

Multiculture In Times of War

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On these occasions, it is easy to imperil the affirmative mood by talking about racism. I am committed to that vulgar choice which is often seen as a departure from proper scholarly standards. However, rather than sounding defensive in anticipation of the inevitable accusations of political correctness, relativism etc that follow from my decision, I thought that I'd proceed without apologies and strive instead to show why a focus on elements of racial hierarchy might not only be legitimate but also productive in several key areas opened up by recent developments: on one side, by the much-vaunted death of multiculturalism at the hands of *homegrown* terrorists, and on the other, by the prosecution of an apparently interminable war in which information does not stand outside the military campaign but is lodged inside it as an element of the conflict. The latter development poses a special challenge to the social sciences where agnatology—the cultural production of ignorance and agno-politics

the relationship of ignorance to power have seldom been considered systematically.

I want to place a discussion of Britain's present circumstances in a historical setting illuminated by early twentieth-century commentaries on war, peace and cosmopolitan responsibility, and by mid-twentieth century speculations on race and racism which have a bearing upon the continuing links between racism, nationalism and imperialism in the age of "extraordinary rendition".

At the core of my argument, lies the suggestion that for Britain, developing durable and habitable multiculturalism depends upon working through the legacies of departed empire. That outcome is currently frustrated by a social, cultural and psychological blockage I call postcolonial melancholia.

In preparing this talk, I've also been mindful of the fact that we are close to the twenty-fifth anniversary of the riots in Brixton and elsewhere. Those events are responsible for my being in the position to address you here tonight. It was in their aftermath that I became employable as a university teacher and acquired a hold on the professional ladder I had not expected to be able to climb.

It's conventional to thank one's old teachers but tonight, I'd like to thank those rioters not just for what they did indirectly for me personally, but for

what they have done for this city and indeed for this polity too. Their wild protests deepened and enriched British democracy, galvanising it against manifestations of injustice in the workings of law, education and social policy. Most of all, they helped Britain adjust to the presence of minority citizens whose difficult life experience could not, even then, be adequately contained under the heading "immigration". Perhaps more riots might assist in helping to spread the task of educating future generations of black and minority ethnic Britons beyond the walls of London Metropolitan University?

When I employ the concept racism I do not mean a thing called "race". Let me emphasise that I am not referring to some neat and tidy ideological package or functional mechanism. For me, race is a relationship and racism a discourse with metaphysical capacities. They are endowed with properties that confound conventional approaches to the relationship between rationality and irrationality. Racial discourses work on and with the senses in distinctive ways, they generate particular relationships between words, icons and other visual cues, pressing the body into service with mimetic repetitions, signs, elisions and performatives that actively produce infra-humanity rather than merely classify it retrospectively. Racism is therefore a system that generates the groups we know as races rather than a

set of commentaries upon the natural differences that those actors come to embody.

Studying the interplay of racialised law and racialised life from this perspective necessitates particular interpretative skills. It involves exercises in historical ontology that rely on sensitivity to the sort of enquiry defined by Ian Hacking as a *dynamic* nominalism in which the things that are named—"objects among other objects" even when they are human beings, as Fanon put it—interact with the scientific, cultural, economic and governmental processes of their designation.

In view of these complexities, it is not enough for Sociology to quantify either personal attitudes or the institutional processes that re-produce racial hierarchy and inequality. Both are necessary but even together they are not sufficient.

Orthodox inquiries usually end with variations on those options. Racism's most militant expressions are reassigned so that they register only as legitimate outbursts of genuine fear, anxiety about the pace of change, insecurity and the ebbing of respect. To say anything else, is to sacrifice a measure of scholastic credibility. However, the sociological and political puzzles involved in explaining *why* so many unsavoury social and historical processes are repeatedly registered in the political languages of race and ethnic absolutism, pass un-remarked upon.

Racism's effects are dismissed as insignificant until the next tragic death or inflammatory eruption makes it newsworthy once again. At that point, a thing called race gets discovered afresh with the utmost, sincere surprise. Expressions of racism will be approached with horror through a fog of novelty. This pattern, in which tragic and disturbing events punctuate quieter periods of apparent forgetting that endure long enough only for the inevitable lament of "we did not know" to appear plausible, is itself a significant part of the problem that interests me.

There were earlier rumblings in response to the publication of the Parekh report, but "multiculturalism" was first officially pronounced dead after September 11th 2001. Obituaries were cheerfully offered after the arrests of Richard Reid the shoe bomber, Zacarias Moussaoui the mad, French bomber, Omar Khan Sharif the public school bomber and Abdul El Faisal the Jamaican-born Imam goaled under the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act for soliciting murder without a specific victim.

The death notices were reissued with greater relish after the murderous and horrible events of last summer. Since then, they have been combined with an insistent governmental proposal that the country's investments in multiculturalism be redirected towards a wholesale re-evaluation of the tarnished notion of Britishness. This wholesome alternative would

supposedly offer immediate benefits in the form of popular national feeling akin to the civic patriotism evident in the US.

These developments give practical expression to the tendentious political and theoretical assumption that solidarity and diversity cannot co-exist. The detail of this argument is not worth reconstructing here—save to say that its complacent advocates have been disinclined to address the histories of white supremacy, xenophobia and racial hatred that have been lapping at their ankles, if not their knees. The assertion that greater diversity necessarily means diminished solidarity cannot survive five minutes exposure to social relations inside any institution of the NHS. Its proponents turn willfully and, in my view, deceitfully, away from the exhilarating cultural interaction common in cities like this one which are not—not yet anyway—segregated according to the principles of the racial nomos which, as we saw in the aftermath of the New Orleans flood, is the silent, dominant partner of stubbornly colour-coded US political culture.

Nonetheless, these ideas have started to circulate in governmental thinking. They have helped to precipitate an interesting change of national mood. One of the first experiences that brought home to me how life here had altered while I lived in the US, was my exposure to a deep yearning for restored

greatness carved onto the faces of the large crowd thronging The Strand following the celebrations of last summer's cricketing triumph over Australia. It seemed then, in a way that marked a sharp divergence from the Corinthian traditions that were drummed into me as a boy, as if the world was now being divided in Manichaeian fashion into two big warring groups labeled winners and losers. The English are now supposed to be winners. In sport and in other areas this involves tricky politico-theological operations. They demand that foreigners, floaters and freeloaders are excluded and that others are seen to lose. This incidentally is why debates over the citizenship of England manager and the number of foreigners in premiership football are noteworthy. A quiet vernacular struggle is being conducted over the Schmittian logic that says "if you are not with us, you're against us".

Many of the problems I want to explore are connected to that thwarted desire for greatness, for the need for a place at the top table and the pleasures punching above our weight. I interpret those aspirations as after-effects of imperial domination, and responses to the loss of imperial prestige. They are key components in the melancholic cultural formation which has shaped and distorted Britain's social and cultural habits.

We've recently glimpsed the first fruits of promoting St George's day as a solidarity-inducing festival, and the tone with which the Queen's recent birthday could be discussed had been altered to a more reverent one. I don't need to tell you that the memory of 1966 is being revived and infused with hefty neo-traditional significance as the tournament in Germany approaches. As part of the same shift, a heavily-filtered and simplified projection of plucky British struggle against Nazi Germany has been brought back into the centre of our embattled public culture. Why is that war is celebrated as the very core of national identity by people too young to be touched by living memory of it? Why do all of Britain's subsequent conflicts acquire irrefutable legitimacy if they can be presented as its analogs or extensions? Why has life in *that* wartime been moulded to represent the last occasion in which authentic, undiluted, monocultural Britons were absolutely certain as to who they were and what they stood for?

If Brits are to be united and robust in the face of terror, Islam, unwanted immigration and European meddling, we must now become fundamentally and decisively the same. The militarization of everyday life and the elevation of security over the other functions of government, particularly when they are associated with the comfort blanket of imagined monoculture, help to secure that result.

However, the national resurrection is hindered by the confusion and disorientation that arise continually from a situation in which melancholic and xenophobic Britain can quietly concede that it doesn't much like all the aliens, blacks, foreigners, Muslims and other interlopers and wants to get rid of them, but becomes uncomfortable and tentative because it doesn't like the things it learns about itself when it gives vent to its feelings of hostility.

Once, Britain was *out there* being great in a world it dominated. However, even grudging recognition of that glorious past can generate forms of hostility when for example, the pain of loss is triggered by encounters with post-colonial settlers. Even if today's unwanted incomers--from Brasil or Eastern Europe--are not actually post-colonials, they may still carry all the ambivalence of the vanished empire with them.

The recent situation in Barking showed that it was not only coloureds and Muslims but the ABCs: Albanians, Bosnians and Kosovars who introduced discomfort into the unhappy consciousness of their fearful and anxious hosts and neighbours. Indeed, the latest incomers may be unwanted and abused precisely because they unwittingly stimulate the pain produced by memories of that vanished imperial and colonial past. The symptoms are intensified by the prospect of a reverse colonisation either by immigrants or by a

gradual creeping Americanisation and the geopolitical catastrophe to which it ties us.

Even if they are "white", these new denizens can be held hostage by the logic of race through the non-negotiable specification that they are immigrants. Here, immigration is always already war. The metaphor of alien settlement as invasion remains potent precisely because the post-1945 migrants were the intrusive, unwelcome post-colonial consequences of departed imperial prestige.

Images of the wounded, white working-class, betrayed by leaders who expected it to bear the brunt of cultural diversity and now beset by violent and criminal aliens, provide a means to assess the initial symbolic configuration of the melancholia that has come to characterize our era. It can be glimpsed in the vulnerable, feminine form of Enoch Powell's aged white women taunted by the "wide-grinning picaninnies" who—if you recall the famous mythography of his "Rivers of Blood speech"—taunted her with the word "racialist" because, in defiance of the race relations legislation newly introduced by Labour, she had unreasonably refused to rent out rooms in her decaying house to them. Thus postcolonial intruders from the "new commonwealth" accomplished what the Nazis had failed to do: they destroyed an unsuspecting nation from within.

Powell's focus on housing and dwelling echoes more recent conflicts but that coincidence does not draw the same degree of interpretative attention as the easier notion that these are unavoidable conflicts driven by the natural force of race and the anthropological power culture.

We often forget that the plausibility of Powell's prophecy of racial war was won through the way that his ghastly predictions coincided with the assassination of Martin Luther King jnr.. The teleology that makes north America into an image of Britain's political future raises more general problems, but we can say that our leaders are still being caught out by their inability to imagine a future for Britain's racial politics that is not deduced from US history. The US also exemplified the only racial destiny that the British punditocracy could conceive. There is now some catching up for both groups to do. Important opportunities arise both from seeking a future elsewhere and in seeing in our own recent history things from which other nations and governments might profit.

Samuel Huntington's Clash of Civilizations linked urgent international problems to the prospect of growing cultural diversity inside the US some time ago. His more recent work Who Are We? presents the flood of overly fertile immigrants from Latin America as "the single most immediate and serious challenge

to America's traditional identity". His sense of the connection between immigration and cultural diversity has now moved to the centre of respectable reflection on how multi-culture should be governed. The conflict between legals and illegals, between citizens and denizens, is endowed with strong cultural flavours deployed to obscure the lingering aftertaste of brutal racial hierarchy.

What matters more, is that long before Hurricane Katrina projected the routine features of America's racial nomos across the world, Britain's history had been telling us that the US need not be the inevitable destination of our racial politics. America cannot be for us the land of the future that it was for Hegel.

This country outgrew the 1960s model that associated integration and immigration in government policy. Two generations beyond their coupling, the anxieties which fuel contemporary concern about the integrity of national culture and national identity have very different sources. Their origins lie, not as we're routinely told, in immigration, but in broader effects of globalisation, de-industrialisation and de-colonisation; in increased inequality and insecurity, in privatisation--particularly of housing--and in the regressive modernisation promoted by the managers, ideologues and incorrigible info-warriors of neo-liberalism.

All those forces shape the turmoil into which immigrants, aliens and most recently asylum-seekers and refugees were thrown and for which they are being held responsible. The emergence of better, richer and more satisfying explanations is blocked by Britain's Melancholia.

After world war II, white, working-class distaste for the new commonwealth's invading aliens was amplified by another, deeper discomfort. New sources of guilt and resentment arose with the pressure to face up to what the brutal administration of the British empire had involved especially during the wars fought by the last generation of National Service conscripts.

As the mechanisms of belated reparation and litigation started to move, more of the shameful things done in the name of crown and country were revealed. People persist in denying that those crimes—even in Zimbabwe and Iran--could have anything to do with the bitter conflicts of the post-colonial present. The small, Cold Wars and "low intensity operations" in Palestine, Kenya, Cyprus, Korea, Aden, Malaya, Ireland and many other locations, slipped out of official national memory and were replaced by a horrible cast of jaunty specters drawn from propagandistic fare like The Dambusters and The Great Escape.

If it returns at all, the final, twentieth-century phase of the British empire comes back through a nostalgic filter. The writings of John Masters, E.M. Forster and Paul Scott have lately acquired a new relevance by virtue of their ability to supply solid old answers to disconcerting questions their successors have been intimidated out of asking: What was the moral economy of empire? Did it involve doing things about which we might reasonably be expected to feel ashamed and perhaps apologise? Does torturing people involve damage to the torturers? and so on.

The mythology of the Blitz as pure, organic community is critical. It was contested in the aftermath of last July's bombings by a different—I'm tempted to say healthier--view of London as a dynamic and heterocultural world city. That ephemeral product of the Mayor's office was a wishful development but it raised the possibility that we might at last have reached the limits of the imploded "two world wars and one world cup mentality". However, the frequency and piety with which those old triumphs are summoned provides a barometer of something like the national state of mind and the news from that front does not offer grounds for optimism.

The key revelation is not that a majority of British people now support the policies of the BNP. It is that their level of enthusiasm falls markedly

when they are made aware that the policies they favour—but do not recognize as neo-fascist--originate with the ultra-right. This phenomenon confirms that today, the political forms racism assumes are not what they were twenty five years ago when the half bricks flew overhead and my hopes of being a teacher took wing among them.

Long struggles against racial hierarchy have introduced a significant measure of shame into the moral equations, querying the elemental force of the traditional pre-amble "I'm not racist but".

These fragile gains should be acknowledged. Sadly, they do not mean that Britain's chronic problems in this area have been solved. Any successes in the transition towards a self-conscious plurality have either derived from the unacknowledged impact of 1970s *cultural* anti-racism (something that should be sharply distinguished from its governmental counterparts) or they have been inadvertent.

These pluses have not been tested by changing economic circumstances or by the fact that the British ultra-right still lacks charming, charismatic or eloquent leadership untainted by association with the ideals and underground institutions of National Socialism. Though they feature formulaic denunciations of the BNP the xenophobia and hostility of much of the popular press recycles the political imaginary of the ultra-right and colludes in

circulating their political demands. The re-coding of those motifs in the world of official politics suggests in turn, that government, fearful of being outflanked on the populist right, has opted to move debate back towards the era when anxiety over that overloaded signifier "immigration" supplied the catalyst for authoritarian and ultra-nationalist political forces.

Media interpretation of the BNP revival, the new reverence with which the memory of that "great parliamentarian" Enoch Powell is now routinely invoked, and debates about the integrity of the concept of racism and its place in British public life, have all told the same dismal story. Huge amounts of political energy have been expended on elaborate denials of the fact that racism is historically or politically significant as such and in opposing the idea that horrible racism can be connected in any way to healthy nationalism and robust patriotism. Poor George Orwell's peerless legacy suffers greatly from being made to produce warrants for this horrible exercise in mystification.

In trying to understand this state of affairs, it helps to appreciate the extent to which ideas of racial hierarchy were enmeshed with imperial domination from the very beginnings of European expansion and intrinsic to making Britain a global power.

All of us who write on race, racism and empire are indebted to Hannah Arendt for her brilliant, flawed attempts to link the history of industrialised genocide to a pre-history in the colonial spaces of death and racialised misrule. She saw this process with clarity in part, because she was alert to the significance of race and the forms of power it animated, even if for her, racism remained part of the legitimate reactions of civilized Europeans to savages, a problem that would lead her disastrously to misread the civil rights struggles in the US.

Despite that, Arendt's insights remain inspiring because of the way that she refuses culturalist views of the politics of racial hierarchy and because of the creativity with which she conceptualised the still unpalatable connections between war, colonial administration and genocide in Europe.

The first multicultural, the vivid hybridity of the initial contact zones had to be extinguished so that the colonial order could become secure. Early ideas about race and what we now call ethnicity were pernicious even in pre-scientific form. They were both a tacit and an explicit presence in English political theory from the days when John Locke winked at the colonists and gave a thumbs up to their wars of expropriation and Hobbes' *Leviathan* was published against the backdrop provided by the passage of the

Navigation Acts which formally initiated the legal and economic consolidation of the Empire.

The history of these English traditions of thought is becoming significant in genealogies of security and securitocracy as well as in the context of debates over what is to count as proper history in our national curriculum (conflicts which are paralleled in other post-colonial countries like France and Japan).

It would appear that the triumph of Tudors and the defeat of the Nazis are not enough to orient the nation either to its new military missions in the world or to its properly patriotic and culturally-integrated relationship with the ethnically-purified version of its heritage that emerges from the air-raid shelters where sugary tea is brewed and cockney songs are sung.

English traditions of theoretical reflection on the politics and morality of colonial government are also relevant because a self-conscious revival of imperial ambitions has helped to define the mediation of infowar and morbid multiculturalism as well as to set new standards for the evaluation of national belonging and the meaning of citizenship.

The country has been deeply divided over the significance of imperialism in its past as well as the wisdom of reviving the civilising mission in Mesopotamia, Afghanistan and elsewhere. Britain's

imperial ambitions were frequently swathed in humanitarian rhetoric. The humanitarian component in colonial adventures can also be thought to remain pending, having been updated and refined in contemporary discussions of debt and poverty reduction.

I emphasise these problems tonight because understanding the economic, political and moral impact of imperialism inside this country and beyond it was previously a mainstream concern among scholars based in this institution—an attitude which might be worth reviving and extending further--notwithstanding the notable contributions of many colleagues who have continued that effort.

Since I came here, I have become interested in the political and intellectual horizons of those like LT Hobhouse who were involved in organizing the Universal Races congress here in London in 1911. That pivotal event drew on the ethical and intellectual spirit of this university and it is not remembered as often as it should be given the current academic vogue for cosmopolitan thinking which is addressed as if it was only a matter for the late eighteenth century.

The organisers of the congress felt themselves to be a cosmopolitical "elite" plucked from across the planet. They saw the world as one place and worked in the light of that perception to avert the looming

catastrophe of the 1914-18 war which they judged to be fuelled by imperialist expansion and economic rivalry. They wanted to prepare people locally for the historical and geo-political changes that would arise when Japan and China encountered Europe and the US as equals rather than racial inferiors. Lord Weardale's introduction to the collected conference papers made their concerns explicit:

"Nearer and nearer we see approaching the day when the vast populations of the East will assert their claim to meet on terms of equality with the nations of the West, when the free institutions and the organized forces of one hemisphere will have the counterbalance in the other, when their mental outlook and their social aims will be in principle identical; when, in short colour prejudice will have vanished and the so called white races and the so-called coloured races shall regard one another in truth as men and brothers."

The organisers cast their pursuit of peace, social reform, the modern conscience and universal humanity as a critique of the ambitions of the great national states as they careered towards the doom of industrialised war. The African American sociologist W.E.B. DuBois spoke for them all, when, looking back

at the event in one of his autobiographies, he had this to say:

"I fancied at the time that I knew my Europe pretty well, but familiarity with the dangers of the European scene had bred contempt of disaster. I thought with other philosophers that a general European war was impossible. The economic and cultural strands among nations had grown too strong to be snapped by war. World peace, world organization, conference and conciliation, the gradual breaking down of trade barriers, the spread of civilization to backward peoples, the emancipation of suppressed groups like the American Negro—seem to me the natural, the inevitable path of world progress."

Not long before, proponents of this ideology of progress had imagined that the world's backward and unfit peoples were doomed and would simply vanish with the inevitable global advance of White civilization. In the congress, that monopoly of historicity and developmental momentum was challenged and hi-jacked by social liberal and cosmopolitan forces for whom internationalism and nationalism were not counterposed. DuBois' later disenchantment testifies to the comprehensive defeat of the organizers' utopian, planetary conceptions at the hands of "the envy and jealousy of . . . imperial powers".

Sentiments of this sort have gone out of fashion in the postcolonial world. In their place, we hear arguments not against gun-boat diplomacy and double standards but for their extension, for the *revival* of imperial rule "under the lightest of touches" in "voluntary forms" that could promote early intervention into pre-modern chaos and incompetent government by enlightened Europe's post-modern weaponry.

These arguments are not monopolised by the right. It is significant that their advocates from whatever political direction they hail, are untroubled by and sometimes even assertive about, their active disinterest in the detail of the country's imperial and colonial history and indeed of the histories of colonial rule and colonial war involving other European powers.

Interventions by the advocates of revived colonial rule for whom the recent offerings of the diplomat Robert Cooper supply a valuable the paradigm case, have appeared in tandem with an explosion of popular revisionist accounts of colonial rule which in the context of the woeful state of British publishing, is something of a sociological and political phenomenon in its own right. This body of work has made the history of empire and colony into a dynamic issue. Happy-clappy approaches to the lost glories of the imperial past have become particularly

inspiring in a geo-political situation where the revival of empire has been explicitly demanded by those keen to link the present power of the US to the global dominance enjoyed by Britain in the past.

Widely-read works, notably by Niall Ferguson, Linda Colley and Saul David do more than just gloss over the rationally-applied barbarity of Britain's colonial phases. These authors, like the populist politicians, the media xenophobes and the Prospect commentariat, trade in the absurd idea that the British are the primary victims of their own colonial history. An awareness that has been judged to be the best pre-condition for the revival of empire abroad and the rebirth of a homogenous, neo-imperial spirit at home, two ambitions that are now integral to the Blair government's conception of our reformed nation's rosy future.

Understood in association with that other article of faith: the refusal of racism, the historical significance of this bid to monopolise victimage is revealed by the way that these restorative themes resonate within the arc of Britain's own post-colonial crisis. There, hostility to multiculturalism and enthusiasm for civilisationism supply the load-bearing pillars for a monumental common sense which is fully compatible with a deeply and comfortably racialised conception of geo-political conflicts. It may not only be the US Special Forces who see the

Iraqis as "untermenschen". Guantanamo can be connected both historically and juridically to the suspension of the law in the name of the law carried out in Belmarsh, Yarlswood, Campsfield house and other unnamed places.

A nationalist counterpart to the belligerent parochialism of the football fans who sing: "No one likes us we don't care" combines with a neurotically-intense desire to re-fill the painfully-empty shell of national identity. The force of this blend has led many to seek the cultural resources for British renewal and re-birth not only in those carefully-airbrushed accounts of the imperial past, but also in the resurgent monarchy, in sport and if those options fail, in the comforting contours of abstract white supremacy enacted on the battlefield or performed on the streets where, as the murders of Anthony Walker and Christopher Alaneme suggest, another doctrine of pre-emption can prevail.

The same underlying cultural and psychological pathology has found notable political expression in Gordon Brown's impossibly contradictory declarations that on the one hand we must revive interest in what was thought to be a discredited notion of Britishness and on the other, that all apologizing for the Empire must now cease. Brown told the Daily Mail that "Britain no longer had to make excuses for its record as a colonial power" adding "I've talked to many

people on my visit to Africa and the days of Britain having to apologise for its colonial history are over. We should move forward".

The residual literary critic in me is attentive to the rhetorical displacement of this timely perception onto his eager African interlocutors but never mind. The signature New Labour desire to move on imposes constraints on revisionist history. It bears repetition that this history's popular appeal, whether it is served up by cheerleaders of Empire or in more tepid form by writers uncomfortable with the prospect of Britain playing Greece to the US Rome, lies in the odd way that Brits rather than the peoples they slaughtered, exploited and enslaved emerge as the primary victims of the grand imperial project.

It is significant that the broad appeal of this particular combination of themes—Britain as victim and Britain as righteously victorious—is seldom identified as a problem or analysed at all. That luxury cannot continue because the national obsession with ww2 and the belligerent nationalism and racism that is often alloyed with it suggest that the renewed engagement with identity reproduces and perhaps amplifies the symptoms of melancholia. Identity is, as you all know, the name and principal focus of the BNP's inhouse journal.

The blend in which the figures of victim and victor are fused is linked both to the denial of racism and to the "fit in or eff off" assimilationism that is now politically favoured.

The historian Idith Zertal reminds us that the pathways of national identity and historical memory routinely intersect at the graveside. She argues that the combination of victim and victor is especially potent in shaping nationalism's post-modern expressions.

The uncontrolled repetition of Britain's heroic triumph against the Third Reich serves the machinery of melancholia as a screen or filter. It blocks out both imperial and colonial history and prevents access to the wars of decolonisation which followed 1945. The disappearance of all those nation-building, post-colonial conflicts encourages the mistaken belief that the empire was too long ago to remain relevant to contemporary realities.

Freud says melancholia is a state of pathological sadness interspersed with manic elation, guilty self hatred and disgust. It is a condition of shamelessness, but guilt abounds there. The loss that triggers those symptoms will not be worked through. The lost object is gone but its loss promotes a limitless grief that is expressed in various destructive forms. For Britain, the guilt and anguish lie in disavowed identification with the empire and

its crimes. Knowledge of them is repressed but the empire cannot be let go. Chicken Tikka Masala is, after all, now the national dish. We'll see in a few weeks how manic elation is articulated around sports spectatorship. That symptom is also relevant to the place of laughter in British life. Ricky Gervais and a few others have been fighting to liberate comedy from its complicity with melancholia.

Largely undetected by either government or media, Britain's immigrants and their descendants have generated more positive possibilities. Other varieties of interaction have developed alongside the usual tales of crime and racial conflict. These patterns emerge, not from a mosaic pluralism along US lines, in which each self-sustaining and carefully segregated element is located so as to enhance a larger picture, but with an unruly, convivial mode of interaction in which differences have to be negotiated in real time.

Britain's civic life has been endowed with a multi-culture that we do not always value or use wisely. In many instances, convivial social forms have sprouted spontaneously and unappreciated from the detritus of Roy Jenkins' failed mid 1960s experiments with integration.

Conviviality is a social pattern in which different metropolitan groups dwell in close proximity but where their racial, linguistic and

religious particularities do not—as the logic of ethnic absolutism suggests they must--add up to discontinuities of experience or insuperable problems of communication. In these conditions, a degree of differentiation can be combined with a large measure of overlapping. This was vividly evident in the carnival crowd swirling around Highbury last weekend. There the cosmopolis on pitch has come to correspond in complex and interesting ways to the cosmopolis around it.

There are institutional, demographic, generational, educational, legal and political commonalities as well as elective variations that inter-cut the dimensions of difference and complicate the desire to possess or manage the cultural habits of others as a function of one's own relationship with identity. Conviviality acknowledges this complexity and, though it cannot banish conflict, can be shown to have equipped people with means of managing it in their own interests and in the interests of others with whom they can be induced, heteropathically identify.

Recognising conviviality should not signify the absence of racism. Instead, it can convey the idea that alongside its institutional and interpersonal dynamics, the means of racism's overcoming have also evolved. Racism is still there, souring things, distorting economic relations and debasing public

life but it is now articulated together with the ambivalent mainstreaming of black culture.

Conviviality promotes this combination which does not represent the end of Britain's immigration problem though it may herald its uncoupling from the political rules specified by Enoch Powell's belligerent imagination. Plurality mutates into more complex and challenging forms. The black community itself is shifting away from a Caribbean-descended majority towards being an African one.

In this convivial culture, racial and ethnic differences have been rendered unremarkable, in Raymond Williams' distinctive sense of the word, they have been able to become "ordinary". Instead of adding to the premium of race as political ontology and economic fate, people discover that the things which really divide them are much more profound: taste, life-style, leisure preferences. By making racial differences appear ordinary and banal, even boring, convivial interaction even when it is promoted by devices like reality TV, has disseminated everyday virtues that enrich our cities, drive our cultural industries and enhance our struggling democracy so that it resists pressure operate in segregated and colour-coded forms.

Exposure to otherness can involve more than jeopardy. Conviviality inspires us to demand a more mature polity that, even if it is not entirely free

of racism, might be better equipped to deal with racial inequality and cultural plurality as matters of politics without lapsing into unproductive guilt and narcissistic anguish.

The first conclusion that emerges from this brief survey is that the supposedly unbridgeable gulf between civilizations can be easily spanned. This epiphany came across strongly in the tales told by homecoming British detainees about their incarceration in the Guantanamo camps and their lives before and since. Those men were presented as having reverted to alien type, as symbols of the failure of multi-cultural society, however, their return has prompted processes of reflection and recognition that overturned the governmental appellation emblazoned with that fatal, Kafkaesque phrase "they must have done something wrong".

Jamal al Harith, the Mancunian website designer of Jamaican descent, was the first to reveal how far we had traveled from 1960s recipes for assimilation. He explained that in articulating their strongest desires for freedom and relief from the camp regime, his fellow inmates agreed that what they really craved was a packet of Highland Shortbread biscuits. Another returnee, the Brummie Moazamm Begg who has written an account of his life, tells us that even when he was held for protracted periods in solitary confinement, the skills he had acquired here enabled

him to make a sustaining dialogue with his guards. We also learn that he read Harry Potter and even received the helpful gift of Jeremy Paxman's The English from one of his MI6 interrogators something that might usefully expand our understanding of the phrase cruel and unusual punishment.

More seriously, Begg explains that his father had him and his brother educated in a Jewish school. A decision which reveals profound things about migrancy and assimilation that defy simplistic civilisationism and imperialist political theology alike.

From an early age my father enrolled us both at a Jewish primary school. His seemingly odd choice was entirely pragmatic. King David, with its high standards of education and emphasis on religious and moral ethics, coupled with Kosher dietary laws similar to our own, was the ideal option for him. But the choice also demonstrated my father's liberalism, his desire to take what was best from all cultures. It laid the foundations for the type of religious teaching that I became so interested in as I grew older.

The lives of the 7th of July bombers and of their victims fall into different categories from the returnee stories, but they too yield resources to illustrate and to explain some of the social characteristics of convivial interaction. The multi-

lingual and cosmopolitan lives of the victims have become reasonably well known through a process of public grieving that has shown it would be wrong to assume their murders represented nothing more than another view of the opposition between solidarity and diversity. This was made moving and explicit in the shrine to their memory outside Kings Cross station.

A more difficult point is that nobody involved in those events seems to have lived comfortably bounded by culture, language, religion, race or history from which they were unable to escape.

Even the bombers seem to have had problems conforming to the rules of ethnic absolutism they had chosen. Their Manichaeism delirium might also be read as a response to culture's protean qualities and convivial aspects. We are not yet in a position to say how the political, cultural and generational shifts in their ethnically-bounded communities, the demise of the Asian Youth movements and so on, may have contributed to their radical estrangement but the combination of integration and Yorkshire apartheid suggests the dimensions of a political problem that will not be effectively managed by history tests, better punctuation and more language classes.

There are reasons to be wary of Mohammad Sidique Khan's explanatory tape but are obliged to consider his claim that his murderous actions were ethical in

character. The video makes clear that he at least seems to have taken the rhetoric of war on terror at face value: "We are at war and I am a soldier . . . now you too will taste the reality of this situation".

The sole immigrant among the four terrorist bombers was the Jamaica-born convert, Germaine Lindsay who, we're told, did not speak Arabic, attend the local Mosque in Aylesbury or mix with the largely Pakistani Muslim community there.

I accept that London's cosmopolis generates new interpretative challenges each day. My Portugese is improving as a result of my bus journeys, though my Polish lags a long way behind. The focus upon conviviality that I propose asks us to look at this city as it is now, and not through the sour traces of Enoch's nightmares regurgitated by David Goodhart, John Lloyd, Bob Rowthorn, Michael Collins and company.

The spirit of Jean Charles de Menezes can assist us here. He constituted a presence so extravagantly unimaginable to his executioners that it could only be misrecognised in the racial archetype of a "mongolian-eyed" IC4. The punditocracy have not devoted a single line to exploring his place in this city, never mind the lives of the other Brazilian denizens in their multi-occupied Lambeth bedsit which

sounded like a throwback to Elspeth Huxley's 1964 exposé Back Street New Worlds.

The conviviality to which I conclude by inviting you to commit, requires that we ask how his alien presence in London became inconceivable to power and law. How did logic of race hierarchy contributed to his fate and, in a way that might counterpoint the very different case of the Morecombe Bay cockle collectors--how making sense of his killing necessitates moving beyond the inadequate and distracting binary logic of black and white.

Though governmental collusion in the operations of the market that puts rock-bottom prices on these varieties of life and labour must be grasped, the focus of this post-colonial analysis involves more than revisiting the well worn issue of culture versus economics. Understanding the significance of the unfolding difference between citizens and denizens demands a more complex model for thinking about plurality than the old defaults which suggested that tastes, cultures, needs and habits could all be aligned and managed as part of a pact which nudges people towards citizenship essentially through their experience as cultural clients of government--faith schools and lottery money as the favoured currency of a quid pro quo.

Rather than seeking to cater politically for each group through mastery of the sorts of cultural things

that ought to correspond to its particularity, and then using that fidelity to secure affiliation to the larger national "community", there must be recognition that diversity means more than just feeding and reproducing the particularity of groups imagined by their community-leaders in the hope that their ritual and formal inclusion will generate reciprocal gestures.

That version of multi-culturalism *has* failed. It effectively placed a few people in charge of saying what the cultural habits of the whole group should be, and then sealed communities up in a version of their past bound to fixed forms of hierarchy as well as mechanical electoral mobilisation. That colonial arrangement not only guarantees nothing by way of commitment to a larger plural identity. Culture is misunderstood and oversimplified through being conceived as ethnic property to be owned and held under copyright. The vital alternative comprehends unruly, convivial multiculture as a sort of "Open Source" co-production.

Sustaining and valuing that conviviality, may yet become legitimate goals in a larger strategy for bringing British citizenship to life. That attractive possibility demands acts of creativity and imagination on the part of planners, politicians and yes, sociologists too.