“Brexit Futures: a Brexit World’s Anxieties, Fears and Hopes”: a Response to Shakuntala Banaji’s “A Review of Victor Seidler’s Making Sense of Brexit: Democracy, Europe and Uncertain Futures”

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Published online: 8 April 2020

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Brexit Worlds

I was in Goldsmiths sociology department and it was October 31—Halloween—and the day that Boris Johnson had repeatedly said that ‘come what may’ the UK would be leaving the European Union today and that for him it was ‘do or die’ and if it did not happen he would ‘die in a ditch’. Some on the Tory right who were in the hard Brexit European Research Group—the ERG had said that had we not left Britain would ‘explode’ and that there would be riots in the streets. But none of this happened even though it was a mantra that had been so often threatened. It was part of a narrative world that had been created around Brexit by those who were determined to leave without a deal if necessary, because for them, it was the leaving itself that was a matter of faith and could alone allow Britain and its four nations to be free from what they had framed as the ‘shackles of the EU’, an allusion back to slavery showing how issues of race were at the unspeakable core of a hard Brexit.

With the date of the 31st October so firmly set in the nation’s mind and it being presented as a critical moment in which we would ‘leave or die’—there was a way that language had become an instrument that was deployed so readily in the tabloid press and in the wider media to capture our consciousness and frame an unbelievable world that felt endless and which we might desperately want to escape, but somehow felt trapped and obsessed with. It was in an uncanny time when we realised that what had been promised was not going to happen, and when our attentions have been displaced on the general election that had just been announced for December 12, that so many people, be they ‘leavers’ or ‘remainers’, felt an unspeakable anxiety about what all the threats had been about. For many discussions around Brexit—the ‘B’ word as it had been framed—were to be avoided, even if at another level they could feel inescapable.

This reply refers to the comment available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10767-020-09350-y>.

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This was a time when I re-read Shakuntala Banaji's generous and thoughtful review of my *Making Sense of Brexit*, though I later noticed that where I talked about 'uncertain futures' in the sub-heading she had replaced this, possibly unconsciously with 'Post-Truth Politics' that might have served as an alternative and which helps to focus on questions of truth in practices of social research. It was so helpful to read her review from a person who had done research on young people's responses, from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds across Europe to the Brexit issues.

She challenged me to reflect upon my own methodology in 'making sense' as a practice of social research and on the generational differences between us and the different histories of migration and displacement that might position us differently so offering different insights how to make sense of an ongoing and still unfinished economic, political and cultural crisis that we are living through that could bring the very existence of the UK into question, especially after the deal that Boris Johnson has negotiated with a border across the Irish Sea, leaving Northern Ireland in the EU customs union on better terms than those made available to Scotland.

As Banaji acknowledges, 'to make sense of' does not mean 'to justify' but it is an ethnographic practice that does want to engage voices from both sides, so disrupting the categories of 'leaver' and 'remainer' that seem to have been consolidated since the 2016 referendum, for many replacing traditional political party identities. Many social research methodologies might insist that you need to give time for events to settle and you can assess the data on voting patterns in an impartial and direct way if you wanted to produce more objective accounts. You need to stand back and give time for events to settle down before you can really begin the task of understanding, let alone explaining what we have lived through as vital social and historical events.

I had written a trilogy on cultural memory around particular events, including the events around Diana's death, 9/11 and the London Bombings of 7/7 which took their own time to trace how these events were to be remembered and memorialised in the years to come. But in each case, I was motivated by a sense of the disruptive character of the events and ways they served to challenge traditions social, cultural, economic and political frameworks. I found myself feeling that traditional narrative methodologies or ways that I had been trained into thinking of social research as a practice of secular rationalism left me unable to really make sense of the intensities of public mourning with so many ethnic minorities and LGBT communities coming on to the streets and taking public space to affirm their rights as citizens and to challenge traditional forms of authority as deference. As people took charge of the streets as citizens and microphones were handed to the people because journalists could no longer frame the multitudes on the streets as subjects of the crown, there was an appeal to a different vision of democracy and a new vision of citizenship and democratic accountability.

In engaging with the global event of 9/11 and the moves towards war in Afghanistan and the war in Iraq, and later in writing about the aftermath of the London bombings in *Urban Fears and Global Terrors: Citizenship, Multiculture and Belongings after 7/7*, I had to acknowledge how my training in social research had left me unknowing about Islam and the ways that new religious identities were being shaped that demanded us to rethink the disciplinary terms of a secular sociology as we learnt to engage questions of belief and religious faith. I had to learn to engage with issues of mass migration and displacement and how feelings of loss and estrangement can be transmitted transgenerationally. I had to be able to think about generational issues of belonging. In reflecting on these different *events*, I realised that I was thinking in real time—doing a form of live sociology that needed to be aware of shifting atmospheres and the ways that people were making sense, not only through

media but also through engaging what remained unspeakable in their own personal histories and memories of displacement.

In engaging in these different studies, I was thinking across the intersectionalities between gender, race, ethnicities and class, acknowledging how questions of gender, particularly questions around critical engagements around men and masculinities, had somehow fallen out of view in the 1980s and 1990s, as concerns that had somehow been 'deal with' or could simply be engaged as variables within particular data sets. There was a way that commitments to feminism and queer politics were taken to be intellectual in framing within research traditions that had become more distanced through ideas that experience was a discursive construction that often left us wary of engaging with our own emotional and psychic investments in the projects we were engaging in.

I felt fearful about the growing polarisation in the politics around the 2016 referendum and the influence of the far right that showed itself in the murder of Jo Cox on the very day that Nigel Farage introduced the poster that showed a long line of migrants supposedly moving towards the UK. This was in line with the leave campaign's invoking the immanent accession of Turkey to the EU and what this would mean for immigration into the country. We can still remember the shock of hearing about Jo Cox's murder, and it still helps shape the political atmosphere and the offensive and misogynist behaviour of Boris Johnson who dismissed women MPs' fears for their own safety as 'humbug'. This was a violent and dismissive language at the very moment when he was being charged with the impacts of his language in parliament on the street violence and internet abuse and so many women MPs were suffering, invoking the language that Johnson had used.

Brexit has been the project of a right-wing conservative masculinity that was seeking to remake Britain in its own image as a free-trade buccaneering 'Global Britain' that was free from its entanglements with its closest markets with which trading relationships and supply chains had been crafted over 40 years. The notions of 'taking control' of 'our borders, our money and our laws' which became the credo of the leave campaign resonating with dominant masculinities that identified their freedom and autonomy as control. There has to be control of the body politics in ways that continued the ethic that it is a dominant white European Christian masculinity that can legislate what is good for others.

This has meant that the Tory right has not had to engage with the multiple causes of the anger that people felt against a political establishment across political parties that had ignored the effects of deindustrialisation on traditional working-class communities and in the Tory coalition of 2010 had imposed years of austerity on top of years of neglect and the hollowing out of town centres and communities. People were disturbed not only at the pace of immigration but also about the lack of consultation with Blair's New Labour that had legislated what they thought was 'best for the country' without consulting people who had been affected, including the ethnic and racial minority communities that had migrated since the late 1940s.

Rather the Tory right did not really have to engage or understand the multiple causes of the leave vote, as long as they could promise to respect the result of the referendum. Banaji helpfully suggests that I could have done more to engage with Tory shires and explored in more detail their long hostility to Europe and how they carried nostalgic memories of what Britain used to be like and could possibly be 'great again'. I think this also has to do with a politics of whiteness and long-held suspicions of 'the foreign' and 'foreigners' that helped shape a post-war consciousness in which people learnt how Britain has stood alone against Hitler.

The memories of the Second World War which were invoked in films about Churchill and Dunkirk helped to fuel a fantasy that if only Britain could free itself from its entanglements

with the EU, then life would be less uncertain and threatening. I did try and explore some of these themes through the generational conflicts with a younger generation who valued their freedom to travel and work in different countries across Europe and so to make friendships and love across borders. An older generation had grown up feeling secure in sustaining borders and boundaries both within themselves and also in relation to others.

I wanted to give space to different voices so challenging prevailing remainder dismissals of those who had voted leave though giving them a chance to listen to different voices. I also wanted older leave voters to hear the visions of a cosmopolitan freedom that a younger generation had helped shape also through a liberal ethics of anti-discrimination that made them more accepted and opened to ethnic, racial, religious, sexual and gender differences. There were different visions of democratic futures also at work within the endless discussions around Brexit.

What was difficult to recognise was the enduring conflict that was to emerge between representative forms of democracy that had been affirmed in largely unclear notions of regaining the sovereignty of parliament and the direct and popular forms of democracy in the referendum. There was a clear sense, repeated by both sides, that this was a once in a generation decision that was being handed from parliament to the 'the people' to decide for themselves.

But what politicians on both sides did not appreciate at the time was that the high level of turnout, involving many people who had not voted in a general election for years was that this vote really seemed to matter to people as a way of having their voices heard and their votes counted. It enabled a moment of popular protest directed at the political elites at Westminster against the injustices and sufferings endured through years of austerity, stretching further back to the scandals around MP's expenses which enforced a notion that there was one law for the MPs and another law for everyone else. The awareness that in the referendum each vote would be counted separately and be assured a significance that it might only acquire in marginal constituencies in a general election added to a determination that the vote needs to be respected.

This was something that the hard Brexiters took advantage off and even though it might have meant more in traditional working-class constituencies as an insistent recognition of self-worth, it also featured across the middle-class Tory Eurosceptic voters who also remained loyal to their votes. This was so even though as time went on people learnt much more about the difficulties of leaving the EU that was not going to offer the benefits promised, nor were the trade deals proving easy to secure. People also learnt more about the dishonesties of the leave campaign and how they were dishonest in their expense claims and readily made false claims in their propaganda on social networks.

Though Corbyn's Labour Party actually designed economic and social policies that promised to engage some of the 'burning injustices' that May had named on the steps of Downing Street when she first became prime minister, it failed to really engage with its own leave voters in ways that could have helped them make connections with the injustices and growing inequalities that led to their vote and the structural transformations that Labour was offering. There was a tragic disconnection that Corbyn failed to heal as he took a position on the fence somehow wanting to maintain an allegiance from both leave and remain voters in the party.

The 2017 election campaign encouraged many leave voters to vote for Corbyn's Labour but somehow the Corbyn leadership really failed over 3 years to engage its leave voters in a conversation about how they would be badly hit by any of the options to leave that were possible. They were inactive and seemed prepared to watch May's government make a hash of negotiations, while losing the support of many young voters, not only for their refusal to really engage the anti-Semitism in the party but also for their refusal to really commit themselves to a people's vote much earlier.

Ethnographic Methodologies

As we approached the 2016 referendum, I started feeling anxious and uneasy about the result that is coming. I also felt fearful and insecure in ways I wanted to trace. I had begun to write notes during the weeks before the vote and continued afterwards before I thought I might be writing a book. I was writing as a way of making real some of my experiences and only later recognised that writing was also a mode of self-defence. I wanted to know where the next attack might come from, and it was through writing that I thought I could keep myself safe. I realised that I was haunted in some way by my own parent's needs to escape from the Hitler's control in Austria and Poland and felt, possibly for the first time, what was involved in having to make such a decision to leave. With the attacks on Polish and Eastern Europe migrants in the days after the result and the far right expectation that once the vote had been taken, people would be leaving, somehow I could identify with a certain vulnerability, even though evidently I was in a position of security and privilege.

The anti-immigration rhetoric reminded me of the rejections my parents had experienced, also from within established Jewish communities in Britain that were wary of the new arrivals as destabilising and threatening their own positions. At some level, I carried a Polish legacy—at least a Jewish one—and had grown up in the post-war years into a dominant culture of assimilation that left us shamed about our Jewish differences. This encouraged a fracturing in the family which meant that as children, if we were to have a chance of belonging, we would have to disavow our parents' migrant histories and displacements.

We would have to create our own memories as the histories and geographies that we learnt at school were to be welcomed in shaping our 'English'—or at least our 'British' identities. In the 1950s, there was no space for differences and we learnt to shape our identities, through the expectations of others. We learnt, particularly as boys, to disavow Jewishness as a source of shameful otherness and to affirm control of our natures have learning to experience emotions and feelings as sources of weakness and as threats to our own male identities. We aspired to be white and we learnt to identify ourselves as rational selves who could put the past behind us and do distance and estrange ourselves from the histories and cultural memories of violence and mass murder that our parents had often silently carried. As children, we were to be protected from these traumatic histories that could only make it harder for us to belong and so offer our parents a sense of safety and security they craved.

This not a matter of personal background nor is it simply a matter of positioning ourselves in relation to a research project but it is an awareness of how we need to explore our own emotional and psychic investments in our projects, and as Simone Weil recognised, only really ask people questions that we have asked ourselves for only then can we help to curate a space of trust between researcher and those defined as 'research subjects'—but who are so often objectified and tacitly reduced in the research process as instrumental sources of data, even if we have been clear to meet the ethical demands of the profession. But there are also ways that we are *questioned* by the research we do, as I was by some of the interviews, so that we sometimes have to take a brake—time out from a project so that we can ask ourselves and do the emotional and intellectual work we need to do in order to ready ourselves to take the next steps in the project.

But there are also particular issues that come with writing in real time through a Brexit crisis that can feel endless. There was a time when I finished the book that I thought I could switch to other concerns, only to discover a few months later that I was drawn back into writing about 'Brexit futures'. There were times when the thinking and writing became obsessive and seem

to shut out everything else, as if I had been captured by a Brexit world that seemed to have an endless future. I would listen to the World at One, followed by PM, the Channel 4 News and then Newsnight while having conversations with people from diverse class and ethnic identities about the unfolding events.

I was less concerned with working out what would happen next, the agenda that seems to have captured much of the traditional news and media sources. I was more concerned with what was happening in different communities around the country and what new languages were being shaped in order to *make sense* of what was going on—before many people just cut off and refused to engage at all and just deal with the anxiety by holding more firmly to their original positions, as was often so evident on Question Time.

Of course, if I was still teaching full-time, I would not have had the time to do any of this. But also because of the time I had, it allowed different anxieties and fears to gather, and I was left wondering about the ways that I had cut off my parent's experiences of migration and their own painful experiences as refugees. Engages with feminist methodologies that taught that 'the personal is political', I also knew the value of the personal and engaging with your own fears and psychic hauntings as integral parts of the research process. I carried some of the wounds and hidden injuries of growing up within the disciplinary terms of a 1950s dominant culture of assimilation that taught a tight mode of masculine self-disciplining. The Brexit resurgence of the far right and the violence on social media and on the streets as well as the abuse Jewish MPs were forced to endure in the Labour Party made me feel angry but also at some level disturbed and fearful. I felt unsafe in ways I was unprepared for.

There were also times that writing around Brexit which was supposedly a way of dealing with feelings of insecurity left me feeling ungrounded and the intensity of the work left me feeling, like for so many others, unsure of my ground and as if everything that was solid had melted into air. I was focussed in writing in a way that gave me labyrinthitis—when everything seems to be floating around and you have difficulties moving from horizontal to vertical plains. There were times when I had to stop and get off the bus. It was like living with no clear line to the future as if you could not really predict what might happen politically in the new few days. You listened to commentators talking about unprecedented times in British politics with some alluding back to the tensions of the Civil War. Nothing felt certain and the institutions that had seemed so solid for years, felt so precarious and needing of a radical transformation and a new constitutional settlement that challenged growing social inequalities and glaring injustices.

When George Monbiot suggests that the referendum vote could be viewed as a 'howl of rage against exclusion, alienation and remote authority' (p.143) he is also calling for a different form of democratic settlement where authority resides in a very different notion of 'the will of the people'—a vision that would include the 48% who voted to remain as much as the 52% who voted to leave. The notion 'remote authority' also refers to the distance felt to London and the ways that the south-east has benefited most from years of neoliberal globalised capitalism that Blair refused to challenge and accepted as a 'reality' that we had to accommodate too, as Thatcher had also believed.

Hopes, Fears and Anxieties

There was also a hope tied in with the anger of leave voters in working-class areas that there would be a chance to realise, with the leaving of the EU, for a different form of democratic authority that would be obliged to listen to its concerns. There was an insurgent desire to

transform an increasingly unequal and uncaring society, acknowledging the ethical incompatibility at some level between a democracy of free and equal citizens who had equal voice and a sense of self-worth and certain levels in equality. There is no need to have billionaires, even multi-millionaires, within a democracy that was committed to freedom and social justice.

Talking about the general election to come on Newsnight on 1 November 2019, Sherelle Jacobs writer for *The Daily Telegraph* says how Boris Johnson was relying upon the 2015 election when David Cameron was able to squeeze Ukip and he is relying on being able to do the same to the Brexit party, so refusing any 'leave alliance'. Brexit was hoping to take votes in traditional Labour seats where people might still be reluctant to vote Tory but might be prepared to vote for the Brexit Party and even be attracted to its notion of a complete break with the EU which is what many think they voted for in the first place. Even though the majority of Labour voters voted remain, they might be reluctant to vote at all with the shift in atmosphere and hostility built up against Corbyn.

Laura Parker a Momentum supporter insisted that people are not only fed up with the Brexit but also are fed up with what has happened to the NHS, with years of austerity, wage levels and that you cannot get a bus. If you ask them on the doorstep about how they voted Brexit, they will tell you that the election is about far more than Brexit, even if for many it remains the vital concern. Talking about her own family in Yorkshire that was split on the referendum, they all care about what happens to the NHS and that the schools are underfunded. She insists that it is a 'Westminsterish view of the world' that it is all about Brexit and that you are either a leaver or a remainer and that Labour is trying to fight a different election. She insists 'it is not the only issue in town' and that people want real change after years of austerity and wage constraint and that the Labour manifesto will motivate them.

Sherelle Jacobs readily agrees to some extent and says that 'people are in danger of forgetting that Brexit was always about so much more than Brexit and you can forget this in the bubble and this will be an election not just about Brexit but about Brexit, not just about the quality of the deal. It is about the fact that people voted for Brexit because they want a new kind of politics, they are fed up with the politics of vested interests and virtue signalling and they want a politics that speaks to the aspirations of ordinary people.'

The danger for the Tories is—"there is a fine line between confidence and complacency and they cannot go into this election purely with the message 'let's get Brexit done so that we can spend money on schools and hospitals. They need to somehow tap into the optimism of Brexit—of the desire for a system's change and the change in the political culture.'" Otherwise in the constituencies where Labour traditionally do well, they will not win the support they need. It is not an inspirational enough offering and the danger could be that Farage's Brexit Party even if it has few substantial policies apart from a free-trade agreement that he offers a complete break with the EU as inspirational to enough votes to make life difficult for the Tories so dividing the leave vote, that Johnson has been desperate to unify.

As Jacobs also tweeted, 'Every undecided Left-leaning voter I have spoken to today (30th November) has said stopping Brexit is not the most important issue for them. The environment, NHS, housing, jobs all cropping up instead. Lib Dems—who have gambled all on squeezing Labour on Brexit—may be in for a rude awakening'. She also warned in a tweet, 'Worth remembering Farage fielding nationally is latest development in long running war over who get a crack over 'Labour' seats—& polling shows only 4% of Labour leavers would vote Tory. Question is how many Lab seats can Tories genuinely win and how many are they kidding themselves with.' But at the same time, she can also write in harder terms for *The Telegraph*, 'Over the past three years, the hardy British public has looked on in despair as MPs

reduced British politics to a weeping kumbaya of grief-stricken virtue signalling.’ This was under a heading, ‘These were the MPs who turned victimhood politics into performance art.’

There is a question whether Labour’s manifesto can make connections with the transformative aspirations that were also part of the referendum vote to Leave and if they can speak directly to Brexit voters who just ‘want to get things done’ and might feel that the Labour promise of a future referendum just carries the whole saga on. Of course it also depends upon how different class, ethnic and racial communities have related to the frustrations of the long Brexit process and whether talk of parliamentary sovereignty has been undermined by the scrutiny of the last few years, where even if parliament has reflected the divisions in the wider community, for many it felt as if they ‘could not do the job they were elected for’ and failed to respect the result of the 2016 referendum even when they had promised too.

This has encouraged calls for more direct forms of democracy on the far right and talk of betrayal. There has been little sense of the country coming together and even if this is part of Labour’s pitch for a middle path between Lib Dem revokers and a Tory hard Brexit deal, for many the deal was on the table and they cannot understand why Johnson did not see it through and this could also help the Brexit party in the election to come when they have done their work to expose the deal and argue it is not the Brexit that many people voted for.

By deferring Brexit and having stayed on the fence for so long, it is hard for Labour to really engage the transformative calls that were also part of the original Brexit vote and however appealing their policies might be, they could fall short in their attempts to appeal to very different audiences at the same time. They need to stand firm against racism and anti-Semitism while really engaging with the desire for a new kind of politics that gives equal voice and equal attention to different regions. With the Tories, there is a danger of perpetuating the separation of Brexit as a concern, because it was always about more than EU trade deal and more than concerns about immigration and it is a myth to think it ‘can be done’ or ‘put aside’ so that we can ‘get on with what really matters.’ Why has it been so hard to really engage the causes of Brexit and ‘make sense’ of the multitude causes that informed the vote? Why has it been so hard to engage different ethnic and racial communities as well as different generations in learning the lessons of the referendum result and creating the new cultural imaginaries of a more responsive democracy?

It is not clear that Corbyn’s anti-capitalism that is framed on ‘which side are you on’ will really capture the public imagination because it is unclear whether he grasped the very different sources of disquiet that fuelled the anger. If he engages with the anger at years of austerity and cut-backs, it is not enough to hold the bankers responsible without really engaging with growing inequalities within a neoliberal globalised capitalism. There is a danger that he is locked into a 1970s left class politics that has not really engaged with feminism and anti-racist politics in their different dimensions, rather than seeing them as extensions of a class politics.

We need a different politics of equality that can engage with a multicultural Britain in all its ethnic, gender and sexual diversity and can speak with care and compassion about what people have been made to suffer though the long years of neglect and austerity. There needs to be more recognition of how polarised the country has become so that, learning from Jo Cox Corbyn can really value what we have together, rather than what divides us, possibly learning from identity politics, without being limited by it. There is a danger of thinking that you have got the right positions and have virtue on your side because it makes it harder to listen and to learn and so to help people with the pain and sufferings they are often silently carrying.

Racism, Xenophobia and Learning for the Future

'I wanted the future to be written about as accessibly as the past' Banaji asks, 'and a sense of concrete possibilities and ways forward to be tied to more concrete evidence.' This is an ambitious prospect and I think she helps with this task and possibly over 3 years on it should feel easier than it is. We live, as media commentators often insist, in such unprecedented times, not just in British politics but with the rise of authoritarian populist regimes across the world challenging the terms of a liberal democratic politics and ethics. I readily concede that it would have been helpful if I had, as Banaji asks, been able 'to paint a more nuanced picture of all the groups who voted leave and the points of intersection between their real and their imagined interests.' I think this can only be a collective task and I can only hope that I did not divert attention from this task or suggest that the focus I chose did not assume that the working-class is not a fractured across racial and ethnic lines. I also acknowledge the importance of analysing middle-class and upper-class support for the leave vote, though this was not my direct focus and it was certainly not to lay blame or responsibility on 'left-behind' working-class voters for the Brexit vote. I explicitly challenged this narrative that reproduced a discourse of passivity. As Kirby Swales report 'Understanding the Leave Vote' carefully researches and Banaji draws our attention too, 'while it is clear that a majority of Leave voters were working class or impoverished, there was also a substantial minority that were financially comfortable if not wealthy'. As Swales insists, 'The Leave campaign's success was underpinned by a broad-based coalition of voters which is much more wide-ranging than the "left behind".' I think this was evident at the time but the immediate responses, as I questioned many younger cosmopolitan remainers, was immediately to look for someone to blame and they accused the racism of older leave voters who had irrationally, as they saw it, voted against their own interests.

Banaji also helpfully reminds us of Neepa Majamdar's research that some ethnic minorities were more drawn to the rhetoric of the leave campaign saying 'White British were the most pro-Leave, followed by those of Indian background who were almost twice as likely to support Leave as other minority groups. There were much higher levels of support for Remain among Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Black Caribbean and Black African groups—on average a quarter being more pro-Leave than Remain.' (<http://ukandeu.ac.uk/minority-ethnic-attitudes- and-the-2016-eu-referendum/>). She is also aware, from her own experience, of British Indian xenophobia and 'vicious and hateful propaganda against Muslims that circulate online in her diasporic community.' Something similar can be noted in Jewish communities.

There are difficult issues that Banaji draws attention to asking 'at what point anti-migrant sentiment becomes racism' and this is made even more complex in relation to Eastern-Europeans who are considered as white, so engages questions of histories of empire, migration, displacement and cultural memory. But again these are concerns that cannot be dealt with in abstract and general terms, but needed to be explored ethnographically in specific historical and economic conjunctures. But if, as Banaji suggests these 'are anxieties which good governance and fair media could allay, it is important to recognise the transformations in the media environment brought about by social media that allow the far right to create their own media spaces that go unchallenged as they provoke abuse and violence that too easily moves from verbal to street violence. These channels of communication tragically bring into question Banaji's notion that 'over racism in the UK now carries such a stigma that everyone including the EDL disavow it' for they have evidently found different ways of expressing racist, anti-Semitic, misogynistic and homophobic hatred.

I think it is vital to engage different forms of hate speech and street violence, and it is important to account for different ‘histories of estrangement and demonization’ that led up to the referendum campaign. Banaji reminds us of the time she was a secondary teacher near the BNP headquarters in the 1990s and ‘in the aftermath of 9/11 when it felt as if ‘they’ were coming for ‘us’ and many of you turned your heads away since you did not have brown skin.’ I think it is so important, as she suggests that we take ‘a longer view of the ways in which anti-working-class sentiments, anti-EU lies, anti-migrant prejudices and anti-youth myths in the media and among media audiences have affected British politics.’ Again this is a vital shared project and we need to develop the ethnographic and historically informed work around cultural memory to do justice. But again we need to challenge traditional positivist methodologies that can make it harder to engage our own lived histories and so open up spaces of encounter across ethnic, racial and religious differences.

As Banaji shares, ‘As a BAME British citizen who has experienced, put up with and contested multiple forms of overt and covert racism in the past 25 years and who recognises that there is racism within BAME communities too’ this is an area of work that I should have explored in greater depth in relation to the longer histories of empire, colonial domination and their interrelations with racism. I hope that I signalled these as part of the historical and cultural context of anti-European feelings that meant that politicians since Thatcher had refused to really speak up for Europe and really engage with how an alternative Europe could be imagined.

Hopefully in writing to come, I will hopefully be able to learn from Banaji’s suggestion to ‘go further in historicising fear of migrants and of the EU, connecting these to the monopolisation and deregulation of mass media’ and to learn more about the responses of young people in her research who ‘were upset about austerity, scathing about racism’ and angry about issues of employment, housing, health service and the deliberate devaluation of critical discussion and political education in schools. They came from the same communities who might have been majority leave voting constituencies but they still valued the peace, worker’s rights and environment rights offered by the EU to vote to remain. They valued a more cosmopolitan Europe that allowed them to travel, work and love across borders while being determined that another kind of Europe, less tied in with neoliberal globalisation was possible.

Banaji helps us appreciate in her research with young people how much can be learnt from many who came from the same neglected and attacked de-industrialised communities and who had experienced the same losses, fears and humiliations and felt similar anger over the social injustices but who voted to remain after weighing up the evidence. They can help to give us ‘the recipe for hope’ in a younger generation that will have learnt lessons from the endless deadlock and who have learn to strengthen their political, moral and ecological values to remake their own future relationships with the Europe they feel a part of, even if the government eventually decides to leave the EU.