Emotion in  
America*  
William Kist

*Screening the Undead: Vampires and Zombies in Film and Television*  
Jesse Kavadlo

*My Lunches with Orson: Conversations between Henry Jaglom and  
Orson  
Welles*  
L. Lelaine Bonine

*Twitter: Social Communication in the Twitter Age. Digital Media and  
Society Series*  
La Royce Batchelor

*The United States of Paranoia*  
Ted Remington

*The Daily You: How the New Advertising Industry is Defining Your  
Identity and Your Worth*  
Janelle Applequist

*The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*  
Chrys Egan and John Egan

**ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS**

**323**

## Book Reviews

### THE STUART HALL FORUM

## Stuart Hall: Relevance and Remembrance An Introduction

A friend and colleague, Adam Tyma, who reviewed Hall's *Representation* for this section, posted this quote from Stuart Hall's "Deconstructing the Popular" on his Facebook wall about a year ago:

Popular culture is one of the sites where this struggle for and against a culture of the powerful is engaged: it is also the stake to be won or lost in that struggle. It is the arena of consent and resistance. It is partly where hegemony arises, and where it is secured....That is why "popular culture" matters (Hall 453).

I immediately printed it in large font and have it hung on the wall over my desk in my campus office. I posted it there to provide me with a quick and articulate answer to students' and colleagues' questions about why I research and teach about popular culture.

Within a few hours, several questions were posted as comments in response to the quote on Tyma's wall. The one I have pondered since asked: "What struggle?" For me the referent was obvious: "for and against a culture of the powerful," of course. This answer, however, prompts further questions: "What is culture?" "Who are the powerful?" And even,

The Popular Culture Studies Journal, Vol. 2, No. 1&2  
Copyright © 2014

considering the two-sided struggle suggested by the quote, “How and when can we tell who wins?” In his book about Stuart Hall, James Porter explains that Hall’s post-Gramscian theory of cultural struggle indicates that culture “is a site of *ongoing* struggle that can never be guaranteed for one side or the other” (emphasis added; 1-2). From this perspective then the struggle does not necessary involve a winner nor a loser. Rather, defining such struggles and identifying the players exposes power relations and reveals the values, beliefs, and practices those involved deem important enough to support, resist, and otherwise argue about.

As a rhetorical critic of popular culture, my own struggle “for and against a culture of the powerful” is twofold. On one side is defining what I do for a public outside of academia. Defining the seemingly ancient term “rhetoric” is easy in comparison to how popular culture functions as rhetoric and therefore is important. People intuitively “get” the relationship between rhetoric and public speaking. But, when I start to explain how popular culture contains rhetorical elements and therefore functions to influence us, I often get blank stares. Using the concept of narrative, however, puts these same concepts in more understandable terms. As Linda Baughman contends in her review in this section of “The Narrative Construction of Reality: An Interview with Stuart Hall,” Hall reminds us that the stories we tell give meaning to events around us. These stories, what they include and what they exclude, shape how and what we think about these events. Baughman reminds us that Hall’s perspective on narrative is still relevant today not just because stories are ubiquitous, but because the nature of storytelling today, especially related to current events, demands theories that help us to understand them. For example, Hall addresses the role of journalists on the ground during the Falkland War in relation to official British news sources. So too can we apply Hall’s perspective of narrative and representation to the Arab Spring, Twitter, and new media today. Explaining that film and television, the most common areas of my scholarship, use narratives in similar ways

helps me with my struggle to explain how popular culture operates as rhetoric with non-academic publics.

On the other side of my struggle is validating what I do for those in academia. While there is more recognition of the importance of narrative, rhetoric, and communication for academics, as soon as I mention my research related to reality television, the blank stares reemerge. Too often, I get the dismissive, “I don’t watch television.” Using the billions of television viewers to establish significance of my work with academics is regularly seen as a disadvantage: if it is so accessible, how can it be academic? Jules Wight’s review of Hall’s “Notes on Deconstructing ‘The Popular’” provides one way such accessibility can be justified as legitimate for academe. She notes that Hall’s work was grounded in a time when the Western world was moving from agrarian capitalism to industrial capitalism. She further contends that Hall’s research is even more relevant today as a new *informational* capitalism emerges. In this time, Wight argues that Hall’s definition of popular culture as “the ground on which the transformations are worked” is essential to understanding the locations in which issues of ideologies are contemplated today. So, instead of asking why they don’t watch television, I can draw on Hall’s rationale for the necessity of studying popular culture, especially in this age of informational capitalism.

Although it was Tyma’s posting on his Facebook wall that prompted me to use Hall’s quote to explain my scholarship, Hall’s *Representation* has, and continues to be, a text I use in several of my classes to help students understand important concepts like encoding/decoding and circuits of culture. In the final review in this section, Tyma reviews the second edition of this text. He contends, and I agree, that this book is necessary for teaching both undergraduates and graduate students about these concepts and various stages of media. Tyma’s reflections on the impact Hall’s work has had on him since he was a student will seem

familiar to young and seasoned scholars of popular culture, media, and communication.

Writing the introduction for and editing this section has not given me any definitive answers to the questions prompted by Hall's quote. But, it has made me realize how important contemplating the questions continues to be. I am sorry that we will no longer be able to turn to Mr. Hall for his answers. Even so, his legacy gives us a foundation to build and expand upon for decades to come even as our media and popular culture evolve and expand.

Jennifer C. Dunn  
Dominican University

### Work Cited

Hall, Stuart. "Notes On Deconstructing 'The Popular'." *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*. Ed. John Storey. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998. 442-453. Print.

Porter, James. *Stuart Hall*. New York: Routledge, 2004. Print.

## Considering Hall and Reconsidering Foundations of the Popular

Hall, Stuart. "Notes On Deconstructing 'The Popular'." 1998. *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader 3rd ed.* Ed.

John Storey. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006. 442-453. Print.

In his time-honored essay, “Notes on Deconstructing ‘The Popular,’” Stuart Hall lays a foundation from which all Cultural Studies research can be understood and undertaken. Not exactly a blueprint of either “popular” or “culture,” Hall’s essay does explain the ground for any understanding of the “popular” and demands that critical research in Cultural Studies begins upon this foundation. In his definition of the popular, Hall shows that both the “popular” and “culture” grow on (or through) this foundation, which must be studied to fully understand the subtleties of power, politics, tradition, and history moving about popular culture. Following from Hall, it becomes important to always look back, or better yet, to look *underneath* the cultural artifact we are researching to see the foundation. Has the ground shifted, or are there cracks? Is the ground or foundation balanced, or does it fall to one direction or another?

Jayson Harsin and Mark Hayward reviewed Hall’s “Notes on Deconstructing the ‘Popular’” for the essay’s 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Their more extensive article addresses politics, populism, and the popular through a review of how current scholarship, particularly in terms of networked media, can continue to work through Hall’s theories in terms of the popular (201-207). However, looking at Hall’s essay now, after his death, and at this particular moment involves newer understandings of expansive state digital surveillance and, also, of new markets for information. In his essay, Hall described the movement from agrarian capitalism to industrial capitalism (442). Where are we now at the dawn of a new *informational* capitalism, and what does the foundation of popular culture look like now with both industrial capitalism *and* informational capitalism? While industrial capitalism has thrived from the days of Marx, informational capitalism is a more recent development derived from advances in information and communication technologies (ICTs), bringing with it new

forms of inequality (Parayil 41). I argue that these forms of inequality and the dynamics of this new knowledge-based market of information also bring with them a new urgency to heed Hall's call and re-examine the base or ground of popular culture.

Hall explains that even though there is a constant dialectical struggle in popular culture that, "Popular culture is neither, in a 'pure' sense, the popular traditions of resistance to these processes; nor is it the forms which are superimposed on and over them. It is the ground on which the transformations are worked" (443). While we study the transformations in popular culture – the new versus the old, the lost versus the won – it is not these transformations that determine or define popular culture. Instead, popular culture is the ground or milieu on (or in) which these transformations take place.

There are actually two dialectics in place in Hall's essay. The obvious one is the one that Hall points to and explicates in the dynamics of popular culture. For Hall, popular culture is always a struggle between "containment" and "resistance." These are the two "poles" of the dialectic. Hall states, "There are points of resistance; there are also moments of supersession. This is the dialectic of cultural struggle" (447). This is not necessarily a fair and even struggle. Hall incorporates Gramsci's notion of hegemony to explain how more powerful cultural forces have the upper hand over less powerful cultural forces. Hall refers to the "concentration of cultural power" (447) to explain this, and we see such concentrations in media conglomerates as well as in (the) military industrial complex(es). The second dialectic could, perhaps, be seen more as a binary than a dialectic – the birth and death of cultural formations and what we know as the "popular." Hall explains that as the popular shifts and transforms, older (or current) articulations of popular culture die off and decompose – we *lose* those forms of popular culture. This death of the popular is a direct result of new articulations being "born" or growing out of a complex milieu of political struggle. However, following Hall's use of

hegemony in the essay, there is also a consent occurring in which individuals consent to this loss – this cycle of cultural birth and death – through the consumption and circulation of new articulations of popular culture. In this way, culture is never *solely* dictated, but, instead, the process of hegemony includes a struggle of consent and non-consent that help form the milieu from which popular culture emerges. The question for a society with informational capitalism is whether “consent” still occurs, or whether the technologies fueling this specific form of capitalism have already been *incorporated* into the everyday for many. As Hall suggests, “Cultural struggle, of course, takes many forms: incorporation, distortion, resistance, negotiation, recuperation” (450).

Looking at these two different dialectics in terms of informational capitalism may help to continue and expand on Hall’s “popular.” Christian Fuchs offers a helpful and descriptive definition of informational capitalism as “a category that is used for describing those parts of contemporary societies that are basing their operations predominantly on information, which is understood as processes of cognition, communication, and cooperation, and on information technologies” (180). This is the capitalism of our networked media – one of dynamic and uneven exchange of information for capital. Informational capitalism provides part of the political struggle underneath popular culture – it is part of the ground or foundation of the popular. However, the industrial capitalism that formed the ground for dialectics of containment and resistance has not faded. Instead, the ground for popular culture depends on political struggles in both forms of capitalism, and there is a corresponding need to reevaluate the dialectic of containment-resistance. Arguably, the informational capitalism of networked media and the Internet may provide new aspects to the ground of popular culture that defy the binary and dialectic. Networked media involves aspects of agency, power, and control on both “sides” of the dialectic. These non-binary and non-dialectic aspects may exist only as possibilities of the

digital, but may also exist in forms of digitally networked protests, community movements, or even personal storytelling. These digital possibilities of course may merely be a part of the containment-resistance dialectic, but they also may be other than binary or dialectical. The agency possible in networked media no longer solely depends on industrial capitalism for circulation, but can instead depend on further agency within the realm of informational capitalism, providing a complexity that may not just be dialectical.

Similarly, as we look at the death-birth dialectic of popular culture, we also see digital residues that evade death or birth but remain always as digital, as entities, and as forces that may resurface in the milieu that provides for popular culture. Considering the continued rise of informational capitalism and networked media, this may be one of those moments of “deep structural change” in which Hall requires us to look underneath the bubbling up of new digital advertising, social media, streamed entertainment, and digital citizenship. This may also be one of many moments in which, for Hall, “Everything changes – not just a shift in the relation of forces but a reconstitution of the terrain of political struggle itself” (444). Govindan Parayil suggests that these political struggles surpass traditional notions of digital divides and instead promote new asymmetrical relations. He explains, “By the time the marginalized group makes any headway in bridging some aspect of these divides, the gap widens to an unfathomable chasm” (42). As digital divides create knowledge and information gaps, it is certain that political struggles change as well. It is up to researchers, in areas from popular culture to critical/cultural studies and from communication to media to follow Hall’s call to understand corresponding changes to the “popular” as each change bubbles up from this milieu of dual capitalisms.

Jules Wight  
University of Minnesota

### Works Cited

Fuchs, Christian. "Labor in Informational Capitalism and on the Internet." *Information Society* 26.3 (2010): 179–196. Print.

Hall, Stuart. "Notes On Deconstructing 'The Popular'." 1998. *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.* Ed. John Storey. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006. 442-453. Print.

Harsin, Jayson, and Mark Hayward. "Stuart Hall's 'Deconstructing the Popular': Reconsiderations 30 Years Later." *Communication, Culture & Critique* 6.2 (2013): 201–207. Print.

Parayil, Govindan. "The Digital Divide and Increasing Returns: Contradictions of Informational Capitalism." *Information Society* 21.1 (2005): 41–51. Print.

### Still Getting Us a Little Further Down the Road

Hall, Stuart. "The Narrative Construction of Reality: An Interview with Stuart Hall." *Southern Review* 17 (March 1984): 3-17. Print.

Critical/cultural scholars the world over keep arguing about the state of cultural studies. While we are busy arguing, we are sure to add, because we are good interdisciplinary scholars, that there isn't one list of the right articles, books, or scholars to read to be a cultural studies scholar. Today, I call "Shenanigans." Because even if the list isn't long, there IS a list; we have an intellectual past. A past that makes us want to, in the words of the

much missed Stuart Hall, “get a little further down the road.” At the top of that list, any list (be it based on Marx, Lacan, or those thieves in the night—feminists) is Stuart Hall.<sup>1</sup> We lost an amazing voice when he passed; an extraordinary person. There won’t be another like him, so we’d better be sure our students read him.

Originally an interview with John O’Hara for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Stuart Hall’s often overlooked, “The Narrative Construction of Reality: An Interview with Stuart Hall,” manages to convey the importance of communication, narrative, and ideology in our understanding of the real, in just fourteen pages.<sup>2</sup> As icing on the cake, he also discusses war, news, censorship, nationalism, and imperialism. This essay is a ‘must read’ for any undergraduate (or graduate) curriculum operating in the landscape of the critical inquiry of culture. Hall begins by discussing the underlying causes of what looks like overbearing foolishness—media censorship by the British government during the Falklands War—and ends by explaining the importance of narrative on the production of the real.<sup>3</sup> Embedded in this highly readable essay on stories is an excellent discussion of ideology and its foundational power to create the world for us.

O’Hara begins the essay by asking Hall about the media coverage of the Falkland’s War. Hall engages with the crucial information gap constructed via censorship by the British government. Hall reminds the reader that British reporting of the war went first to the Minister of

---

<sup>1</sup> Hall called out his own blindness to the broadening nature of the project of cultural studies when he spoke about how feminists had to force their way into the conversation, “as the thief in the night” (Hall, “Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies” 282).

<sup>2</sup> For simplification in reading, all references in this essay are to Hall’s “Narrative Construction of Reality,” unless otherwise noted.

<sup>3</sup> For those readers too young to remember: the Falklands War as a three week tidal wave of British military aimed at Argentina. Argentina attempted to reclaim a small series of islands off its coast, the Falklands. Great Britain took exception to this, having claimed them for God and Country in the late 1600’s. When accounting for both sides, over 1,000 lives were lost and the world press of 1982 wondered at the overpowering show of might by Great Britain.

Defense, causing an official information lag of up to twelve days. In the days running up to the official war, censorship was in play about relations between Argentina and England, but journalists on the ground in Argentina could, and did, interview locals about what was happening. These stories were aired without censorship because they were not directly about the rising conflict. Hall explains that this caused an interesting disconnect, where contrary versions (versions that sometimes favored ‘the enemy’) of the war were being aired by the British media. Hall argues, “...for the first time journalists saw a reconstruction of their own construction of events” (3). This obviousness of the process of storytelling via journalistic voice was noted by audiences as well (Hall 4). Interrogating the disparate stories told by the British media gives Hall the opportunity to discuss the nature of storytelling and its powerful effect. He reminds the reader that events don’t have meaning for us until we frame them via representation. Things/events don’t mean anything until we settle on the story/stories about them. The variety of alternative stories being told about the Falkland War in Britain created a sort of crisis in storytelling: what was the truth of the events in Argentina? For Hall, the meaning making around the Falkland War was confusing and up for grabs until the BBC began to stitch the various narratives together.

In “The Narrative Construction of Reality,” Hall uses media discussions of the Falklands War to examine how narrative structure produces myth. He focuses on how the BBC reconstructed the varied stories being told about the war into a seamless narrative. “Narrative tells a story into which it is impossible to enter or introduce any questions at all” (Hall 4). For Hall, once the BBC connected the Falklands War to other stories about Britain, it was difficult to see a way around the narrative. The BBC naturalized the events of the Falklands War to the point at which they became a part of the larger myth about Britain. The early 1980’s under Thatcher wasn’t the best time to be a British subject. The economy was dreadful, and the sun was setting on the British Empire.

The Falklands War became a symbol of Britain's continued responsibility to the world; a continued sense of thriving power. The Falkland Islands provided a global sense of Britishness, as they located The Empire beyond Europe, North America, and Australia. Hall recounts how the might and right of Britain during the Second World War was used to justify this war: this was Britain rescuing British citizens from the clutches of the Argentinians, (not a war about island grazing ground for sheep). The story of the 'just war' is a narrative structure into which questions are not required. All over the world, we simply know this story, some wars are good and some are bad. This is what Hall means by the mythic nature of narrative, it doesn't answer questions, it absences them.

In conversing about the power of the myth of the British Empire, Hall examines the power of narrative itself, "Let me make a point that if you tell a story in a particular way you often activate meanings which seem to almost belong to the stock of stories themselves. I mean you could tell the most dramatic story, the most graphic and terrible account of an event; but if you construct it as a children's story you have to fight very hard not to wind up with a good ending. In that sense those meanings are already concealed or held within the forms of the stories themselves" (7). For Hall the power of stories isn't simply in their content, but in their form as well; structures of narratives infuse a version of the world into our way of thinking. Hall likens much common sense thinking of narrative structure to an empty box that we simply fill; he finds this incorrect. Instead, Hall argues the form of a story inevitably becomes a part of its content (7). When we examine form and content together we examine something bigger than a funny story or compelling drama. We find ideology.

One of Hall's most compact and direct definitions of ideology comes from "The Narrative Construction of Reality." Here Hall writes, "we all constantly make use of a whole set of frameworks of interpretation and understanding, often in a very practical unconscious way, and that those things alone enable us to make sense of what is going on around us, what

our position is, and what we are likely to do” (7). For Hall, it is through stories that our society creates dominant meanings. Those meanings become the real for us. They are ideas, ways of experiencing the world that are largely unconscious and absolutely True. Hall neatly encapsulates an entire field of ideological theory when he writes, “When people say to you, “Of course that’s so, isn’t it?” that moment of “of course” is the most ideological moment, because that’s the moment at which you’re least aware that you are using a particular framework, and that if you used another framework the things that you are talking about would have a different meaning” (8).

Hall’s “The Narrative Construction of Reality” is still an excellent introduction to the power of representation: he offers an introduction to some of the key terms in our field; he offers an example of how to apply those ideas in his discussion of the Falkland war; and he offers us an opportunity to learn how to examine an ideological position. He reminds us that we cannot escape ideology, so Hall offers us two opportunities to examine it: use theory or another ideological position. We use these positions to extract answers to the essential question for our field: who benefits from this sense of experience, this emotion, this version of the world (Hall 10-11)? Trying to answer that question is the way we get ourselves a little further down that road Hall laid out for us when he joined the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies in 1964. And introducing your students to “The Narrative Construction of Reality” could put them on that road with us.

Linda Baughman  
Christopher Newport University

## Works Cited

Hall, Stuart. "The Narrative Construction of Reality: An Interview with Stuart Hall." *Southern Review* 17 (March 1984): 3-17. Print.

Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies." *Cultural Studies: Now and in the Future*. Eds. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, Paula Treichler, with Linda Baughman and Gregory Wise. New York and London: Routledge, 1992, 277-294. Print.

## Reviewing and Reflecting: *Representations*

Hall, Stuart, Jessica Evans, and Sean Nixon. *Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2013. Print.

In full disclosure, and some history as to my relationship with Stuart Hall's work: I was introduced to Stuart Hall during my Master's program in a Media Studies course taught by Mary Vavrus at the University of Minnesota. His article, "On Postmodernism and Articulation," although *technically written* by Larry Grossberg, was not what I would call the easiest reading. In fact, it was quite difficult. However, as I started to peel back the layers, the ideas in that essay began to sink in – so much so that it became one of my "go-to" pieces in the early stages of my research. Something there just made sense to me. More importantly, it is possibly the moment, to which I pinpoint, that changed the way I see things. This is why reflecting on and paying homage to Hall's work is so important. I am grateful for the chance to do so here.

The first time I read *Representation* was after I ordered a used, battered, and well-marked copy of the first edition online. I was in need of a few key citations and other references were pointing this direction. Though I had many of Hall's articles in my "collection" (aka the PDF folder on my desktop), I had never really read through this book. I bought it to help develop my literature review for my dissertation – I kept it because the book (and now its second edition, the version I will be reviewing here) continues to inform the work I do, in new ways every time I open it up.

However, it is the body of his work that has informed me, rather than any one key piece. Across my research, the idea of *articulation* runs rampant, as it helps me to make sense of the (mediated) reality that surrounds us, always reconstructing and reconstituting what we see as "the real" in new and exciting ways. When I teach my students about understanding how meaning making with media occurs, the encoding/decoding circuit is the first concept that my students look at me and say "Oh! I get it!" It never fails that the perceived simplicity and complexity within the concept of articulation invite conversation and interrogation of our media practices and media production (given that I teach in a School of Communication, with the majority of our students in our Journalism and Media Communication major). Articulation, along with the other ideas presented in Hall's work, help to uncover the layers of "the popular" and see where active political resistance exists even within the most mundane mediated texts.

So ... why *Representation*? Why, of all of Hall's work, do I want to review essentially a textbook? It is simple, really: Hall was a teacher. It only seems right that we look at his work as teachers AND critics; therefore, *Representation*. I chose the second edition because, now that I have spent too much time grounding my own respect for Hall's work, I want to treat this as an honest review of a book that should end up in undergraduate and graduate classrooms for the next wave of media critics,

consumers, and producers. While this review is in a journal centered on popular culture, the book itself is appropriate for areas including media studies, rhetoric, advertising, public relations, even contemporary art courses. As the second edition was published in 2013, it could be argued that it is one of the last educational works with which Hall was involved, before his passing.

*Representation* becomes a guidebook for the student of our mediated cultures and a touch point signifying Hall's contributions to how we make sense of popular culture (translation: "day to day life and the things that are part of it"). *Representation* not only presents complex perspectives to us, but does so in ways that are accessible and, therefore, useful to a wide range of theorists, scholars, students, and practitioners. In other words, he gives us the tools and then shows us how to use them. These tools are desperately needed, not just for popular culture scholars but for anyone who consumes the texts around them, particularly as our mediated life has become so much more ubiquitous. Hall and his co-authors work to help us understand the cultural signifiers present and all around us, through not just a theoretical lens, but a philosophical one as well.

Like cultural studies and Hall's own work, *Representation* has changed between the first (1997) and second (2013) editions: It (they) evolves as the world does. Hall's central tenets always suggested that the text – who we are as individuals, social groups, audience members, cultural products, and citizens – is never static. We are always in the process of becoming. Therefore, we are fluid, never fixed. It only makes sense that *Representation* has been rearticulated in the updated edition. The majority of the arguments are the same, yet a few have been replaced with more context-appropriate discourse (new chapters include discussions of documentary production for film and television and updated examples throughout).

When I review a text for a journal, or for my class, I do the same thing every time: I read the introduction to get a sense of the text, then I move

into the meat of the book to figure out what kind of “work” the teacher and students will need to put in with it. In this case, the introduction to *Representation* is quite brief, as far as textbooks typically go, but it sets up the reader for what to expect. Immediately, Hall explains that we are looking at this idea of “representation” as part of a cultural system (for him, *a circuit of culture*.) He thanks Paul Du Gay for this concept, and then starts us with his first question: what is the connection between culture and representation? His answer is “shared meaning” (p. xvii). It is this idea – and Hall’s typical use of graphics to help his meanings along – that shape the conversation throughout the rest of the book.

The remaining chapters of the book are written by Hall and a collection of scholars who use *Representation* as an opportunity to play with specific concepts that add to our whole understanding of how we are present in our media, represented in our media, and subsumed by our media. The overarching impression to the whole of *Representation* is that it is dense – quite dense. Students and teachers alike will need to be sure they allow time to debrief in the margins of the text themselves and during their class discussions. Each of the chapters provides a near-“Who’s Who?” of theorists, ideas, arguments, and approaches to inquiry. I would encourage teachers who assign this book to have their students track the various noteworthy mentions in a reading journal. This will ensure that they are able to not only read the material but also able to speak to it, both in class and in their own writing and critique.

This “review” is as much about *Representation* as it is about what Stuart Hall has meant to my own foundations and those of cultural inquiry in general. For me, it is difficult to easily summarize my foundations, but it seems that *Representation* might be that interesting collection of ideas that actually does so. I have a quote from Stuart Hall regarding the classroom as my email signature: “You have to be sure about a position in order to teach a class, but you have to be open-ended enough to know that you are going to change your mind by the time you teach it next week.”

This not only frames Hall's rationale for how *Representation* changed – had to change – between 1997 and 2013, but why we must continue to visit our foundations in order to change with the new cultural realities around us.

Adam W. Tyma, Ph.D  
University of Nebraska at Omaha

### Works Cited

Hall, Stuart, Jessica Evans, and Sean Nixon. *Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2013. Print.