

WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN ON STUART'S BOOKSHELF?

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As an English Literature student, Stuart Hall archive initially appears as a daunting maze of handwritten notes, files and CDs. Hall's work is expansive and towering in its magnitude and his ideas and writing can often feel complex and overwhelming. However the archive offers insight into an aspect of Hall's life that grounds both Hall and his work, connecting our home intimately to his: what might our bookshelves share with Stuart Hall?

When Hall initially studied at Oxford he had hopes of pursuing fiction and poetry and it is perhaps this genuine passion for literature that informed his literary preferences. The archive indicates that Hall was interested in a vast array of novels, with a large amount attributed to American novelists. Henry James appeared prominently in the archive, mentioned in an extensive array of index cards and in Hall's interview with *BOMB* magazine in which he cited having fallen under a 'Jamesian spell'. *The Portrait of a Lady* crops up, a novel that grapples with the freedom of Isobel Archer that grows increasingly more fleeting.

Another beloved literary idol that you may hold in common with Hall is Toni Morrison. The release of Morrison's 2003 novel *Love* is thoroughly recorded by Hall; there are sheaves of handwritten notes and cuttings from articles upon its publication. James and Morrison are both household names within their own right. Tonally and culturally vastly different, they encompass the breadth of Hall's literary appetite. Authors such as James Baldwin, Herman Melville and Caryl Phillips were also referenced in the archive: literary powerhouses who shaped the face of literature in both the novelty of their tales and compelling prose.

Using literature as an entry point into both Stuart Hall's work and the archive itself can prove rewarding, as literature innately shapes our cultural understanding of the world. The novels mentioned in the archive provide scope upon Stuart's own viewpoints and as an extension the way his academic work may be a reflection of this.

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