

# Historical Memory, Global Movements and Violence

## Paul Gilroy and Arjun Appadurai in Conversation

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**T**HIS INTERVIEW was conducted in order to give an opportunity for these two thinkers, who stem from different disciplines, but whose work meets at certain crucial junctures, to present a discussion to a wider audience about the themes and issues that were currently motivating them in their work. Paul Gilroy's work is well known as a central reference point within the contemporary analysis of 'race' and racism. At its most broad, he has a reputation for thinking throughout his writings about the historical constitution of race and the mobility of forms of racism over time and space. Arjun Appadurai's work emanates from the discipline of anthropology, and he has a specific and on-going interest in South East Asia Studies. He has been influential in the exploration of new modes of conceptualizing the remit and processes of forming anthropological knowledge. While both authors share certain key concerns, their interconnections are not explicit in their writings. This interview, conducted in London during Arjun Appadurai's visit in 1997, was an opportunity to bring these two authors together to discuss the themes and connections which they are both exploring in different ways, but in ways that have similar theoretical and political impulses. In particular, I wanted to ask them about the themes that I think animate the critical edge of cultural studies: the politics of memory, the theorization of movement and new conceptualizations of spatiality, the critique of authenticity and modes of theorizing embodiment,

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and concurrent directions in their present work, especially around the notions of extreme actions, of war and violence.

*VB:* I wanted to ask first of all as an initial question about the fact that both of you have written within the context of ‘home’ disciplines – anthropology in your case, Arjun, and sociology or cultural studies in yours, Paul – but both of you I think have been very critical of the traditions that you have inherited. In your case, Arjun, I was interested in the way in which the very concept of place in anthropology is something that you have written about, critiquing the tendency for certain places to become ‘show cases’ for certain ideas, as well as critiquing concepts of temporality that anthropology works with. Paul, in your case, I think you’ve been critical of sociological modes of categorization, particularly in relation to ‘race’ as an explanatory concept, and of central sociological ideas of method. So, what I wanted to ask you both is how you feel your work resides within those disciplines, how you see it critiquing whilst remaining within them, and how you see your audience responding to your work?

*PG:* It seems to me that sociology lacks its own version of the very interesting self-critical conversation that was forced on anthropology for obvious reasons at a much earlier point. Although sociology has been kind to me, much of the time I don’t think of sociologists as being people who would be interested in the things that I have wanted to talk and write about. This seems borne out by the fact that I haven’t had a lot of sociological responses to what I’ve done. I suppose what I’m most interested in doing is prompting a disciplinary crisis in sociological thinking, something like the reflexivity that followed the impact of Talal Asad’s work in anthropology some years ago now and has been consolidated by writers like James Clifford, Renato Rosaldo and the rest. These are people who applied the tools of literary criticism to anthropological writings, who put anthropology back into colonial history and who saw the production of anthropological knowledge in the context of a wider system of political and cultural relations in which the academy negotiated the needs and priorities of governments, artists and intermediate institutions like museums. I’m interested in feeding a disciplinary crisis like that. I think there are all sorts of reasons why sociologists in this country in particular haven’t really been comfortable in confronting the imperial and colonial dynamics that have constituted and refined their discipline, or even been prepared, with quite the same enthusiasm as literary scholars have, to seek for the kind of repressions and elisions and lapses of memory that have characterized the configuration of sociological modernity. So I wanted to provoke some of that, and that is an ongoing project.

I know that one of the issues you want to raise later on is the current state of the sociology of globalization. That seems a good example of how partial and selective – on some occasions almost trivial – sociological writing has been. Once the light does come on, the problems that appear

get reduced to the simplest and most easily assimilable forms: markets, states, cultures are essentially what they always were. The concepts aren't being re-worked, re-thought. People want to put up a signal that says 'business as usual'. It's that business as usual signal that I want to interrupt.

AA: In my own case, the relationship to anthropology is slightly more deliberate perhaps. First of all I should say that I teach in the US context, which is peculiar. Anthropology comes not so much with the 'business as usual' sign, but with a crisis bulb on all the time. So the problem becomes 'What's the crisis, what's the *real* crisis?' whether it's the reflexivity business, or the impact of Said, or the impact of cultural studies. Everything precipitates crisis. Moreover, because the space of anthropology in the US simultaneously hosts issues in natural science as well as issues which are entirely sociological, you inevitably have a kind of crowding and have times when consensus is weak but departmental and university institutional realities force people to have a common position. The question is the relationship of these crises, some of which are institutional, not trivial but not exactly conceptual, and others of which are conceptual and which may be interesting, historical and productive. So my interest has been to try to use the things I have engaged with over time – India first of all and most of all – as well as other concerns such as globalization and colonialism – to try to identify which of those crises are the productive and interesting ones. My subjects have emerged at that intersection between the locations I know best and to which I'm committed, and what I imagine to be this panoply of crises of which some are more consequential than others. I do think it's been helpful to have some idea of a disciplinary history or a canon of some kind. I'm fully aware that these vary depending where you are, but in my location there is a history of a field, and there is a picture of its best actors, and its distinctions and so on. All of these are contestable, of course, but it's identifying, opening up and resisting those narratives that has been helpful for me. I can imagine it would be very different if I were in sociology or psychology, I might have a more loose relationship like that which I sense from Paul, but in the case of anthropology, it has been helpful for me to be able to say, 'Well you think this is the issue ... but it's really this.'

PG: Let me clarify lest I sound too ungenerous to the very tolerant responses of some sociologists to the things I've said. I wasn't trained as a sociologist and I didn't think of myself as a sociologist until I became a sort of domesticated foe of sociology. It was through trying to critique the complicity of too much sociological thinking that reduced critical political questions to policy questions and showing where academic sociology was entirely comfortable with reproducing, for example, a number of pathological assumptions about the way that black culture and social life were constructed, that I got drawn on to sociological ground. I would have to

admit that people have been very tolerant of my interventions in their field, perhaps too tolerant. I think it is very different from anthropology. It's important given that the audience for this conversation is wider, to mark out some of the very specific problems that mark the development of *British* sociology, because I think Arjun is right to point to the different character of sociology in the American academy where the line between political science and sociology is sometimes the most difficult one to draw and a great deal of energy is invested in that, and where questions of social policy have a different flavour altogether because of the absence of the Welfare State institutions that have always guided a great deal of sociological thinking in this country. So I'd want to be careful to confine what I say about sociology to a particular moment. And yet I think the reification of race and culture is still very strong, in spite of the easy victories that were achieved, not by me but by others who shared the critique of sociological rationality around race. I think the easy resort to reified notions of race and culture is still to be found in the present. The complex history and experience of migrants and settlers to this country is still represented continually in pathological terms. So there is still an endless amount of that work to be done. And what causes me a great deal of sadness is to see the failure of the generational group to which I belonged as a graduate student. We have not been able to reproduce ourselves in the academy, and there are all kinds of reasons for that, but I'd say that teaching at Goldsmiths, the brightest and the cleverest black students who I would have thought would have a great deal to contribute to the intellectual life of the discipline aren't always open to that possibility. That is a very interesting thing, to see that that interruption hasn't been sustained.

*VB:* You were saying Arjun that sometimes you took the debates within anthropology as a way to bring people back, as it were, to anthropology; that you used the interventions from other disciplines and the sense of perpetual 'crises' to bring the focus back on to the question 'What is important about what we anthropologists, specifically, are doing?' I thought that the piece that you wrote about the past, this is quite an old piece of yours now, but it's one I really like – 'The Past as a Scarce Resource' in the journal *Man* – is a piece where you do just that, where you seem to be arguing against an emerging attachment to the idea that the past is infinitely malleable, by addressing it in relation to your own area of anthropological knowledge. If I could use that as a way to pose my second question, I wanted to ask you both about ideas of the past, or more specifically, about the place of memory, remembering the past, because I think it is a question that you both work upon. I wondered, Arjun, if you would say something about how remembering is performed? And Paul, for you also, memory is a very strong theme in *The Black Atlantic*, the remembering through music, the remembering of slavery, the re-creation of traditions and so on. Could you say something about how that performing of memory features in your work and why you see it as important?

AA: The first thing to say is that the essay that you refer to was a part of a conversation that I now would see as an excessively formalist conversation, not that I think that its main idea is a bad idea, but it was a very formal piece, innocent of much of what we learnt later about memory, about even indeed the invention of traditions. Its main point was to argue with anthropologists of a certain type – a functionalist type who had a certain interpretation of Malinowski – who argued that somehow myth and thus anything else of that type was just a thing people functionally produced in relation to contemporary interests. It was an argument good in its politics but bad because it suggested that this just happened somehow and that anything was possible. I argued that anything was not possible. I would write that argument very differently now, and at the time there was much less for me to work with on memory or even on temporality – no LeFebvre, for example – so it was a confined literature. Nevertheless, I think your intuition that it does have to do with later concerns of mine, ones that are connected to the politics of pastness, broadly, is correct. I think it allows me now, in my current work, to think more about the political economy of the relationship between nationalism, remembering and forgetting. Forgetting is a much more recent problem in cultural studies – the issues of erasure and removal – but in India for example, Veena Das’s work has shown how much had to be forgotten for Sikhs to be seen as enemies of Hinduism and as instruments tied up with Islam. They were in fact historically the friends of Hinduism and directed against Islam, but on all sides that story has changed, and extremely fast, so the economy of forgetting is even more striking here than the economy of remembering. One interesting question that I think many people will have to engage with is how to connect the idea that under different cultural or ideological regimes the past has different shapes which ordinary people produce, as historians, etc., with both the notion of different temporalities and the questions of memory and forgetting. If those things can be co-configured somehow I think we would come up with better understandings of the ways in which history is mobilized, whether in everyday life or elsewhere. So let me leave it at that. I have not yet taken that up myself and I’m interested in it, and I’m interested to hear what Paul is going to say about it.

PG: The political economy of remembering and forgetting and the place of nationalist thinking in its circuits is something that was raised very very sharply and early here. This was done not only by a kind of black movement but also by a number of white critics of the morbidity of English nationalism. I’m thinking particularly here of my friend Patrick Wright who had taken on rather more than he bargained for when he published his influential and important book *On Living in an Old Country*. The conversations that I had with him around that time were very important in focusing my attention on the mutability of history, memory, heritage and place. So the political currency of the assault on memory – on *official* memory – and official patterns of commemoration around national heritage which have flourished

all around us in the period since, is something that had an immediate significance. I would also want to say that my own thinking, and this is something that I have been much more comfortable with in writing the book that I'm writing at the moment, was very much shaped by reading those closing pages of Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* when I was an undergraduate, those pages where Fanon is turning his eye simultaneously both against white supremacy and its black nationalist shadows on the other, and he's saying, we are not bound to the past. He is giving his version of revolutionary palingenesis, a sort of Sorelian aspiration toward the production of a new man, a new humanity, and that stages a very interesting political conflict that I've been trying to see through. I want to endorse his argument, to the extent that it says 'the authoritarian nationalist voices in my own political community have to forget certain things in order to instantiate a particular pattern of official memory from which I disengage'. He is saying that we must find opportunities to be more creative, to be more future-oriented than their love affair with the past allows us to be. Embracing that orientation towards the future and looking at the syncopated temporalities of the dissonant modernity he's conjuring up through his critique of Western philosophical traditions or his uncomfortably ambivalent relationship to the anti-fascist struggle in Europe (Fanon had returned from fighting the Germans when he's thinking about this) means we have to be more creative, because to be bound to the past is to become hostage to patterns of political work in our communities which are strongly authoritarian in character. I've become very interested in how a future-oriented political language can or cannot break with those patterns of authoritarian irrationalism. That has become a central issue for me. Black Protestantism has elements of looking forward, but it's always been limited by its eschatology, it always says 'well, you know those utopian questions are for another, better world'. When the authoritarian nationalism of the early 20th century comes along and makes that utopian aspiration into a worldly thing – you have a very strange result – with people like Garvey turning around and saying 'we were the first fascists, I was the one that Hitler and Mussolini stole their act from.' He goes to Germany in 1928 and looks at Hitler and says 'I did this before.'

AA: Just a small comment. I've been hinting, in some small way here and there, especially in the recent book *Modernity at Large*, at something that partly comes to me out of Stuart Hall. That is, the idea that identity, especially that form of identity that we still for lack of a better word, rightly I think, call ethnic, has somehow, not only analytically but historically, become in the etymological sense, a *project*. That is to say, one can see ethnic identity as projected, so that it has a future, without entirely giving up the idea that it is produced by histories that are marked, and that identities are particular, and cannot therefore be completely expansive. Moreover, if one looks at identity movements, and sees them as *projects* that have futures, then one has a completely different sense, first, of the question

of the past in relation to those projects and second, to put it simply, of who can join. This allows a kind of openness to inclusion in the project, although not necessarily to inclusion in the history. One does not have to say that the history is open and unmarked and anything might have happened, but at the same time, while resisting that, one can open the project up, so that the project can tie up with other projects, and so on. That becomes politically really interesting.

*PG:* Well, I was thinking about that essay that you wrote about your father's Indian nationalism and struggle to make the history of the nationalist movement in India complex enough to accommodate his formation. That was one thing that came to mind. There are other questions of memory that we haven't addressed, like what happens when commemoration becomes work, and the very formal ways that the diaspora intercultural has for staging those trials of identity, often ritualized in quite extended ways.

*VB:* Could I ask, Arjun, whether you could take up that lead in relation to the ideas of movement and authenticity as they figure in your work? There's a real relationship between what Paul has just been saying about ideas of diaspora, but also earlier about ideas of mimicry and borrowing, that cluster around the notion of looking for authenticity and creating authenticity, and what you have written yourself in relation to active consumption as involving the question of authenticity and the creation of 'taste'. I would like to bring together what you say about objects in some parts of your work, and what Paul is saying in his about the creation of subjectivities, and, if you like, to take away the distance between them.

*AA:* To open this, I would just say that in *The Social Life of Things* I tried in my own essay and in a sense in the whole collection, to milk very hard the conceit that we need to forget people for a moment and think of things themselves, as in some kind of way having a *life*. And then we read out from that to the human contexts, agencies, forms, socialities. It has its merits, but clearly it's a weak way of capturing the other moment, which is the consumption moment or the subject moment, to which it gives one only the most indirect clues. In the work I did a little bit later, on duration and consumption, I tried to think more of what the work of imagination *is*, and to see consumption as a privileged site for looking at the imagination, not as a romantic heroic individual practice but as a social practice which is often quite tedious and difficult in all the ways that capitalist labour is, and not metaphorically, but actually. But still, I know that what I don't have, and would like to think about more, is a more complex idea of subject, which brings us back to the disciplinary question. I, and others, sometimes prefer the default idea – something like 'person' – which is anthropologically important, as it is a constant reminder that there are other constitutions of agency, in say, the Pacific. So that word is important for that reason, but

when used it may appear to be markedly in preference to (which it is not), say, ‘subject’ in the sense that comes out of Hegel. So right now, in my current work, one of my struggles, is to determine whether there is a way to keep that slightly dated sense of self or person, as a culturally constituted thing, which is not natural, which is not everywhere the same, etc. but still bring it into some configuration with the Hegelian idea of subjectivity. I’d love to hear what Paul has to say on this.

*PG:* I think you’re being unduly modest about some of the formulations that came out of that work – *The Social Life of Things* – because what that work set in train for me was a set of questions about the critical role of particular objects, and particular technologies, in mediating precisely that relationship between subjectivities and political life. Not wanting to give any hostages to the notion of a phenomenology of bodily experience, I suppose I’ve got very much drawn into thinking about the technological processes, objects and systems that mediate our relationship to the constitution of racialized bodies. I’ve been trying to sketch that unfolding through a number of particular phases: the birth of political anatomy, the advent of microscopy, different notions of the miniature, assumptions about the body and its visual cultures as they move into the phase that we’re in now. Here we encounter a number of technologies that operate on scales beneath the microscopic – nanotechnologies – and see the end of those to do with the impact of the play of light on the body. This change offers us an opportunity to reflect upon ourselves, our humanity and our species life in a very different way. Yesterday as I was going out to the library, I was looking at the Stroke Association billboards. The first one showed one of those brain scans done by PET. It superimposes a beautifully coloured image in the way that only computer images do, of a person’s brain who has had a stroke, over a sheet of cracked glass, and it says ‘every twenty seconds a stroke shatters somebody’s brain’. Now the new one has a black doctor sitting at a computer screen looking at the rainbow PET image of the brain, and it says something else about strokes as a species hazard. My particular fantasy about what was going on in the minds of the people who made that particular campaign was confirmed by the fact that that they troubled to put a black doctor – albeit a male, but never mind – sitting at that screen. It confirms my own sense of the value of the technological intermediation of our corporeality and the possibility of turning some of that in a more political way to our understanding of embodied difference. That’s a very minimal example of a much longer argument which involves thinking a lot about the history of optics and visuality, about the visualization and observation of racial difference over a long period of time. That’s something that seems to me very important and that’s only one way of trying to reconcile the problems that you offered, and it is something that I’ve drawn very directly from.

AA: Yes, that is interesting because this mediation question certainly is a key one. In some of the work that I'm trying to do now, I have an idea that in thinking about things like mass mediation you can deploy some idea about subjectivity and some idea about embodied experience while keeping on board this anthropological idea that persons are constituted fundamentally differently, which is a good heuristic position even if in the end it turns out not quite right. It's a good thing to imagine that in the first instance somebody you meet when doing field work in New Guinea doesn't come out of the same regime of things as oneself.

I'm working now on violence, and I won't say more about it except that for the first time ever, I have to think very hard about embodiment and this business of technologies allowing you to 'see in' and so on. I'm keenly interested in enriching my hold on the 'body question' which has a classical status in anthropology. The talk I'm about to give at the LSE is called 'Purity and Certainty: Towards an Anthropology of Ethnic Cleansing', and it is centrally about the body question which I have written about before but have never had to think so hard about.

PG: Bringing this back into the context of the argument about memory, it is also important to remember that we have a strong suit, where we can show how unreliable, how intermittent, how partial, how selective incorporated memory is, how incorporated memory lacks the kind of authority that we want to invest in it. There are counter-histories of modernity that we may want to summon up, whether it's a carefully reconfigured reading of the material that the slaves themselves produced, or a look at situations of extremity where there is the failure of embodied memory, a renunciation of memory's authority, something that comes out very strongly in Primo Levi's work about his own memory and the tricks it has played upon him for example.

VB: There are two questions which follow on really nicely from that, and I'll mention them both so you can see my points of connection, Paul. First, that idea of the failure of embodied memory makes me want to leap to ask about the relationship that both of your work might have to ideas of performativity, as they figure in Judith Butler's work, and those moments of disjuncture. Let me save that line of questioning, and take you into it again later. Instead, let me pose the second question which concerns the issue of globalization, and maybe what you have both been saying about technology would be one way to lead into that. I know that you've thought about technology in terms of the Internet and diaspora, in relation to the production of locality, Arjun, and issues of reterritorialization. But I feel that you are both quite critical of the sociology of globalization in some versions, and so I wondered if you would take me through why there is that implicit critique, and what you do with the term?

PG: I read the collection *The Social Life of Things* around the time that I discovered John Ellis's (1976) extraordinary little book on the history of the machine gun as a piece of technology. That might be a way to think about why I felt an unease about the way in which formulations of globalization were offered, as if to resolve prematurely a number of important things that anthropologists were prepared to delve into. So I'm uncomfortable with the periodization of those notions, and I'm uncomfortable because the history of the diaspora that interests me is never acknowledged in the narratives that culminate in the theory of globalization. Here we are in London. The work of Peter Linebaugh, a social historian, always reminds me that London was around prior to the instantiation of either the nation or the state, you know, and it's important to reflect upon the legacies of those kinds of histories. Of course, sociologists have a good alibi for setting those problems aside, and obviously if one wants to be a sociologist in that sense one has to respect it, but I suppose that's another way of conjuring up my own ambivalence about what one loses when one isn't prepared to take a longer look. When I was a school boy doing my A-level history, we were doing the expansion of Europe, and I remember thinking at that time (I suppose I was 16 or 17) about what it meant for these Spanish and Portuguese navigators to stand in the prow of their boats bellowing the papal requirement into the darkness 3 miles off the shore. I've never seen any of this even hinted at in the constitution of globalization, and it's not because the historical materials aren't freely available. They have been for a long time, and so to be absolutely basically crude I think this is often a truncated and trivialized way of showing that the same cosy assumptions and developmental stories that sociologists tell themselves about the identification of modernity with the formation of European nation states can just persist happily and undisturbed. There are a number of very heavily routinized ways of answering that critique, but I don't think any of them work. That's been a big disappointment to me.

AA: It's interesting what Paul says. It's a reminder of two things. One, the work of one person, among many others, which relates to and forms part of the context of my own reacting to reading *The Black Atlantic*, is the work of my friend and colleague Rolph Trouillot who is constantly asking what if one wrote the whole history of not just a triangle but quadrangle of the two Americas, Europe and Africa, perceived from for example, Haiti. It's not just the trick of saying let's look from the margins. He has an idea specifically of what it means to put oneself where one is hearing that bellow. From there, Spain looks very different. I think that one of the very important things about *The Black Atlantic* was to shape that new look at space and, as it were, to reconfigure the geographies with which we teach. For example, in Area Studies in the US a lot of the understanding of the world is organized area by area. Thus my own training was in South Asian Studies, whereas the whole world could be seen as a series of oceanic formations, quite equal to those of land. The Indian Ocean is important to

see in this way, and God knows, the Atlantic, and then the Pacific Rim and its peculiar histories and so on. Some people are beginning to think like this. They just drop the land markers, not that there is anything wrong with them, but there is so much created around them. If you just start with water, then the whole picture changes. Then there is the big question, which has been a troubling and challenging one for me in recent years, which is how to write the positive statements about globalization, knowing full well the difficulties with these things, without appearing to fetishize the present – in other words, one must attend to the global that existed before. The question is: how do you both recognize that continuity, in different parts of the world, *and* speak for breaks, for changes? That's a deep and difficult question, but the first step is of course not to act as if the history of globalization begins in 1970, any more than the history of capital.

There's something that I'd want to throw in about my own project. The way I find comfort and illumination, wherever I find the formulaic dead end that Paul was talking about, is twofold. One is that I see this recent book of mine as an effort to bring back to what in the US one would call the social sciences, ideas from cultural studies. These ideas open up old and classic questions – of identity and of nationalism – that have been around forever. But these can be asked and answered I think, richly and differently, informed by 15 years of work in feminism, and media, and race, and so on. So that's in one way where I see my project, and where I find things that are helpful. And this enables me to address social scientists, even if I think their social science is faulty, and I think that's important. The other thing I wanted to say which is not so clear in my work, but is very much on my mind in respect to globalization, even more than the important and positive debate about its present or its past, or its occluded geographies, and this ties up with some institutional work that I'm involved with, at the University of Chicago, is to see whether and how one can draw in scholars or intellectuals, anybody who is thinking critically about these matters, from other places and to ask them: what really matters to you? Is the 'g' word good? So for example, in Africa scholars I know will often say it is not a good word, they don't like its sound, the way it's tied up with structural adjustment. They have other ideas about it too, but basically they see it as something worrisome both as a process and as an academic term which is floating around. So I'm interested not just out of the broad liberal impulse to say 'What do other people think?', but actually I think that this process peculiarly demands that we should first ask that question. I think I have done very little of that so far, but it informs my sense of what is wrong with this or that theory in a way that I can't yet articulate, because I know there are people in Japan, in Kuwait, in every place I know, who have a picture of this large 'thing' and its forms.

*PG:* I agree with that absolutely. There's something else that I wanted to say which I think that draws out, which is a question about imperialism, and the abuse of notions of postcoloniality which assume that we now inhabit a safe

space beyond the grasp of all of those dynamics. I think you talk for many of us in the way that you mention questions of debt, and the relationship between the overdeveloped countries and the underdeveloped countries. I think that's right, but I'd also want to link it specifically to the argument about American imperialism, I mean, now I've been very critical and I would want to be very critical of the anti-American elements in English social science and social history. But we are left with the political dynamics and periodization of American imperialism. This is something that I've begun to think about in approaching the Cold War, the constitution of black intellectuals and their critical reflections on geo-politics during the Cold War period. I think that we're in a position now to see the constitutive force of the Cold War period in a much more sustained and thoughtful way, and I'm sure that when we begin to do that it will transform all sorts of things about the way that we understand the idea of globalization.

AA: Again the time and space issues come together. There's a question of the locations of these theories – disciplinary locations, national locations and so on – which are always important, but with globalization, possibly especially important. The optics and ontology are really very intimately linked. In my own work I've wanted to put some distance between my style of expression, which can be loosely seen as postmodernist and so on, and my actual account. I would like to see people engage with the account. Everything is not flowing and fluxing; that position seems, to me, thoughtless. So I have taken pains to make positive statements. I think it is important to say what I think, *definitely*, from the belly of the beast, from anthropology, or from American social science, which are not other people's locations. This century is about to end and is now becoming, if you like, historical, and the second half, which is substantially the story of the Cold War, is a large historical story which we may be for the first time in a position to prevent being arbitrarily divided among the fields, or periods, so that some specialists monopolize some decades. Very few historians write about it, and of course they should. I think the idea is worthy of some collaborative work. I think that it is important to reflect collectively both on the Cold War, and on the position of the US, which is still a looming force, not least in defining the terms on which topics get engaged in other places. A note on that is never enough – to say 'note that the US academy has put x on the agenda' – because that power is not unrelated to other things about the US and its force.

VB: Could I press you Arjun to say something about the issue of reterritorialization in relation to ideas of movement around the globe. There's a little phrase in your work on the production of locality where you talked about the implosion of forces within cities, and you do a list – Belfast, LA, Sarajevo, Mogadisho – it was one of those moments when you're reading and you think that 'yeah'. Globalization tends to be seen as a kind of movement 'out', the connection of London with Tokyo, with New York, and it seemed

that your use of the idea of reterritorialization was partly because you were turning attention to the way in which these processes have created cities where identities and affiliation were actually implosive.

*AA:* Absolutely. In some of my early work, drawing partly unconsciously on Deleuze, I used the ‘d’ word – deterritorialization – like other people did, and was of course instantly reminded that there’s not only de- but reterritorialization, and I thought, yes, that’s quite right. Indian, or South Asian, populations in the US reterritorialize, but they are also involved in the politics of India, so they are reterritorializing in more than one place. It’s really very important – refugees move, but then they can be in camps for 20 years – that’s reterritorialization! Not the best kind but ... Then on a different register there’s the other question which you put nicely that globalization can seem expansive – but as somebody said, there are flows, but there are also bumps. There’s on the one hand that sense of reaching out, connecting, and linking which I think is very important, even for poorer people – you can go and be a fitter in Dubai from being a sweeper in Bombay – that’s not a minor matter. But on the other hand, something I’m struggling with especially in relation to the work I’m doing on violence – and I can only draw on geological ideas here – is the way that smaller spaces are being deformed by the pressure of the others. That pressure makes certain kinds of cities not just violent but violent in certain ways. What I want to talk about is the folding in of national violence, partition and so on, into cities in very concrete ways, so that that in Bombay, for example, one street ‘is’ Pakistan, to put it crudely. You have to see that both spaces and subjectivities have been deformed in the technical sense, because things are folded in, so the implosion idea is trying to catch that phenomenon without falling into the use of metaphors that are too biological or too organic ... language is limited.

*PG:* I would want to support that very strongly as part of the critique of the sociological parties constituted around globalization. I don’t like to use that word. There is a good sociological heritage of a different, a counter-tradition, not that I would call it that, but you could make it into one, if you were to look at people who have addressed these questions. I think for example of Ernst Bloch, and his argument about non-synchronicity in accounting for the particular quality of conflict and violence in which the fascist movement grew in Germany. And I’ve always been influenced by André Gorz and his notions of what he calls South Africanization: service sector employment, the return of domestic servants, the development of gated communities, the systematic privatization of important civic functions. I do prefer to name those processes South Africanization, although it’s harder to call them that now. That’s what I’ve always called them, and they rely on the spatialization of identities, the relationship between the territorialization of identity, the territorialization of power, particular kinds of configurations and sanctions on movement, and yet a premium placed on

movement because of the expansion of certain kinds of work, and so on. I always thought that South Africanization was a very useful heuristic way of pursuing these questions. Again one goes back to Fanon and the paradigmatic way that the configuration of space and power and identity in South Africa supplies him with an interpretive key to a whole range of different colonial, decolonizing and postcolonial instances. So I want to find another vocabulary for talking about these things even when I share a concern with the sociological agenda that is beginning to emerge under the sign of globalization.

*VB:* There are two remaining clusters of things that I would want to ask you both. The first cluster is about politics, because I wanted to come back, Paul, to the point earlier where I was wondering about the phrase you used – the ‘failure of embodiment’. I want to link that, if it’s not too big a leap, to the things that Judith Butler has been saying about performativity, the performance of gendered subjectivity and the trope of interiority. It feels like there is in your works the same kind of political impulse to find those moments of disjunction.

*PG:* I would very much like to make that connection, and I think Judith Butler has been very acute in drawing all our attention to the kind of moments of anxiety and instability in what we, often against our better judgement, and she sometimes against her own better judgement, sees as closed systems for the production of both meaning and subjectivity. So yes, I would want to make a similar kind of critique and identify the radical forms of anxiety that flow from uncertainty about racialized identities. I would want to link them to the remarks Arjun made earlier on about the authenticity question which you raised, citing Arjun at himself. For me, authenticity is something which very often circulates as an antidote to those anxieties. This raises a number of critical political problems in wanting to make an analogue of that ‘Butlerian’ critique. I’ll put this in its crudest and simplest form. The political configuration of race in America right now means that to take a deconstructive approach that is both radical and principled to the forms of certainty that people feel about the racialization of their lives and their victimage, is something that for some good historical reasons is very much associated with positions on the Right rather than the Left in America. It’s hard to recover the liberatory moment in the process of freeing ourselves from the bonds of raciology and compulsory raciality. That goal has raised all sorts of difficulties for me. She doesn’t have to negotiate these problems in quite the same way though I know that as part of the wider attack on ‘cultural studies’ and its betrayals she’s recently been accused of not really being political at all! That seems a quite extraordinary measure of how feminism has been forced into defensive positions. There are tactical limits to how much I’m prepared to be ‘out’ about my own radically deconstructive aspirations, with regard to race and its observance, but at the same time, I draw great inspiration from the rigour with which she has

made that argument about gender, bodies and discourse in ways that always open it to the question of race.

AA: I have a less clear sense of how my own work might link up with Judith Butler's work, which has pressed us hard on the question of performance, on the breadth of the resources upon which such a performance may draw, and how to think about that without evacuating politics. So she's stretched us all to the maximum, and therefore put a challenge to all of us, around gender particularly, but I think generally on other identity projects, in which she may be less engaged, i.e. racial or national or ethno-racial, and in my case on the whole question 'Hindu'. Having been brought up under that sign, which is now a deadly sign, I ask myself again 'Where did I enter into that sign, and its now completely deadly contemporary history?' So I guess I think two things: one is how to relate that kind of general ideal of performance to the work of imagination, trying in other words to draw in ideas about fantasy in relation to the global. Not the imagination in the older sense, but as a kind of modern work. This must be done, it's non-optional as it were. But second, how does that work then relate to the emancipatory implications of the idea of performance? So for example, when you see that great early film called *India Cabaret* by Mira Nair, which I refer to occasionally, there are these extraordinary recorded statements by cabaret dancers who are in fact prostitutes, sex-workers, in Bombay. Clearly what they are doing is very complicatedly placed in that space of performance, both in terms of femininity and in other ways. It's clearly not emancipatory in any obvious way. Where do we place these women in light of these questions about work, sexuality, representation and fantasy?

There is an interesting slightly more technical question, and perhaps I don't have the resources yet to deal with it, and which is something Judy Butler and others may have taken up and I just don't know about yet, and that is how performance as a question in terms of language, in pragmatics, discourse study and in Austinian terms, is related to the other sense of performance which comes out of the study of cinema, theatre and other bodily practices. These are not clearly connected although Bourdieu tried in his early work to bring together these two senses. I'm not clear about that ground – it's a genuine and broad ground – because if I could identify that then I would know how much weight the idea of identity as something you *perform* can carry. What I do like about it is that it goes back to the idea of the projected, that is, to say these things are not only ideologies, not only histories that people automatically propel and enact, but are things that are more visions, utopian and otherwise. In political movements, and we're talking here about politics of many kinds, but especially those relating to identity – not party politics, although perhaps that too – there is in this idea of performance a new angle on bodily actions as invitations or exhortations to others, as possibilities or instruments for mobilizing. That is what I would like to find out more about. Is that built in? Is it only sometimes that these

performances have that exhortatory or invitational quality that says ‘join me in my product’?

*PG:* In a kind of homage to Judy Butler, I’d like to call that ‘interpellative’ process soliciting! I think that is right. The question is how one holds to that openness, keeps the invitation open. I think that this is something which she has really tried to do. [The question is] how one holds to that possibility without being overcome by voluntarism? I think as her work has developed, she has moved this way and that to try and duck that sort of voluntarist appropriation of it, whilst at the same time holding on to the possibility of historical and structural features. I think that has been very difficult. I share her discomfort with voluntarism, although I don’t always share the ways that she has tried to describe the closures of that more systematic aspect. For me it’s very hard to do both simultaneously at a very high level of abstraction. We all struggle to do it in different ways.

*AA:* I think it does make a difference which location one comes from, so if one comes from say the cluster composed of gender studies, studies of sexuality, and feminist theory, as opposed to that of sociology, ‘race’ or anthropology, it sets the terms of the way in which one catches the issue, and the way in which one experiences the anxiety about it. If you come from South Asia Studies, all of these questions have to run through the sieve of some form of the Saidian critique, some form of the subaltern critique. If they don’t make it at all out of that [sieve] then you know something is wrong, or something more has to be engaged. Probably for some one like Judy, I imagine, there are other kinds of discussions in the US that have to do with gender and other philosophical problems which, if you don’t come to the other side of, the thing doesn’t work.

*PG:* I think what I would like to see is a way of complementing her enquiries into the histories of subjectivity with a kind of enquiry into the history of solidarity, and intersubjectivity. I think that’s more difficult really, and again raises the tension that you cited earlier between notions of personhood and histories of subjectivity. A lot of the time we use the word ‘identity’ to blur all of these. In a way what we need to do is to unpack that in a much more rigorous manner so that those different problems, some of which are more readily seen as questions of politics than others, come more clearly into view.

*VB:* Do you mean moments of solidarity both in the positive and the negative sense? Is that what you feel you are writing about now where you’re thinking about the Cold War and the responses to fascism and other forms of extreme politics?

*PG:* Yes, and thinking not just about the Cold War, but about ‘hot’ wars too, war in general actually, and principles of fraternity and solidarity which are

explicitly contradicting other noble modern aspirations towards brotherhood, equality and liberation. I think one of the reasons I was drawn to the idea of fraternity as a problematic value was precisely prompted by Judy's work. I think the emphasis on fraternity as a particular value is something that in a very useful way troubles our understanding of authoritarian irrationalism cross-culturally. It takes us away from notions of patriarchy, forms of male domination according to the dynamics of power that derive from men's hold over women as husbands and fathers, into a rather different domain of a kind of collected masculine power, the value of brotherhood assumes a different shape and the psychodynamics of power are altered remarkably. There's a whole literature there that's useful and valuable – some of it by sociologists even! – some of it by sociologists in the 19th century even! – but it isn't always put together in that way. I'm thinking for example of Simmel's work on secrecy, fraternity and fraternal organizations or Weber's essay on ethics and fraternity, things of that kind.

AA: I am struck and very delighted at the interesting convergence between some of what I gather, Paul, you are up to now with this interest and a cluster of things of things that I am working on which centre on the question of ethnic violence. This is of course a very overcrowded field so I take it on with trepidation, but I'm now compelled to do it. With the enquiry into ethnic violence – with particular reference to Hindu–Muslim violence in India, but of course also trying to think about Eastern Europe, Rwanda and so on – I find myself asking questions which people have been asking for 15 years or so now, not least Ben Anderson but also others, concerning the issue of *affect* that surrounds nation. I have returned to the question of love of the nation, the question of how such a plainly abstract, contingent, artificial and violent form actually persuades people to live for it, to die for it. It's a classic question, of course, but I think we are now in a position to ask it again, and to ask about the role of violence, both in the macro sense – warfare, mobilization, conscription – which has been pointed out by others, and less discussed, in the everyday practices of violence. One of the things that I will be talking about this week, at SOAS, is arson, or burning, which is very frequent in public acts of violence. What is it doing? It's very much part of everyday life, it's not a macro-historical statement ... it's one example of a problem that I hear underneath or between the things you're saying, Paul, I hope rightly: what is the economy of sentiment surrounding the nation form?

In turn this question opens up the propaganda question, which is always brought in as if once said, we know – 'that's because of propaganda' – but what do we know about propaganda? We know nothing ... when it works we don't know why it works. So what are the practices which produce affect for the nation?

Today I was reading Gordon Craig's review of a book on Hitler. Hitler said very early, in 1923 or so, that the important thing was that you have to have certain things in place and then teach people to hate, hate and hate

again. We also know that there is some complex kind of love involved. But we know little about either of these things. To me, they surround the question of ethno-national violence. In my current work, therefore, one question is: what are the practices through which this set of feelings about this entirely abstract form are produced, and more importantly, reproduced?

These questions tie up of course to classic concerns such as crowd behaviour, the work of Le Bon and others, people who had good ideas, but whose questions we may be in a better position to ask now. Questions about the micro-physics of crowds, for example, or about what parades do, or other institutional forms through which the movements of positive affect for the nation can be rehearsed. In some situations, we also have to attend to the way people, in Hirschmann's terms, 'exit', and say, 'Hang on, I don't care for this bloody thing, I'm gone from here.'

*PG:* I agree, absolutely. I'm much more inclined to think about the sort of iteration of hate as a much more substantial component of what an irrational authoritarian movement does, how it works with its members, how it manages its own institutional life. That is, to see those forms in their positivity – it's difficult for me. What's most powerfully connected with what I'm doing at the moment from how you've described your project is this question of love, and how bad I think we've been as social scientists in thinking about love, and thinking about the forms of love. I had all sorts of trouble when I tried to name it homophilia or whatever, because people immediately accuse me of betraying a project in queer theory, I suppose, which suggests that what counts most about this is the specifically erotic dynamic involved in love between men, the forms of love that men practice when they have banished women, got women out of the way so they can get on with the very intense business of loving each other. I still think that what's most important there is the idea that that form of love might be extremely compromised and destroyed by the erotic dynamic, and a great deal of work, a great deal of technology, is invested in managing and containing that problem. That interests me a great deal.

*AA:* It connects with issues of remembering and forgetting, that can play into this question of the economy of love for these abstract, large projects or institutions. There is the issue of what it takes to accomplish or to sustain that love, and which everyday forms of it are models of the larger forms. I think, coming back to the comment right at the beginning, that at least in anthropology of a type, but also in sociology, there has been the banishing of psychology, either classic Freudian psychology or American-style clinical psychology.

I'm now finding – as a personal note here – reading Žižek very useful, not because I either understand nor endorse the whole project, but because I think his alertness to how a kind of Hegelian retake of Lacan can directly illuminate the peculiar ironies of certain charged ideological situations, or those wonderful examples of communist trials where people have to confess

that they are communists but confess that they are not communist because they recognize the importance of such confessions.

*PG:* We learnt this from Kafka a long while back! I think there are elements of that which have been alive in the experience of the literary culture of Eastern Europe. People were under the pressure that you describe, an almost geo-physical kind of pressure.

*AA:* I think you're right. I'm speaking more of these disciplinary habits about where one can move. For me I have read little and understood less of the whole Lacanian thing, and I feel tempted to say well if that's the place that illuminates a kind of split subject – and it may not! – then I have to go for it. We have a disciplinary habituation to bracketing the question – either the psychological question, or the affect question, which is broader – which is to say 'well that's somebody else's job' so we'll take that theory and plug it in. I think that's a mistake.

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