Decoding Diaspora and Disjuncture

Arjun Appadurai in dialogue with David Morley

Abstract *The dialogue begins with a discussion of the development of processes of globalisation in recent years, offering a critique of some of the more hyperbolic claims about the death of geography. The discussion then moves to the question of the new conditions for the production of localities, and the role of new technologies in these developments. Further issues considered concern the politics of mobility, the question of differential modes of circulation and of continuing patterns of sedentarism and in some sectors of society. The relation between migrancy as a differentiated material process, and as a metaphor is discussed and these issues are then related to contemporary political debates in the USA, in the UK, India and South Africa. As the dialogue develops, attention turns to the question of how best to theorise the activity of audiences in different cultural locations in relation to particular structures of cultural power. The discussion also covers the particular status of readers and audiences within the context of postcolonial theory and concludes with a debate about questions of race, class, empire, consumption and resistance.*

This dialogue between Arjun Appadurai (then of the New School, New York and now of the Department of Culture and Communications, New York University) and David Morley (Department of Media and Communications, Goldsmiths College, London University) was conducted at the 'Reading After Empire' conference at Stirling University on 4 September 2008, with Arjun Appadurai participating via a video link from New York.

MEDIATION, GLOBALISATION AND TECHNOLOGY

DM Arjun, as our dialogue today is itself being 'globalised' by the technology of video-conferencing, I thought we might as well begin with questions of mediation and technology. I'd like to invite you to comment on how you see things as having changed in these respects, in the ten years between the publication of *Modernity at Large*[1] and *Fear of Small Numbers*.[2] The first book predates the high moments of both globalisation theory and of born-again McLuhanite technologically determinist cyber-discourse. Since then, of course, we have had the emergence of a kind of revisionism, in which people have begun to recognise not only that globalisation has a reverse gear, but also that even the Internet has got a geography, and it still matters *where* you are and how you can access cyberspace: so, while people like Joshua Meyrowitz argue that we now have 'no sense of place' maybe, in fact, there is a limit to the usefulness of those kinds of claims.

In that context, I've personally found it interesting to think about cyberspace in relation to the anthropological work of people like Danny Miller and Don Slater, when they talk about the need to understand cyberspace in the various different cultural contexts in which it is instituted. That means that we have to consider the *integration* of the virtual and actual realms. This aspect of things, I'd say, is now also showing up with the success of phenomena like *Facebook* and

UpMyStreet, as it's when the virtual is more closely articulated with the actual, that things really get interesting …

AA I think your question points to the need to find a place from which to speak in regard to mediation and technologies (old and new), which doesn't have us oscillating between the two (opposite) poles that are always available in these discussions. One polarity is the utopian (or 'Brave New World') perspective that says 'Everything is now transformed and everything that has gone before is as nothing'. The other one, which is what we might call the 'hyper-realist' or cynical position, says that 'we've seen all these things before' but that nothing has really changed so 'it's still just a matter of exactly the same old questions about power and inequality'. I think the question is how to find an intelligent and flexible middle position, which is not static (nor simply in search of some Golden Mean) but which leaves one open to processes which are actually still in their infancy, by anybody's definition. It would be unwise to prematurely pronounce these things to be phenomena we have always known, and it would be equally unwise to say that we understand them already. As my friend Keith Hart, who writes on the economy, says of the current cyberworld in which we live, it's a little bit like trying to understand the industrial revolution fully, if you were living in the first 50 years of it. We have to generate intelligent hypotheses and also be open to the empirical.

In fact, I think the way forward has two or three components. One is to say that new forms of mediation always crowd, complicate, extend and enrich the existing field of mediating practices, such as print - or indeed, plain conversation - and all the other forms in between. So that history never goes away, but I think the field is consistently changed by significant new elements. So, the telephone clearly changed everything else when it arrived: not that it deleted everything else, but it changed the status of other things. So that's the first general position on how I think about new technologies and the new worlds they generate.

But that said, I think one has to recognise that the world is not yet (and perhaps never will be) 'one place and one time'. It will always have some discontinuities, some heterogeneities, which is what always underlies the need for mediation and communication of any type. If we understood each other perfectly face-to-face, presumably we would cease to speak: in the end we would just look understandingly at each other. Now that's never happened. We've had a long time to practise talking and it's still not happened - and it won't happen with the new technologies either. But the question of how these things shape real life worlds is, I think, still critical.

MAKING THE LOCAL

That leads to two observations. One has been a perennial interest of mine, at least as far back as *Modernity at Large*, which is the question of localities. I used the phrase in 1996 'the production of locality' and I still think that is a very worthwhile way to think about some of these things. How do the new technologies and the new modalities of mediation complicate how localities are produced? How do people now make their worlds meaningful, habitable, negotiable - and how do they traverse them, using these technologies? Of course, it may not be *all* people that will do these things, but whoever *is* engaged in the task of 'making the local' has to take account of these technologies - and to take advantage of them - when and where possible.

So the first question, I think is how to avoid constructing an over-sharp contrast between

the global and the local. We should not fall prey to the temptation of saying everything is local - nor, obviously, to saying everything is global. Rather, we should ask: how exactly, do the new horizons of distance and 'reach' affect the local, the everyday, or the quotidian?

The second question follows from the issue of localities - and methodologically, locality plays to the strengths of ethnography and anthropology, because we anthropologists have always been good with small scales, intimate worlds and so on. But the question of localities is especially complicated by the modalities of the virtual with which we now live. You mention the fact that it's not just that we have new ways of talking to each other (writing to one another, messaging one another, texting one another, etc) but that we also are producing whole new sites, spaces and forms of sociality and community. In this sense *SecondLife*, *Facebook* and all these social networking activities are, I think, in some peculiar way connected to the new genetic sciences of the modification of life. These are perhaps rather like *social* ways of 'experimenting' with the modification of life.

The study of the production of localities is a good way to look at the way the new mediations work. These technologies do offer new spaces and modes of building relationships and communities - even rebuilding the fabric of reality itself. While trying not to be mystified immediately by the claims of these technological forms, we must also avoid any built-in cynicism about what they might do or say. So - localities, virtuality and sociality, for me, would be the 'anchor-points' of a broad discussion about the new technologies of mediation, in their various applications.

THE POLITICS OF MOBILITY

DM I think the debate about the global and how it impacts (differentially) on various 'locals' has quite a profound parallel with the earlier discussions in relation to the issue of cultural imperialism, about the media's influence or power over its audiences.
Can I now move you from the technological to the question of the demographic? If ours is an 'age of mobility' as so many people say, *how* new is this?

Let me give you an example of what I mean. Here we are in Stirling, in southern Scotland, very near to Hadrian's Wall, which was once the northern edge of the Roman empire. As we are at a postcolonial studies conference, I feel that some reference to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is obligatory, but it is in fact, the preamble to the story rather than its conclusion to which I will refer. In it, you will no doubt recall that the narrator talks about the time when 'London was also one of the dark places of the earth' for the Roman soldiers guarding the Empire. By invoking Conrad in this particular way, my point is to signal the radical potential for the long-term mutability of positions, in relation to questions of empire and colonisation, in this location as much as anywhere else. Moreover, just before coming to the conference, I found an essay by Seneca, written in the middle of the first century AD, in which he writes about how, as he puts it 'nowadays, everywhere, people are of mixed and imported stock and you will hardly find a single country still inhabited by its original natives': he is already claiming *in AD 50* that mobility is (already) a profoundly normal phenomenon.

To put it the other way round, but to use another UK example (which may, in this respect, be a very different place from North America), the empirical fact of the matter is that more than 50 per cent of the UK population still live within 5 miles of where they were born - i.e. for many people, it's still a very sedentarist culture. In that context, can I ask you to revisit the question

of the mobility of people - the 'ethnoscapes' part of your well-known model? I do apologise for the question, because I can imagine that there must be points when you think that the 'scapes' model is the one thing you personally want to escape from, but in the context of the conference we can't really avoid it!

AA Yes - maybe we should add a sixth 'scape' called an 'e'scape or an 's'scape'!...

CRISES OF CIRCULATION - AND OF SEDENTARISM

DM What I was interested in was that in *Fear of Small Numbers* you formulate all this in a slightly different way. You talk there about how we now face a 'crisis of circulation' and you talk about how 'the logics of circulation are growing ever more diverse and disjunct, in spatial scope, in speed and in tempo'. I'd just like to invite you to gloss that a little bit more if you could …

AA Your question presses all of us to ask 'where does the *sociology* of this stand?'

I think it's a very good 'cut' into that idea. So let me begin by reflecting on what is very much on our minds these days, here in the United States, which is last night's speech by Sarah Palin [in August 2008, in the middle of the presidential election campaign - DM]. Now there is a demographic she is speaking to which is powerfully real. After her speech, those of us who are hoping that Obama will win - and transform the nature of things in the US, the way the US both acts and is seen in the world - were very sober - why? Because she gave a speech that, by all accounts, was very rhetorically effective for her immediate audience. The media pundits, even if reluctantly in some cases, had to say things like 'a star is born'. In other words, they had to concede that something had occurred. They presumed that the TV audience, and the invisible conference audience to whom she was actually speaking, was certainly galvanised - even if only in the mode of 'preaching to the converted' in the latter case. And then they raised the big question of how many people, who were *not* converted yet, might come to think again about all this. If you look at someone like Palin, both individually and generically, she has a very particular demographic in mind and she has got to *drive* that demographic as deep and wide as she can: she has to 'broadcast' that narrow demographic as forcefully as she can.

What is that particular demographic? Well actually it's not really that different to the example you gave from the UK. My wife, Carol Breckenridge, who some of you will know through the journal *Public Culture*, has a family in upstate New York, very close to the border with Canada. They live in the country, between Rochester and Syracuse. People there don't move very far, except in relatively unusual circumstances, like going to war, for example - joining the forces and going to Iraq. Otherwise, people tend to stay within 30 to 100 miles (if not quite as near as 5 miles) of where they were born. That still means that they remain very close by - and the family is infinitely more important to them than many outside observers realise about the US. By that I don't mean 'family values' in any ideological sense. I just mean *family*.

'FAMILY VALUES' AND THE RIGHTS OF OTHERS

To risk a small aside on the whole 'family values' business, it places a particular idealising 'spin' on the family - which is still a very real thing in the US. The family is divided, it is difficult,

it's rent with challenges today and it bears enormous burdens. But is very much *there* and it's partly there *because* people don't move that much - especially, ordinary working people. All this is one way of saying that the sociology of relatively *non-moving* populations remains vitally important. The US - which is often imagined to be very plural, very fast-moving, very mobile, very volatile - is, in fact, sociologically, less so than it seems. This is exactly why we have these kinds of conservative values that come into play in politics - such as those espoused by Sarah Palin - which can be very effective and very resonant for many working people.

Conversely, take the word 'maverick' which was being kicked around by Senator McCain and is now applied to Palin: 'maverick' is an idea that is anchored in the concept of the American West. It is a very forceful idea that says people who move quickly are *not* just 'unstable' or opportunistic - they are adventurous and they are (potentially) even heroic. These are very powerful ideas and they appeal to relatively 'fixed' audiences. So my first thought is that we would be badly beset if we imagined that the receivers of the bulk of the messages that float around in our media worlds are themselves as 'unfixed' as we may sometimes suppose them to be.

That said, it's also my impression both in the US and in Europe, that there are very few places which have not experienced some serious movements of populations, over the last 10 to 15 years. These previously stable localities clearly are experiencing all kinds of anxieties. So the big European swing to the political Right, all the way from Italy through Austria to the Scandinavian countries, has to be put in this context. So I think it's fair to ask then, what is happening to these populations that both are, and see themselves as, relatively fixed - and sometimes that means being fixed in ways they don't like. You know, they feel they've been there a long time and other people keep coming in from Asia, from the Caribbean and elsewhere, disturbing things for them.

But as you say, the question is what is *new* here? Some of the issues *do* pertain specifically to this new era. For example, take the fact that young Muslim men in the UK can now hear speeches from mosques in Iran or Pakistan in 'real-time'. This is very consequential, because it means that their 'second lives' (the religious lives which they actually believe in) become 'first lives'. In the case of the young *Jihadis,* the 'disorder' which we can't understand is based on the fact that what we think of as their 'second lives' are actually, for them, their *first* (and most important) lives.

However, the other thing which I tried to emphasise in *Fear of Small Numbers* is that ideas of the nation, democracy, and most of all the ideology of human rights (which is markedly new and about which Seneca would have known nothing!) now make it possible for all kinds of moving populations to claim not only humanity, but specifically *material* rights in their new places of residence, even if they are refugees. That is a matter of worldwide resonance and consequence because, except in the most rigidly totalitarian societies, and certainly in all those which pay any lip-service to ideas of democracy, anyone who comes in can say that he or she has a legitimate claim on the polity, on resources, on welfare. That, I think, on the social side, is one of the biggest changes corresponding to those on the mediation/virtuality side of things.

MIGRANCY AS MATERIAL PROCESS AND METAPHOR

DM The other idea that I think is useful in this context is indicated by Doreen Massey's phrase about what she calls the 'power geometry' of all this movement. In that respect, I think she does

something rather similar to what Zygmunt Bauman and Ulf Hannerz do when they distinguish between the 'tourists' and the 'vagabonds' of this mobile era, or between the voluntary and involuntary cosmopolitans of our time.

To go back to *Fear of Small Numbers*, you talk there about how some people had perhaps seen your earlier work as a bit too 'cheerful', in relation to the supposed benefits of globalisation. You now talk of moving to a focus on what you have called the 'relations of globalisation, uncertainty and incompleteness'. What I'm interested in is how you talk there about minorities as the 'unfortunate reminders of the *failure* of the nationalist project' and what kind of status they therefore get, as a kind of symbol (for everybody among the settled population) of what globalisation is doing to their localities. I think that is a very productive direction in which to go (and it seems to me to chime closely with the concerns of other people, like Ghassan Hage). But can I hang two queries onto the end of that comment?

If there is sufficient that is new about all this to talk about it as an 'age of mobility' or as the 'age of the migrant', what *epistemological* consequences might that periodising statement have? Does that mean that we are then going to find ourselves having to do what Lukacs did for the proletariat, in relation to an earlier phase of capitalism and say 'Hey, the guys at the sharp end are best placed to know the truth about all this'? Do you have to then give some kind of epistemological privilege to the migrant perspective? Because, if so, I'd be very worried by the theoretical consequences of that move - the granting of epistemological privilege to the proletariat got Marxism into some very deep philosophical and ethical difficulties!

The other thing is how to properly distinguish between migrancy as a differentiated material process and migrancy as a kind of *metaphor*. That worries me, because some of my colleagues in cultural studies seem to fall into a sort of romantic valorisation of all forms of mobility, whereby migrancy is seen as inevitably a Good Thing - in the same way as intellectual curiosity or innovation are seen as good things. That is an impossible question, I know, but I'm sure you see the direction of my thoughts.

AA A wonderful intervention - and a very fair and timely question! I think we've had a long enough period for these questions to be posed not simply as parts of the intra-cultural wars *within* cultural studies. My general sympathy (and I'll tell you why, in just a second) is to be quite conscious about just that 'collapse' between the material and the metaphorical that you pointed to. Many of our good colleagues and interlocutors (I think of people as different as Nestor Garcia Canclini and Homi Bhabha) are sympathetic to keeping all those things on one continuum, even if they don't collapse them totally. That said, I think I'm a little more inclined to draw some lines between phenomena such as involuntary and voluntary movement. Then there are the implications of that for (as you very wisely put it) how we think and how we locate our ways of knowing, in relation to the question of ethics - i.e. what we do, as a consequence of what we know - because epistemology, politics and ethics are all deeply connected.

At the end of *Fear of Small Numbers* I allude to the fact that, in my own case, I have been doing work for the last few years with a group of activists concerned with housing, among the poorest of the urban poor in Mumbai, and also in a number of other countries worldwide, many of them in the African subcontinent. In the South African context the main focus there was on demolition and eviction - on the fact that up to 100 million people (which is a very large number, even if still a small percentage of the world population) are today, in some serious

way 'displaced' in regard to housing. It's not only the squatters, the slum dwellers and so on of hundreds of cities, but it is also every variety of internally displaced person or refugee, from Darfur to Baghdad. If you think about how many people have had their roofs blown off their heads, it is a very large number. So, for all these people, whether they move or not (and they do move in places like Darfur, while they do not in other places, like Baghdad) it seems very tricky to consider their forms of displacement, dislocation or what I think of as 'de-housing' in the same way that one might think of people who have access to more 'elective' or privileged forms of movement.

I think that the word 'involuntary' demands our respect. It demands our attention, it demands its own sociology, its own epistemology, and it demands its own ethics. I just had the privilege to read a book by an author called Adriana Cavarero, who's a prominent Italian feminist critic whose book is simply called 'Horrorism' (as in 'horror movie'). In it, she is trying to make a distinction between terror and horror. The book speaks to what she calls the 'epistemology of the victim' by which she means that if terror is all about the perpetrator, the 'victim experience' is primarily the speechlessness and the fixity that comes from horror - not the flight and motion that comes from terror. I think that however much we may have reason to emphasise what Bauman might call the 'liquidity' that attends dis-location, exile and motion (and there are certainly benefits to that point of view) it cannot be done in ignorance or avoidance of the even more pressing need to locate the epistemology of the genuinely dispossessed, 'de- housed' and de-humanised.

DE-CENTRED AUDIENCES AND THE WORK OF THE IMAGINATION

DM I want to stick with this question of the 'involuntary', though in a less dramatic modality than that of the victims of the terrible situations which you describe. I remember when I was reading the beginning of *Modernity at Large*, there's a point where you're talking about your own childhood, growing up in India, consuming first of all British imported culture, then North American culture, and it reminded me of two parallel experiences. The Latin American writer Manuel Puig talks about growing up in Buenos Aires, and says that, at a certain point in his childhood, he'd seen so many American films that he came to believe that reality itself was normally spoken in English and that anything else - i.e. anybody *else's* reality - was a kind of dubbed, or subtitled, or somehow 'second-hand' version of the Real Thing. Then, in a different way, the Turkish writer Orhan Pamuk talks about going to the cinema in Istanbul as a child and he says that, to him and his friends, it didn't matter exactly which country the films came from, as long as they came from that magical place called 'The West'. So, the meta-message that *he* got from his own cinema-going experience was that where he was (which had, of course, once been the mighty imperial city of Constantinople) was now a very long way from the Centre of the World.

This is where I want to go back to the question of voluntary and the involuntary, in relation to what you say in *Modernity at Large* about volition and imagination. I just wonder, from some of the comments you've made today, whether you would take the same position now that you did in that book, in relation to Bourdieu and his idea of the 'habitus'. You say in *Modernity at Large* that the idea of the 'habitus' has 'much less force these days, because stress must be put more on improvisation, which no longer occurs within a relatively bounded set of thinkable postures, but is always skidding and taking off, powered by the imagined vistas of mass-mediated master

narratives'. Now I wouldn't want to deny the very good sense of all that, but it just sounds to me, from your earlier comments, that maybe you're now 'glossing' that position a little differently. Perhaps you're now inclined to give a little more emphasis to Bourdieu's ideas about the 'weight of the world' - which, I know, can sound like a terribly oppressive and deadeningly deterministic position, but nonetheless, evidently has a very important sense to it. So - has your own position changed in some way in relation to this issue, I wonder?

AA That's a very good place to 'locate' how I'm trying to think about these issues now. I consider Bourdieu to be one of those people to whom I can always fruitfully return, so this is a splendidly specific way to do that! I think that I would probably be happy writing my earlier sentence again, but I think that how I would 'inhabit' it, and what I would like others to take away from it, might now be different. I do still think it's the case that the kind of 'sluggishness' invoked by the concept of habitus is nowadays, in *general* terms, more offset by the possibilities of improvisation. The only thing I would add, as a kind of footnote (and it does indicate a significant change, I think) is that the way that sentence is put, especially the second part of it, suggests that the 'skidding' and the work of the imagination is always both voluntarily done and liberating in its consequences. What I would say today is that many people *have* to improvise: if you're in a refugee camp and the price of bread is going up by magnitudes of a hundred every 15 minutes, the way you think better not be stuck in some 'habitus' that's even two weeks old, or you're likely to be dead!

It's not exactly like Puig or Pamuk (or for that matter, myself) who had the privilege of a (cinematically) 'expanded' view of their worlds but, when they emerged into the light, after going to the cinema, then paid the price of feeling that their own lives were actually somehow 'derivative'- and that they were coming back to something rather second-rate, having just inhabited (imaginatively) the 'Real' of Hollywood or New York. This other situation - of the populations that are being reduced, dis-located, de-recognised - and in some cases, demolished or decimated - means that while improvisation certainly has to occur, it's then part of a 'survival apparatus' in which the imagination *has* to be mobilised, simply in the business of getting from today to tomorrow. It's not then necessarily about fulfilling all your possibilities, though it *can* be, because I do think these practices - in refugee camps, in slums, even in places under aerial attack - also contain the elements of what I would call the 'capacity to aspire', which involves the ability to still experience the sensation of hope, etc. But that is often done under considerable duress, and that's the qualification I would now like to bring, not exactly into the sentence you quote, but into the 'unpacking' of the implications of that sentence.

DM Pamuk is a particularly interesting case, because, of course, what he did with the privileges that he had, for a long time, was to decide not to move at all - to stay put. He was in a position to carry on living in the family house in which he'd had grown up, and as I understand it, other things being equal, that would still be his preference. But, of course, now that's no longer possible for him. He has been frightened away from Istanbul by the ferocity of his critics and it's no longer possible for him to live there. So, even someone who was once at a very high degree of privilege can, in a certain political situation, find that a certain choice is no longer available - that, quite literally, their house is no longer habitable. But I think the broader point that I was trying to move us towards was the question of power. For me, the issue is how to add into

your sentence the question of who is in a *position* to imagine going where - and this raised the question of 'situating' both the imagination and the volitional elements in the equation.

TEXTS AND AUDIENCES IN POST-COLONIAL STUDIES

Let's turn now to the question of the media, of the text, its readings and the question of audiences. Now this is a bizarre business for me, because I began my research with audiences a very long time ago, in the 1970s. I work in a field in which, during the '80s and '90s, not only did the author 'die' (cf Barthes), but the *text* also died, as it was theoretically 'dissolved' into an infinite number of possible readings which audiences might make of it. But, as Derrida's 'hauntology' tells us, these discarded ideas often come back in ghostly forms, to trouble us.

These days, if I'm in a media studies conference, I have to spend my time *defending* textual analysis, because many people in the field seem to have totally abandoned it, as if texts themselves no longer mattered. In that context, I say 'come on folks, the encoding/decoding model says that the text has a structure!' It is not *equally* open to any old reading that you might want to make of it. It's more resistant to some readings, and anyway, everybody *can't* make just any reading they like, because that possibility depends on what cultural resources they have got at their disposal. Do they speak the language, are they familiar with the generic codes? So, in the context of media studies, I spend my time fighting a kind of rearguard action in defence of the text. Then I attend postcolonial studies conferences, and I'm bemused because there I face the opposite problem - that there don't seem to be any *actual* audiences in postcolonial studies - only texts, floating about in 'hybrid' spaces! In that context, everything seems to still largely be dominated by a very traditional model of the isolated scholar alone with the text, figuring out its meaning, and then 'deducing' its probable consequences for an implied set of audiences, without feeling the need to research the matter empirically.

So, I just wonder how you see these questions? Because my 'rider' to that comment would be that, in so far as audience theory does seem to have made an impact in postcolonial theory, it seems to have only done so in a rather problematic mode. On the whole, it seems to me to have been imported into postcolonial studies in a manner that *romanticises* the freedom of the reader, or decoder. The implicit position is more or less 'don't worry about the structure of the text, because the audiences are going to indigenise it and everybody is going to make marvellously creative readings of it'. So, from that perspective, whatever the sins of the industry or the message, the presumption is that there the audience will 'redeem' it - and to be frank, that seems to me rather like the road to nowhere!

AA My feeling is that we still have some dilemmas to face about a couple of things here. One is that, in so far as postcolonial cultural studies were strongly affected by all the new literary criticism, there has been a tendency to interpret *everything* through the text, including the reader (that is, of course, the *implied* reader). This is, evidently, quite different from studying *actual* readers, ethnographically, in the manner of scholars like Janice Radway. But I think, in defence of our literary critical friends, there are a whole host of different understandings about how the reader can be 'read off' from the text. There are people who simply study the text in isolation, and I think that really is not very helpful. But then there are others who use the text to intelligently construe the position it offers to its implied reader. Then there are the people

like Janice Radway who said 'let's look at communities of readership', and then there are the people - yourself included - who have said that there are yet other ways to reach audiences and study how they function, and how they operate. But I still have the feeling that there is a kind of unresolved question here, about how these different ideas of the reader, the respondent, the viewer and the consumer, etc. can be brought into a fruitful relationship, without it all being reduced to some kind of 'zero sum' game.

My own sense, as an anthropologist and ethnographer, is that there is a lot left to be done in this regard. Let's take, for example, the viewer as constituted in the field of Indian film studies, which is a thriving field, both in its more popular, journalistic modes and in its nose-bleedingly theoretical manifestations. Being both a Bombay boy and a Bollywood boy, I have been working for 10 years now on a little paper on the single phenomenon of 'repeat viewing' of Indian films. It's widely known that a hit film in Hindi cinema is one that people either actually have (or claim to have) seen anywhere from 10 to 50 times. This is certainly something that you would think was worthy of an article or two, but I guarantee you that it has hardly been studied. So, Professor Appadurai is still working on his little article about the pleasures of repeat viewing - and I must admit that I don't have a very good method, because you can't ask people a lot about it, apart from simply asking something about the songs which people, evidently, enjoy hearing again and again. But my short 'theory' which I'm expressing here in the form of an aphorism - or a joke - is that in India, no one sees a hit film for the first time – it's always (already) for the second time. So a film which produces, for its viewer, the effect, on first being seen, of seeming like the *second* time, is the film that is going to be a hit. So, this is as far as I've got, and I have already revealed my 'trade secret'!!

DM Thank you, Arjun - I actually have a whole list of other questions that I was going to tease you with, but I think we now must give the microphone to your larger audience here, to ask their own questions.

AA May I make one suggestion? Is it possible that I could listen to several questions and then give a kind of 'collective response' so that we allow as many people as possible to speak in the time available?

CLASS, RESISTANCE, READERS AND ORIGINALS

Q1 Thank you very much for that really insightful commentary on all these issues. But one of the key terms that I feel was missing from the discussion was the issue of the nexus between race and class. The degree of expansiveness of one's vision and of one's imaginative capacity has so much to do with class. When we think about the kind of globalised, privileged class, race becomes much *less* of an issue, but when we think about a globally underprivileged class of the dispossessed and the disenfranchised, then race becomes almost the *foremost* criterion. I'm thinking here of a really excellent book by Amitava Kumar called *Bombay, London, New York* where he talks about how 'the very poor may be materially disenfranchised by advertising and may hold back very little from their imagination'. It's this idea that they have less of a critical ability to analyse the media that is presented to them, which they perhaps absorb more 'involuntarily' than anybody else. So I guess my question is, what are your ideas on class, in terms of this kind

of globalised media and to what extent do you think that those media exacerbate these huge class differentials?

Q2 I'd just like to comment on the notion of 'resistance'. David Morley was explaining that whether he attacks or defends the text depends on the context in which he is speaking - and he has also both attacked and defended different senses of the idea of resistance. I would like to hear your comments on the role of the concept of 'resistance' in the field of postcolonial studies.

Q3 Can I just add a question: here we are at a conference called 'Reading after Empire' and we've mainly talked about audiences *in general*. But something you said a moment ago suggested you were worried about clumping together concepts of audience, consumer and reader. Is there something distinctive about a reader of a *text*, as opposed to an audience or a consumer, understood in more general terms?

Q4 My question is about this notion of the West being the 'original' and the East being the 'copy' or, in a sense, the Other. But the other *is* only the Other when it is 'discovered' by the original, isn't it? Why do you think that this dichotomy is still being used? Because, surely, if western cinema is presented as the 'original' - the question is, how did it *become* the original - since it can only be seen *as* that, once it has been demarcated against the other?

AA Thank you very much for all these questions - all to the point and all on areas where we need to continually reassess our positions. Let me take up the issue of class first of all. Again, I offer only a sense of a general direction, which I fear I've not been able to develop very much in my own work, but I have always had a hope that I could do something more along these lines, coming out of my earlier work on *The Social Life of Things*[3] which made me think a lot about consumption.

What I would say today is still something like what Baudrillard and, in a different way, Bourdieu lead us towards. But I think we could do a lot more to open up the question of class from the consumption side. In other words, I think that in many of the situations that I inhabit (in Mumbai for example, or New York for that matter), you can still apply the old idea developed by Max Weber of what he called '*Stände*' or 'status classes'. This is to do with ideas of class based on lifestyle: not classes based on their relationship with the means of production, but as they are applied in the field of consumption.

I can give you a very simple example: if you are a delivery boy, working in the business district of Mumbai, and you are in an elevator with some executives, you might be *dressed* very closely to how they are dressed and you may be doing all sorts of other things modelled on what they do, except that you might well still be living in a hovel somewhere. So in that context, during the day, you occupy a space of practice (or as Doreen Massey says, a position in the geometry of power) which is very different from where you sleep at night. Now, the normal tendency would be to say, that's a minor, ephemeral and unimportant question - that, in the end, the important thing is how much you earn, because after all, you are ultimately just an office boy.

But I think there's something to be said for a serious analysis and theory of class considered from the consumption point of view. It is hard to do this, and the methods are not straightforward. One issue is - the consumption of what? Should it be the consumption of *anything*? Specifically of

texts, books, cinema? Or should it be clothes, food, shelter, or all of the above? But this difficulty is no more overwhelming than that of Marx's original project. I would say, simply, in regard to class, that we need to enrich our picture of how consumption also *generates* classes, both locally and globally. Classical, production-based ideas of class also need some updating in the world of the services-based, rather than manufacturing-based, economy. I think we could open up a theoretical landscape in which class remains very important - but how we understand it, where we take it and how we study it, might push us beyond the limitations of the original Marxist model - which is still the most powerful analytic model of class and politics that we have. I'll leave the question of class there. It's very important, but it's also important to widen what we do with these concepts.

The question of resistance follows directly from that: again, it is a big question and there has been a lot of argument about it in many fields, including anthropology. Has it been overdone as an idea? Well, you *can* end up seeing resistance too often, in too many places, even when one *appears* to be seeing compliance. There is a rich body of work (such as Jim Scott's work on 'hidden scripts', or Paul Willis's work on 'learning to labour') which, after a while, did create a certain sort of theoretical paralysis - because seen in one way, even the most extreme forms of compliance *could* be argued to conceal what is actually radical resistance - and one doesn't always know how to tell the two things apart. So I would say again, this is no reason to stop being interested in resistance, but I do think we need some new rhetoric here - and some new sobriety. It's a little bit like what we were saying about globalisation at the beginning. One doesn't, on the one hand, want to say, that everyone is now fully co-opted or, as Marcuse might have put it 'repressively tolerated', nor on the other hand, does one want to claim that everyone is resisting all the time, even if they appear to behave like collaborators!

With regard to the question of reading and the audience, we need to find ways to address these issues that, to my knowledge (and I stress that qualification) don't quite exist yet. We need to find ways to combine theories of the reader, the viewer and more broadly, the consumer and at the same time, to better distinguish between categories like the audience and the mass. But we do need to develop these methods, so that we can pick up the fine grain of these matters more effectively. In that way we can then perhaps do accounts of 'resistance' which are 'falsifiable', if I may use a very old-fashioned term. That way, I could say of some particular case, 'I think *that* is resistance', and you could tell me how and why you disagree - which would, at the very least, be a productive form of argument! I'll leave that question there and just conclude with that of the reader and the question of the original.

I was recently in South Africa and there is a group of us working on Ghandi's famous text *Hind Swaraj*, written in 1908, as he left onboard a ship from South Africa to India. *Hind Swaraj* may be a founding text of Indian nationalism, but it was not produced in India. It was produced in the diaspora - in fact, produced on board a ship. We are now living more than 100 years after that text, and I am very enthusiastic about re-examining the question of things like printing, reading, and presses - re-examining what we might call the Benedict Anderson question. But I want to read them into the discourse of *diasporic* public spheres, such as those of the Indian Ocean, that Gandhi went from one end of to the other. As to where we might take the question of the reader and where, in turn, that leaves the question of mass audiences, I'm not quite sure. But I think that, in the end, we come back to an interest in how print media, for example, produce and inflect public spheres which may not be as well bounded as we imagined them

to be in earlier cases, like the old national public spheres of the twentieth century. They may perhaps be oceanic, or they may be inscribed in quite other kinds of geographies.

Finally, on the question of the 'original' and the Other, I can only say that in the end, there is a kind of 'Turtles All the Way Down' aspect to these issues: otherwise, it's rather like how the debates about Orientalism, as you may recall, were stalled by a small crop of studies of Occidentalism. There is a point at which one has to just get off the bus, as it were. As the saying has it 'you pay your money and you take your choice' - you just have to decide where to get off, among these ultimately undecidable dilemmas and infinite regressions. Actually, I think I will stop here, where this metaphorical bus stops - with the question of Orientalism - and leave you to continue this challenging discussion. Let someone else 'do' the Other! But my serious response is that, of course, one has to understand that these things are mutually informed. Nothing descends from heaven and all these things are historically produced, in relation to specific interlocutors. But saying that should *not*, I believe, be an invitation to relativism, because although I may 'produce' my other, I do not do so exactly as I please, much less as the Other might please.

I will stop there. Thank you all for your questions, for your very generous invitation to the conference and for the inclusion of my voice and presence within it, from a distance, in this somewhat distorted and clinically mediated form!

NOTES

1. *Modernity at Large*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1996.

2. *Fear of Small Numbers*, Minneapolis, Universit of Minnesota Press, 2006.

3. *The Social Life of Things*, Cambridge University Press, 1986.