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Kieran Connell: I was going to ask first of all what are your memories, really, of moving, that move that the family made from Leicester to Birmingham? How old would you have been at the time?

Paul Hoggart: Oh well I was very young when I first went to Birmingham, because we had gone to Leicester in 1959, and that had been a big break for him because it was his first internal job, he had been in adult education before, in Hull, and so I was only 7 or 8, 7 and he moved to Leicester, he moved to Birmingham 3 years later, which I think he felt a bit bad about that, because the professor at Leicester, Arthur Humphries, had been incredibly kind and supportive, and he thought he hadn't given them very long, but he was lured, I think he had already been through the Chatterley trial, and he was becoming a real name and he was offered a professorship, and the opportunity to start his own research centre, so it was a huge break for him, and everyone understood, but he commuted for 2 years so the immediate effect on the family was that he changed the car, because he used to like to drive rather big second-hand cars, we always had a Humber Hawk, and then we had a Riley Pathfinder, but he needed something reliable, so we got a new Ford Consul, which was quite odd because it is like a sort of classic commercial travellers car, and Dad had always had bad experiences with staying in hotels in the north, with commercial travellers, when he was doing ad ed in Hull, in North Yorkshire, and they were not people for whom he had a lot of respect! So he felt he was out of place in this quite large, plasticated American-looking vehicle. And it meant he tended to get back late, which he didn't like, because he was always very, very family orientated, and I noticed that is something Michael Green refers to in the piece, actually this is a slight tangent, but Michael used to love coming around, and spent ... I remember him coming and I mean Dad was never into playing games with the family, but Michael would come and join in games of Scrabble, and enjoy making up silly words and things like that, and also the house, which has since been demolished, was enormous and had a very large garden, they have put up a sort of mini estate in the grounds, where the house was. And we had a badminton lawn marked out, on a large flat section of the lawn, Michael used to enjoy ... I remember Michael enjoyed playing that.

Kieran Connell: So colleagues would be around the family then?

Paul Hoggart: Well Michael more than others. I mean there were dinner parties, quite often, and I was a bit too young to be allowed to attend, but my sister Nicola was occasionally, Simon would be away at Cambridge by then. He had already gone up, he went up in the summer we moved to Birmingham so he was never based in the house in quite the same way Nicola and I were. But Nicola remembered one occasion when I think people like David Lodge were around, and they played a game after dinner which was you had to ... it was kind of embarrassment, a competitive embarrassment game where you had to admit to not having read a book, and the more people said that they had read it, the more points you got! And Nicola swept the board, because she said 'The Uses of Literacy'! And so of course, gales of laughter, and none of them were prepared to admit to not having read it, so that was quite funny!

Kieran Connell: How did the move to Birmingham affect ... I mean you were what 13?

Paul Hoggart: Well yes I had to change school, and it wasn't cool to begin with, it was fine in the end, because I had been very happy at Leicester, and I was doing very well. I had done one year at Wyggeston Boy's which is the sort of big grammar school in the centre of Leicester. It is not direct grant, but it was pretty prestigious, and I had done incredibly well and I moved to this place which was like a pretend public school, King Edward's, and full of its own language and all the years had funny names, like the first years were called shells, and the second year were called removes, and we didn't have a hall, we had big school, we didn't have a head master, we had a chief master, and I had lost all my friendship group, and it took me a long time to re-establish myself, so I was very unhappy for a few weeks, but then it gradually got better, and fine by the end, and then still in touch with them, I still see a group of about 4 or 5 people, from there, one of whom is a professor of philosophy at Essex, who is a friend of Michael Bailey's. I don't know if you have spoken to Michael Bailey?

[0:06:13]

Kieran Connell: No I haven't.

Paul Hoggart: He has written a lot about Dad, and sent me a copy of his book via Peter, my friend. Yes, one thing I do remember from Dad commuting is being in the bath at night just before I went to bed, listening to the radio and hearing the news of the Kennedy assassination, and I came out of the bath in my pyjamas and stood at the top of the stairs, when Dad came in and told him that Kennedy had been assassinated, from the top of the stairs, he had just come back from Birmingham, so I remember that, quite clearly. But I also remember gradually learning more and more about what was going on, and Dad and I used to go for walks together in the evenings, for quite a long time. I mean in my mid-teens, and he used to talk to me about anything and everything, but he would do things which were absolutely make my hair curl sometimes, he never lost that sort of ... you know that kind of observational thing, that you get in 'The Uses of Literacy' and we would be walking down a suburban street, and the lights would be on because it was dusk in winter, and the next thing I knew, he would be standing on the pavement, staring in through the window across their front garden, "They have got one of those lava lamps! What do you call those things with the blobs? Oh that is such typical décor of this." And he noticed and I said "Dad! Will you move on!" And he has always had a curiously unselfconscious side to him, and he used to, again when we had family meals on holiday, we would go into a café or a restaurant, and we would all be eating and then suddenly Dad would be leaning over and saying "You see that couple at that table over there?" And there would be the sort of observations that anybody might make, actually, but delivered in a voice which was just that bit too loud, or at least we thought so. And couched in a sort of quasi-sociological language, so he never lost that, but he would often talk about battles he had at the university, never with people at the centre, but with people in the establishment. I don't know if I told you the story when he was getting funding for the centre, he started canvassing people who might offer money. And I can't remember if he has put this in one of the biographical works or not, but he got somebody from a commercial foundation, which gave money for good academic courses, up to Birmingham, because he had written and this chap was interested to talk about giving money to the centre, and as courtesy Dad took him to see T J B Spencer, the head of department then, who was quite a character, and Spencer said oh in an extremely patrician manner but could be utterly charming when he wanted to be, and he said Richard, Richard I seem to be out of sherry, would you just go and pop along to the senior common room, and get us a bottle of sherry, Dad went off, have I told you this, Dad went off and by the time he came back, Spencer had persuaded this man that he shouldn't bother with this little fly by night thing, and he should give the money to the Shakespeare Institute, which was Spencer's own research outfit! Dad was absolutely furious!

Kieran Connell: So that is when he had to kind of go look elsewhere, and ended up ...?

Paul Hoggart: Well, I think he threw the net as wide ... he looked for money from wherever he could get it. But he never forgave Spencer for that, because it was just such a rotten trick.

Kieran Connell: Did that, I know it is difficult for you looking back on it knowing what you know, and then also remembering what you remember at the time, but did that incident reflect a wider ... the uncomfortable nature of the relationship between what became the Centre and then the rest of the department at the university?

Paul Hoggart: Yes. Well, he was very conscious of snobbish, looking down the nose, and I seem to remember, and I have read since also confirming it, that the university was very heavily dominated by science and in particular medicine, and they did look down their noses at art subjects generally, and Dad's outfit was trying to establish itself, and people are still incredibly snotty about anything in that area. A few years ago, I was furious because I saw Howard Jacobson, the novelist, not Howard, Dan, no Howard, yes! In a discussion programme, and he just said casually 'so they go off and they do these non subjects like media studies' and I had taught media studies, and whatever else it was, it was actually academically pretty stringent, I mean certainly at A-level, which is what I taught it at, it was harder to do well at media studies than in was in English Literature, but I thought he was just doing reflex ... and when one of Dad's books came out, they did a short piece about it on ... one of his late books, they did a short piece about it on the review show, The Late Review or whatever it was called then and when he was introducing it, Mark Lawson said something like Richard Hoggart is jointly

responsible for ... sorry it was one of the ... there was some phrase he used, like some would say responsible for the foundation of Cultural Studies, again a sort of knee jerk ---

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Kieran Connell: Almost derogatory?

Paul Hoggart: --- deflection to the kind of contempt that a lot of academics held, and people always pass remarks back, don't they? I mean the academic world is extremely competitive, and extremely bitchy, as I am, sure you are aware, or can be anyway. I mean there are honourable people, obviously, and very nice people but in general, the ambiance is quite ... it is a bit of a snake pit, and somebody told him that Spencer had said that Hoggart has a nice line in cheap hats which meant you know graduation hats, so it was very hard to get people to take it seriously so that was something one was aware of.

Kieran Connell: Because eventually he got the funds, or some of the funds came from Penguin and Sir Allen Lane?

Paul Hoggart: Yes, yes.

Kieran Connell: Did you ever remember, I mean you were probably too young, but was it one of those stories that was in the household in the trial of Lady Chatterley, Lady Chatterley trial?

Paul Hoggart: Oh no the Chatterley trial very quickly passed into legend, that happened while we were at Leicester, and I remember being stopped in the street by somebody saying 'Your Dad is in the Leicester Mercury', and so he was. We were protected from some of the nastier flack, I didn't realise until years later that they had had dog shit pushed through the letter box and things like that. Obviously my Mum had got that and cleaned it up, before we appeared for breakfast. But you couldn't escape it, it was a source of some humour in the family. I remember Simon and Nicola making up jokes about Lady Chatterley's Lover, and Lady Chatterley's Later! I think there was another word play, I can't remember exactly what it was! Yes, and it was talked about a lot, and the encounter, you know the famous exchange with Mervin Griffith-Jones was talked about a lot, so yes you couldn't avoid that.

Kieran Connell: What was Richard's relationship like with colleagues within the centre, in those early days? Michael was part time, half in English, half in the centre, and Stuart was appointed straight away. Do you have any memories of looking back?

Paul Hoggart: Oh I remember he was very excited about Stuart's appointment, I remember that, and I remember he was, from the word go, he was very fond of him, and he also recognised that Stuart's mind worked very differently from his own, and that he was very adept in areas that Dad didn't. It wasn't so much that he couldn't, he didn't really have the inclination, doing an analysis of Marx's Grundrisse, and the other thing that Dad was kind of ... Dad's relationship with the left in general was always very ambivalent, and I remember during the student disturbances, we would occasionally meet up with people who were tangentially involved, usually because they were family friends, or people Nicola knew, or people Simon knew, and there would be discussions, and Dad hated things like heckling or pelting visiting speakers, he couldn't stand that, and he always said it is like ... he would always come back saying it was totalitarian, and refer back to Marxism and he was deeply suspicious of Marxists because he was so horrified by the situation in the Soviet Union, and he was never under ... I mean there were people in the British Communist Party who comprehensively deluded themselves, that it was justified. In fact, as we now know, but really people ought to have known then, and a lot of them did know, Stalin was a mass murderer on a scale, and Mao was even worse. They killed people by the tens of millions, and there was no ... Dad believed in freedom of speech, that mattered to him much more than ... the debate between totalitarianism and openness always mattered to him far more than the debate between capitalism and various forms of socialism.

Kieran Connell: In a sense though, I mean also Richard had a different relationship to popular culture, to Stuart as well, in some ways. I mean re-reading his inaugural lecture that he gave, you almost get the sense from that that his point was that we should take seriously popular culture, we can't just dismiss it without knowing about it, without first knowing about it, but you also get the sense that beneath the

surface, there are certain things in popular culture that he didn't particularly feel sympathetic towards, but his point was that he wanted to understand it, whereas Stuart was coming from a different formation, wasn't he?

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Paul Hoggart: Well, Stuart, it was much more analytical and in that sense I think much more distanced. But also Dad was always aware, because he started off writing about his own family, he was always wanting to think about what it meant to the lives of the consumers, if you like, well consumers is the wrong word, because that is implying ... I mean Stuart was pointing out, I was just having a quick look at Stuart's article in one of those collections, and he was saying that there was an unresolved dichotomy in *The Uses of Literacy* between talking about cultures and lived experiences and talking about it as a set of commercial artefacts, or practises, which are as it were imposed from outside, and obviously he points out that Raymond Williams had gone much further towards defining those differences, but they were all feeling their way, and Dad was responding to people like Queenie Leavis, which was completely 'de haute en bas', oh look how terrible and silly this is, and isn't it terribly bad for people that are consuming this? And Dad was trying to get a handle on how it interacted with people's lives and that meant looking at their lives, but he was feeling his way, and he was doing it for the first time, and he was doing it not knowing if the book would even get a publisher! So I can see why that criticism is made, but I think what Dad was concerned about was to put the two things together, and consider the interaction and so it is a bit of a sort of a hindsight judgement, if you know what I mean? I am not saying it is without validity, and he was concerned about commercialisation, and he was concerned about Americanisation. And I think the Americanisation thing is complicated, because I don't think he did look enough at the effects, probably, he wasn't sympathetic enough to get curious enough about the nature of that kind of a book. But you see I was looking at *The Uses of Literacy* again a few months ago, and a lot of premises, there is a lot of very careful, guarding comments in the early sections, which actually address some of the things that people have subsequently levelled at him as criticism. Which makes me think that some of that is a little bit unfair, because he was aware of those issues and certainly the issue of sentimentalisation.

Kieran Connell: It comes off straight away, doesn't it? He raises that straight away?

Paul Hoggart: Yes, yes. But also I think there are things about what the underlying drift of a lot of it is that the commercialisation of, or the commercial imperative behind what is offered to people or what is sold to people, can have a sort of perverting effect on the quality of what they are offered. And it is a very obvious, you might say naïve thing to say, and it is something that leads a fantastic amount of hedging around with qualifications and so on, but in essence, it is bang on the money! And it still is, today it is as relevant and you look at the fact that somebody like Peter Bazelgette can be made head of the Arts Council by a Tory government, because they have no conception of these arguments and my father came from a school of people who came up during the war, were educated after the war, they committed to the Attlee government, they were never going to go back to the 30s, and they wanted to make life better for ordinary people, not just working class people but everybody who wasn't privileged, in every way, and they believed that culture could be ... this is why they are always accused of being elitist, I mean I have been reading a sort of little memoir that his old friend, Roy Shore, wrote before he died last year. Are you aware of Sir Roy Shore? He came from such a similar background, and they became very close friends early on, and Roy of course became head of the Arts Council, for a lengthy spell. And they believed that culture and art could make people's lives richer, and improve it. And this is now regarded as patronising, but I think what Bazelgette, I heard Bazelgette defending Big Brother years ago, and he was arguing that having Jade Goody having explosive rows with an Indian girl was democracy, this is real democracy, because where else ... what other form of television would give somebody like that access to the national media? And I could barely believe it! Because it was the most ... she had been set up, in the most exploitative kind of way, she had been recruited to the programme in the first place because they knew she was incredibly ignorant and stupid and volatile, and would therefore create a tremendous amount of public attention, which she did. They had used her from the word go, as a sort of tool, and the idea that that was democratic and the only way in which she became iconic was she became iconic in that she was there as a kind of validation for all those girls who were sitting at the back of the class, chewing gum, refusing to pay attention, talking across the teacher, fucking up everybody else's

education, as well as their own, and boxing themselves in to an incredibly limiting, limited future. And so his claim about that was wrong on so many levels, and I just thought ...

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Kieran Connell: It is almost like that is traditional, in those circles it never happens, it is almost like your Dad's work has never been ---

Paul Hoggart: Yes, but I think it has effected, oddly enough I think it has had a huge effect, not just Dad, I mean it was very widespread, and ---

Kieran Connell: Academically of course, it goes without saying, it is incredible. Even today still I guess?

Paul Hoggart: Yes.

Kieran Connell: But going back to the Stuart thing, I was going to ask about ... in Michael's piece, one of the nice things about Michael's piece was when he talks about how Richard appointing Stuart was almost characteristic of his openness to people from different walks of life? I mean Stuart obviously being someone who came from Jamaica, and came from that post-colonial society?

Paul Hoggart: Yes.

Kieran Connell: Did you think it was, looking back on it, quite a brave ... because obviously there are such conflicting political ---

Paul Hoggart: Oh I don't think he would have used the word 'brave', but I think it probably was brave, but I think on one level, he found the idea quite exciting! That would sound awful if it sounded like Stuart was a bit exotic, but of course Stuart actually was extremely exotic, because he was so handsome and incredibly charming and he has that wonderful sort of golden voice, and so I think Dad was charmed by Stuart, and I think he quite ... he didn't think about race very much, and he has never been good on being PC, his antennae were never that good! And Nicola told him off about something he put in an early draft of one of his autobiographies, I can't remember what it was, but he had used a word that just isn't used anymore, and it was as a quote or something someone might have said, or something, so ---

Kieran Connell: I guess Jim wouldn't have been the safe option? In a sense there probably would have been any number of candidates he may have perceived as being slightly more safe or more academic even, because Stuart of course didn't even have a PhD, didn't finish the PhD.

Paul Hoggart: No, that is probably true.

Kieran Connell: So was that a characteristic ---

Paul Hoggart: He had already written the article, and I guess Dad just thought this is my man. This is a really bright, exciting guy and he is going to open things up. And also Stuart's awareness of popular culture was probably much more attuned than Dad's and it was like what you told me a few minutes ago, about Stuart being accused of not watching enough tele, that could apply to Dad even more, or certainly would have done then. And he has never been ... his entertainment was always his work.

Kieran Connell: So he wouldn't watch Coronation Street or whatever?

Paul Hoggart: No, he would come and join us to watch tele sometimes, but he probably watched early episodes of Corrie! I remember asking him once what he thought of Corrie, and he said it annoyed him because it was all so insular that they were all turned in on themselves, and that there was no sense of them interacting with the bigger, wider world. But there is an irony in there. That is certainly true of soaps, which I think have just lapsed into absurd pantomime melodrama, but you know the figure of Ken Barlow is quite obviously based on Dad, and have you seen the early Corries?

Kieran Connell: I have only seen short clips of them.

Paul Hoggart

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Paul Hoggart: Well, I bought a box set a couple of years ago, of the very first ones, ah there it is, and the very first series, the very first episode you are introduced to the Barlow family, and there is this stropy lad who has gone away to the local university, and it is causing tension, and a few episodes later they do a coach trip to Blackpool to see the sights, and see the lights, and Ken Barlow leans on the balustrade on the pier and delivers this diatribe about how the people are being sold cheap, tawdry popular culture, and it could have come straight out of Dad's mouth! So I did see a documentary years ago, and I wish I could pin this down, where Tony Warren, the creature of Coronation Street said that he had read *The Uses of Literacy*, and that was one of the things that inspired him to make the series.

Kieran Connell: Fascinating. Because when was the first Corrie episode broadcast?

Paul Hoggart: I think it was 1960? I mean they did a dramatization at the creation of the series, last year or the year before? And I was hoping that there would be some reference to 'I have just read this book!' but no. But one of the things I always like to say about *The Uses of Literacy* is that people still come up to me, or he still gets letters, he got one a few months ago from Frank Field, the MP, saying I just wanted to write to you to tell you how much that book had meant to me, so I read it to Dad, who sort of said 'oh who was that? Oh that is nice' and he can't write anymore, he hasn't been able to write for years, he can't read either, so I wrote back to Frank Field on his behalf, but that was just the latest in a string, that has gone on over the years, and oddly enough I taught in a FE college down in Woolwich for years, and I have kept friends with various people from there, and one of them is a woman who is about 5 or 6 years older than me, or possibly slightly more, who was around in London in the 60s, and was asked to pose for Lucian Freud, and turned him down, and was mixing with bohemians when she was young, and just last year we were talking about this and that on the phone, and she said 'I can't tell you how much that book meant to me', and I said 'What?' She said 'oh it was extraordinary, the affect it had when it came out, you can't believe the affect it had' and I said 'I was working with you for 15 years, and you never mentioned this'. 'No, no I couldn't, it was just too ... I don't know, it was too blah, blah, blah, blah'. But no it really was, and it is ...

Kieran Connell: And all those classic studies as well? Even after your Dad joined UNESCO, all those classic studies that the centre produced into the 70s, the graphic studies in many ways, about encouraging sub culture in the meaning of style for example, or Willis' 'Learning to labour'?

Paul Hoggart: Yes.

Kieran Connell: I have interviewed Hebdige, and he talks about having read *The Uses of Literacy*, and seeing himself within that tradition, wanting to foreground his own part of that working class culture, so the mods and the rockers, that was his little part of the working class culture that your Dad is describing, in a generation earlier. You can still see the lineage of that, tracing it through all those classic ethnographic studies that the Centre produced, I think.

Paul Hoggart: Yes, yes.

Kieran Connell: What was your Dad's relationship ... you touched on this a little bit, but what was his relationship to 1968, and to the sit in at Birmingham? Do you have any memories or recollections of that? Stuart was very active in it.

Paul Hoggart: Yes, I know. Well yes, he felt badly torn. I mean I think Michael Green got that very well, that certainly came to mind. Was that meant to be part of a longer study, that was going to go into more about the ---

Kieran Connell: That is an introduction to one of the recent books that has come out, about your Dad.

Paul Hoggart: But Michael Green was writing a book about Dad when he died, I had heard.

Kieran Connell: Well when he gave me that he told that was going to go into one of his collections.

Paul Hoggart: Maybe I am missing one.

[0:36:22]

Kieran Connell: I don't know if it made it in, because I don't know if that is a finished version, he gave me that.

Paul Hoggart: Because I get these things, and I don't have time to read them properly. I will do, because I want to write something about Dad myself but I was looking through these Sue Owen ones, I was looking for ...

Kieran Connell: I mean that was the last thing he ever wrote, Michael Green.

Paul Hoggart: Really? That is so sad. I think my sister had a bit of a crush on him!

Kieran Connell: Oh right!

Paul Hoggart: Well he was very funny, actually and tall and handsome and ...

Kieran Connell: I will look it out for you.

Paul Hoggart: I don't know, I have a feeling there might be one collection I haven't got.

Kieran Connell: Shamefully I haven't kept track of it myself.

Paul Hoggart: Don't worry, this is so much ... anyway going back to 68, he felt very torn because he shared a lot of the student's indignation I suppose is the right word, about the way the establishment conducted itself and the hierarchical nature of the university and in his way, he was always resolutely left wing, but in a way that I think you would best probably most accurately describe as soft left Labour, so the people he felt ... he was quite an admirer of Healey, and I sometimes think if he had gone into politics himself, he would have become a bit of a bruiser, like Healey, because one side of him, when he felt embattled, he became very ... he was a fighter. He spent 5 years fighting at UNESCO! Fighting everybody and anybody. So he shared a lot of their anger and frustrations, but it is what I said before, about he couldn't stand anything that smacked of totalitarianism, and he recognised that certain types of popular movement tended to get ... he was very suspicious of people who regarded themselves as revolutionaries, because he just thought that they were ... I suppose the kindest way to say it is that they haven't really thought it through! And he couldn't stand anything that smacked of totalitarian behaviour, even if it was by people who considered themselves to be oppressed, so shouting down, violence in any form. And I think he was a slightly ... he was caught between a rock and a hard place, in that sense, and I think the problem of the Centre moving so far ... well the trouble was that it moved in 2 different ... it made 2 changes in a sense, because there was a political shift to overtly Marxist perspectives. And he makes a rueful reference in his autobiography, the late autobiography, about being told about discussions at the Centre where they said we become a red cell, and somebody saying nobody should be allowed to join who isn't already well down that road, and Dad would have considered that ... I mean he doesn't make a comment on it, he doesn't make a judgement on it, but he would have regarded that as absolutely outrageous. I mean the thought that anyway it was a sort of ... he would have been deeply uncomfortable with the idea that a collective of students should be allowed to direct their own education by telling their lecturers what they could and couldn't teach, what was acceptable. And one of the things I am curious to know actually myself is how comfortable Stuart was with that side of things, because I get the impression that he got more and more uncomfortable with that himself, as it went on. And I know being told, I think Fred Ingles told me that Stuart himself had been accused – or did I read this in an article? That Stuart himself had been attacked by feminists in the Centre, for being patriarchal and so in a sense I wouldn't say hoist with his own petard, but there were things going on which weren't ... he may have found difficult. I mean has he talked about that?

Kieran Connell: Well I mean it is interesting you say that, about Richard may have been uncomfortable about students deciding on the syllabus, or having input into the syllabus, because one of ---

Paul Hoggart: Well he would have been very happy to negotiate, but it was being told, the notion that the students would collectively decide on a political stance, he would have found anathema.

[0:42:24]

Kieran Connell: That is interesting I think, because by the early 1970s, after your Dad had moved post, Stuart was actively accelerating it, it turned into a collective, he wanted it to be a sort of, I think, a leaderless revolution, so he was actively encouraging this notion of the Centre becoming a collective being lead by students, effectively. Politically, becoming more and more politicised, they call it the politics of intellectual work, and in the archive, in your Dad's archive images in Sheffield, there is a very interesting series of papers that were being written by Stuart and others, (inaudible 0:43:06) for example, within the Centre, on the collectivisation of the Centre's work, and the politicisation of the Centre's work and clearly Stuart was very diligent in turning all these materials over and you can see your Dad kind of highlighting certain bits and certain passages, so there is one bit for example where Stuart talks about how he felt extremely uncomfortable at being acting director in your Dad's absence, because he didn't feel like he was comfortable with all the trappings of power, and so he wanted to open things up and make it into a very ... literally a collective, so I don't know if by 1969, after the student movement, after this move towards an increasing politicisation of the centre, whether your Dad thought that was the time for him to leave? Or whether it was a combination of that and UNESCO being too good an opportunity to turn down?

Paul Hoggart: He never mentioned discomfort, over that, to the family as far as I know, certainly not to me, before we left, because I mean you discover things about yourself, as you go through life, don't you? And he had already been in demand in terms of public service type things and becoming one of those, to quote, the great and the good. He had been on the governing body of the Royal Shakespeare Company which he had really enjoyed, because it meant he got to go to Stratford a lot, the BBC they had an advisory council which he was on, and this was all in the wake of things like the Pilkington Committee, and the Abermar Committee that he had done when we were in Leicester. And he had learnt quite a lot about power manoeuvres in a big British university, and he had already been sent to UNESCO as a British delegate. And people had been making overtures to him, to do grander jobs, and he had been offered a very distinguished professorship in New York, so we might have ended up going to America for 5 years or whatever, and the UNESCO thing came along and it was very exciting, so it wasn't I have got to get out of here, this isn't working, it was oh my God, look at all these things people are offering me! I am not saying that you are wrong, that that wasn't a factor, it may have been, but it wasn't something he ever stressed to us. And as I said jokingly before, if he thought he was going to get away from political infighting, I mean obviously it was all more abstract at UNESCO, it wasn't close to home, in the way battles at the Centre would have been, that would have been much closer to the core of his being, but the place was an absolute snake pit, of petty corruption, of back scratching and back door deals and petty betrayals. It was run by a patrician French functionary, who behaved like he was some kind of ancien regime aristocrat, and it was very, very tough and Dad had the sort of slightly straightforward Anglo-Saxon wholesome views of how life ought to be, and was constantly coming back fuming about something that somebody had done, or whatever. He was quite wry about it a lot of the time, but I suppose in a way, when he was getting these missives from Stuart, maybe he thought ... yes I think he thought oh well, I had better let them get on with it, but I know he was hurt by the publication of Colin Sparks' article 'Rubbish and the Uses of Literacy' and he said wryly, oh well, I remember him telling me about it, and saying they are explaining why my work was naïve and whatever, he said it is what Freud calls 'killing your father'! But he was hurt by it, and Fred Ingles who knew him fairly well by then, and was obviously not at the Centre, but working in the same area, told me that he had written to reproach Colin Sparks about it, and had got a slightly penitent reply! But I mean I did this year, I sort of flirted with that world myself for a while, after I came down from York, and I did do a year as a tutor on the Open University's new Popular Culture course, and they had a overview, introductory overview, and I remember reading it and there was this description of the course and the discipline was started by the usual triambic, as identified by Stuart, Hoggart, Hall and E P Thompson, sorry Hoggart, Williams and E P Thompson, but of course we have moved on so far since then. And I remember thinking it is like a history of the

railways, and Dad and Williams and Thompson are the sort of Trevithicks and Stevensons and they have now got these sort of glossy continental pendalinoes and train de grande vitesse of (inaudible 0:49:56) and (inaudible 0:49:57) and so on. And I felt it was ... I remember feeling it was a bit patronising, but also when you are doing a course like that, you have got intelligent, ordinary members of the public who have come from all sorts of different walks of life, who come in to do these courses, and they are quite hard to ... you know you have got to be able to sell what it is you are selling, you can't just say Gramsci has defined this and that, and therefore how does this apply? You have got to convince them that these approaches have real merit and there was a fair bit of scepticism, I did my best with it and I was still quite titillated and excited by what I knew of the theory myself, although that course was an extraordinary hotchpotch, I mean it had everything in but the kitchen sink! There were units by people who had written loving histories of industrial Lancashire folk music, and mixed in with post-structuralist theoretical positions, and it was a strange course, and it was quite hard to explain some of the theoretical positions, and I had a bit of the same when I was teaching media studies, in further education, to reasonably bright A-level students, and older students on foundation courses and things, and some of it makes a lot more sense to the general public than other stuff, and I think one of the critical, I think if I had to define a critical difference between Dad's approach and the approach of the ... you can't sell a political position to the general public, as if it is an academic truth, because that doesn't wash. And the theory has to validate itself, in order to prove that it has some currency, and I think the critical difference between Dad's approach and I am not necessarily saying Stuart's, but some of the other more theoretically inclined people, was that Dad was always thinking well how is this going to play if I am debating this in this situation or that situation? And when he was around, he was frequently asked to contribute to TV programmes and things like that, radio. Obviously all of that stopped when he went to Paris, but when he came back, I was puzzled because I would be watching TV programmes, discussion programmes, about culture in the 80s and so on, and I remember once seeing a programme about cultural change in the last 10 years or something, and there were virtually no academics on it at all, and this bloke came on called Peter York, and it said 'Peter York, cultural analyst'. And I don't if you have ever come across Peter York, but he is a smoothie-chops who is a business man who makes money out of interpreting zeitgeist to businesses. And he prides himself on always being ahead of the curve in social trends and things like that, but he is from the world of commerce, and the academics weren't there, and Newsnight once had a discussion about is British television dumbing down? And they had Bazelgette in the studio, and they had I think Lord Putman, and by live link from a studio in Norwich, there was this sort of grey-haired, rather sunken featured looking figure, looking like an old Testament prophet without a beard, saying yes it is dumbing down! And it was Dad, and I thought what is on the Rolodex? How come he is the one they have lighted on? It would have been because one of his books, one of his late books would have come to their attention, but it made me think, it brought home to me the way that the people who were continuing the analysis in universities had detached themselves, or that is how it felt to me, were no longer part of the general public debate.

[0:55:01]

Kieran Connell: Which moves it back into the ivory tower, in a sense?

Paul Hoggart: Yes, and there was something very self-referential, I mean the bloke who ran that Open University course, a chap called Tony Bennett, was another smoothie-chops, I remember him talking with another lecturer at summer school, up in Preston, about how they had had ballroom dancing lessons at school, their private school, in west London, when they were young and I thought oh this is a bit odd, and apparently he has completely flipped. Fred Ingles knows him and says he has completely flipped and he is now teaching in Australia and he has become very right wing which I don't know, that is just hearsay, but he had all the right language and all the right words and reference points, and he had been editing screen education, which was very radical. And I sometimes, after I looked at the Colin's part thing, I thought I wonder what he is doing now. Have you been in touch with him?

Kieran Connell: Yes, I have actually, I have been in touch with Colin, yes.

Paul Hoggart: Well I looked him up, I Googled him and found out that he is teaching at a Baptist University in Hong Kong.

Kieran Connell: I caught him when he was coming over actually, he was at Westminster.

Paul Hoggart: Have his views shifted?

Kieran Connell: Well he has got a very particular interpretation of Marxism.

Paul Hoggart: And that is okay at a Baptist University!

[0:56:35]

Kieran Connell: Well I don't know. I talked about the context of the turn to theory at the Centre, and that is what I really wanted to end by asking you about really. I mean you said that your Dad in one sense his view was let them get on with it, but there must also have been, looking back, a sort of to some extent, perhaps I don't know like a sense of loss, given that the original Centre project changed so much in the 70s and 80s and became this theoretical, overtly Marxist place. Do you think that was the case?

Paul Hoggart: Yes, but he was very, very reluctant to talk about it openly, because partly it was loyalty to Stuart, and partly it was a feeling that if I am not in there, actively involved, it is not really my place to start laying down the law from a distance. I mean that was the difference between him and Thompson, because of course Thompson was still involved, and so he let his fury rip and then went back to doing the kind of history he respected, and working actively, politically for END, in fact Thompson remained always much more Marxist than my father, it wasn't the politics it was the theory he hated wasn't it? But no I think there was a sense of loss, and oddly enough, well I say this but my own career has been so odd and bitty and involved teaching in FE as I said, and watching as the Thatcherite revolution and later the new Labour, continuation of the Thatcherite revolution, changed that sector. I mean there were all sorts of things about it in the early days which were extremely slack and ill thought out and so but there was a commitment that everybody had to second chance education, and it was very much born out of that post war idealism, or in fact pre the post war, if you read the Roy Short thing, he talks about institutes he went to in Sheffield, when he was a boy before the war, well he was a teenager, where they were providing this kind of intellectual stimulation and opening of horizons, for working people. And I was watching that kind of being dismantled, and I had always wanted to write so I decided to start making a move out of writing, and ironically I was offered work on the Times, but then I thought because I had a friend who got me an in, so I then became a TV critic for quite a long time, and again was watching all this going on, and all these shifts in television and trying to write about it in a reasonably intelligent way, and I felt that sense of loss myself, quite acutely, because I just think I mean it would be putting it a bit strongly to say that in some ways the academic left ... I think the academic left lost the plot, in terms of their interaction with the general public, and British culture, and became far too self referential. I have never had a conversation like that with anybody who came from that tradition. I mean your parents were part of it, I mean you said they were in the Centre? So I don't know how they would react, or if they would feel insulted or affronted about somebody having that kind of view, but I often wonder how they feel about the way things have panned out, because things have not landed in the favour of ... oddly enough a friend from school who is a friend of Michael Bailey's, the philosophy professor, was an expert of (inaudible 1:01:03) and was very much involved in all that sort of stuff himself, and he is quite wry about it all now, and it is has never affected our friendship, and I have never said to him come on admit it, it was all nonsense! What fucking good has it done? How has it benefitted, and maybe somebody like Stuart would be able to point to a lot of gains which have come out of that, which I am not really aware of or hadn't thought about that, I don't know. Has he ever talked about the way that panned ---

Kieran Connell: Yes, he speaks quite eloquently about ... he is a believer in the importance of theory and he hasn't shifted his position on that, but I think he has more recently when I spoke to him, he did talk about the importance of theory alongside ... I don't think he was ever wanting to lose sight of that ethnographic empirical work, I think he is a believer of the two together, really. So there is no coincidence that even after Richard left, as I said, there was still a great long line of very, very ethnographic, empirical pieces of work produced, but they were ---

Paul Hoggart: But did he have a take on, because I know in recent years, he has become much more preoccupied with issues to do with race and position of black people and all that, and do you know why he left the Centre to go to the OU?

Kieran Connell: I think he felt it was time, I think he had been there for 15 years, and there was things going on with feminism, there was a series of ... of course a long line of debates within the Centre, and not revolutions, but rebellions in the Centre, and one of those came in the late 70s, Stuart made some comment at a conference, talking about describing feminism as having broken into the Centre, like a thief in the night, which went down very badly obviously within the Centre, so anyway there was that, but I think he also felt that he had been there for a long time, and he needed somewhere else, and the Open University, he said to me he chose that because he was massively in favour and supportive of that project, to give people a second chance in education, so he saw that as being ---

[1:03:37]

Paul Hoggart: I suppose the Open University was a kind of jewel of that movement?

Kieran Connell: Yes exactly.

Paul Hoggart: But was he ... I mean it sounds like there are some sort of slight parallels, actually.

Kieran Connell: I think so, I think so. I mean I think that is what is interesting in the archive anyway, it is tracing that out, you can actually see that happening, it seems like Stuart ---

Paul Hoggart: Well I am sorry I am not able to quote you chapter and verse.

Kieran Connell: No, of course not.

[End of Transcript]