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A Critical Analysis of Britain’s Living, Dead and Zombie Multiculturalism: From 7/7 to the London 2012 Olympic Games

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Abstract: A day after the London 2012 Bid Committee succeeded in bringing the Olympic Games to Britain using the slogan “the world in one city”, a series of coordinated suicide bomb attacks occurred across London (7/7). In one day, Britain’s somewhat beleaguered multiculturalism went from prompting national celebrations to being decried as “dead” by politicians and commentators alike. Against a backdrop of the Committee’s success in July 2005 through to the end of the Games themselves in August 2012, this article analyses the social and political discourses and debates that ensued in relation to Britain’s multiculturalism. Exploring the metamorphosis of these discourses—using the analogous language of being alive, dead and zombie—this article reflects on the impact and legacy of the London Games on future understandings of multiculturalism. In doing so, this article argues that the everyday lived variety of multiculturalism will always be distinct and different from the political discourses appropriated—or rejected—by political actors.

Keywords: London Olympics; multiculturalism; Britain; Muslims; 7/7; zombies; politics; discourse

1. Even Dead

“That multiculturalism has failed, is in political retreat and even dead ... has become a dominant discourse” laments Modood ([1], p. 1). But what exactly is meant when multiculturalism is referred to as being “dead”? This article sets out to explore this question at the same time as extending this to include other similar tropes, those that have been actively used to refer to Britain’s multiculturalism for instance “zombie” as indeed those that might arise from valid extensions, for instance the extent to

which multiculturalism might be seen to be “alive”. Drawing upon Weber’s observation that through processes of constructivism the norm of the truth can be located solely in the truth that it has been made or constructed [2], this article will focus on—and indeed argue—that the type of multiculturalism referred to in the British setting is little more than a discursively figurative and metaphorical construct that exists only in public and political discourses, something that is far removed from the objective and factual realities of Britain’s “everyday” and lived multiculturalism. Exploring the discursive through rhetorical and metaphorical tropes, this article will further argue that what is known and understood about this construct of multiculturalism is based on inter-subjectivity rather than classical objectivity, viability rather than truth.

To critically engage this discursively constructed multiculturalism within a relevant and appropriate timeframe, this article reflects on the public and political discourses that emerged against the backdrop of the London Olympic Games: from the successful winning of the 2012 Games by the Bid Committee in July 2005 when Britain’s multiculturalism was at once seen to be both alive and in rude health through to the hosting of the Games in London in the summer of 2012 by which time that same multiculturalism had been proclaimed dead simultaneously also in a state of zombification. This period is relevant in that the London Games not only actively employed discourses about multiculturalism in the processes of both winning and hosting the Games but so too did it coincide with clear shifts in public and political thinking and pronouncements about multiculturalism, not least catalysed by the attacks by four suicide bomber on London’s public transport system on 7 July 2005 (7/7). This article therefore considers how shifting discourses saw Britain place its living and vibrant multiculturalism front and centre in its bid for the Games before going on to explore the extent to which this almost immediately changed in the aftermath of 7/7. From there, this article seeks to unpack some of the arguments put forward by Paul Gilroy and others about how multiculturalism can be understood to be a “living dead” reality before closing with a critical reflection on the London Games themselves and the extent to which they sought to re-animate Britain’s multiculturalism. Drawing upon a range of sources, this article seeks to compliment the academic inquiry by making reference to relevant tropes and metaphors relevant to other fictional constructs of living, dead and undead in order to speak directly to the subject matter whilst also illuminating the discourses and narratives under consideration.

2. Multiculturalism in Political Discourse

In the British context, one does not have to look far to find evidence of the dominant discourses about multiculturalism’s demise for which Modood laments [1]. Whilst far from always being necessarily explicit or overtly expressed, this is not to suggest that the British setting does not resonate with wider or more extreme criticisms evident elsewhere. At its most extreme, resonant discourses can be seen in the underpinning ideology and motivation of Anders Behring Breivik who shortly after launching a bomb attack on government buildings in Oslo, Norway undertook a mass shooting at a youth camp on the island of Utøya killing 77 people. Shortly before committing those atrocities, Breivik had uploaded a copy of his manifesto to the internet. Titled “2083: A European Declaration of Independence” [3], his remit was wide, endorsing extreme forms of Zionism, white nationalism and right-wing populism at the same time as endorsing and promoting Islamophobia, cultural conservatism and anti-feminism. Underpinning all of this however was what Breivik identified as the greatest threats

pertaining to the continued viability of modern Europe: a heady and interrelated concoction of Islam, “cultural Marxism” and most tellingly, rampant multiculturalism. If these three things were not destroyed—or at least contained—then for Breivik, Europe’s identity and all that it was seen to stand for would be imminently lost.

Of course Breivik’s views and methods were undoubtedly extreme, both unlikely to appeal to any mass or mainstream constituency or audience. Nonetheless, the threats he identified—in particular, the threat posed by a rampant multiculturalism—resonate with similar dominant discourses routinely voiced elsewhere across the European political mainstream [4]. So much so that in recent years, a number of Europe’s political leaders have actively sought to attack and denounce the notion, concept and existence of multiculturalism in highly rhetorical and at times, vitriolic ways. Germany’s Angela Merkel for instance in October 2010 spoke about how “the approach [to build] a multicultural [society] and to live side-by-side and to enjoy each other ... has failed...” [5]. In reinforcing her point, she reiterated her view by repeating the statement that multiculturalism had “...utterly failed” [5]. Similar was France’s Nicolas Sarkozy, who in the same week as Merkel in October 2012, added to the debate by declaring that “we have been too concerned about the identity of the person who was arriving and not enough about the identity of the country that was receiving him...” before adding, “...multiculturalism has been a failure” [6]. Britain via David Cameron also joined in the political rout:

“Under the doctrine of state multiculturalism, we have encouraged different cultures to live separate lives, apart from each other and apart from the mainstream. We’ve failed to provide a vision of society to which they feel they want to belong. We’ve even tolerated these segregated communities behaving in ways that run completely counter to our values ... Frankly, we need a lot less of the passive tolerance of recent years and much more active, muscular liberalism” [7].

Despite being roundly condemned for failing by various political leaders, it was not always clear what exactly they were referring to when they spoke about multiculturalism, especially when all three of those countries—Germany, France and Britain—were seeing the levels of diversity within their respective populations not only increasing but also becoming more complex and more “multi”.

This lack of clarity may reflect the wider situation as regards notions and concepts of multiculturalism. Despite its widespread usage and adoption, multiculturalism remains a relatively recent phenomenon in terms of political and social theory with standard works being surprisingly still little more than thirty years old [8–10]. However, following the demographic changes that have occurred in the latter half of the twentieth century in much of Western Europe as a result of mass migration and other forms of ongoing immigration, multiculturalism as an adopted socio-political theory and model upon which a nation state is founded can be seen to be a very different entity to the real and lived multiculturalism that many experience on a day-to-day basis and which currently exists in almost all European states in relation to the levels of diversity and group difference. Despite the latter point being a reality, it is worth noting that some European states do not necessarily or self-consciously declare themselves to be multicultural—those that adopted and promoted themselves as being multicultural—thereby ensuring a critical distance is maintained between the state and the socio-political model. This is important because as Kelly rightly notes, irrespective of whether modern Western European nation states identify with that particular socio-political model, most will still face the

“problems” that are consequential of multiculturalism even if they choose not to officially endorse or implement multiculturalism through any given political ideology, strategy or policy agenda [8].

For Kelly [11], there exists the need to differentiate between what he sees as the two distinct “types” of multiculturalism. For him, the first is a more “factual multiculturalism”, a demographic reality that is reflected in the simple fact that multiple cultures—a catch-all term incorporating ethnicities, religions, nationalities as indeed cultures among others—exist within a single state’s borders and can be typically seen to be evident in some or all of its public spaces. The second is what he describes as a “prescribed multiculturalism”, a largely institutionalised and state-endorsed socio-political model which seeks to apply egalitarian or libertarian principles of justice and rights as a means of trying to redress Kymlicka’s “problems” of multiculturalism, for instance the consequences of group difference and conflict that can become manifested in terms of exclusion, inequality and racism [8]. It is worth noting that while the former “factual” type of multiculturalism can exist without the latter “prescriptive” type, rarely can the latter exist without the former.

3. Contextualising Britain’s Multiculturalism

Despite Kelly’s suggestion of different types, there remain some problems as regards the interpretation and understanding of multiculturalism within political discourses and rhetoric [11]. For Cameron, Merkel and Sarkozy—as also Breivik—it was not always entirely clear which “type” of multiculturalism was being suggested as having failed or, to refer back to Modood, of being dead [1]. Clearly, if multiculturalism is factual, then it cannot be this type of multiculturalism that can be duly pronounced dead, not without certain drastic measures being taken as regards the demographic diversity of individual states’ populations. If it were, it would seem to suggest that the demography would have to be returned to some form of mono-culture or historical homogeneity, if indeed either truly ever existed as a distinct reality. In Britain, Germany and France—as indeed elsewhere in Europe—factual multiculturalism is becoming an increasing reality with significant population changes ongoing. As such, factual multiculturalism is therefore becoming an ever more concrete—and factual—reality. As Gilroy [12] put it, Britain’s factual multiculturalism is routinely exhibited and apparent through what he terms Britain’s multicultural “conviviality”. For him, this conviviality consumes everyday experiences of living within and alongside difference and hybridity to the extent that the multiculturalism experienced becomes non-reflexive, taken-for-granted and somewhat ordinary. He adds that Britain’s multiculturalism is undoubtedly banal. In being an ordinary and banal aspect of everyday British life therefore, so Britain’s multiculturalism in this respect at least, would seem to be some distance from the multiculturalism Cameron and others were seemingly referring to. Indeed, if Britain’s multiculturalism is convivial, then just the term would seem to suggest quite the opposite to it being an entity that is dead: instead, alive, buzzing and enjoyable but tempered by ordinariness and everyday engagement.

As regards Kelly’s second type of multiculturalism [11], given the resonance between the egalitarian or libertarian principles of justice and rights underpinning that particular type of prescribed multiculturalism and the many similar principles that underpin the modern, liberal state then it must surely be as unlikely that it is this type of multiculturalism that Cameron *et al.* were referring to when speaking about multiculturalism’s failures and untimely demise. In fact in Britain, this type of

multiculturalism can be seen as being routinely promoted and endorsed by various politicians and political institutions as also the state itself. This particular “brand multiculturalism” can be seen to be one that is deployed to accentuate and congratulate its inherent sense of tolerance and respect for diversity, is according to Lewis [13] most evident when Britain seeks to communicate about itself to a global audience—using its multiculturalism to promote, communicate and reaffirm “our” way of life, “our” diversity, “our” tolerance and “our” values. So much so that this type of communication about multiculturalism can be seen to be evident in the speeches of various existing and former prime ministers and politicians alike. For example, the former Foreign Secretary David Blunkett stated while in office that “The [British] Government welcomes ... cultural diversity ... our society is multicultural and is shaped by its diverse peoples” ([4], p. 129). When it appears convenient therefore, Britain’s commitment to multiculturalism not only remains strong and evident but more so becomes promoted and pronounced for maximum impact: brand “Britain’s multiculturalism”. As Meer and Modood [14] rightly note, such has a vehicular quality which allows it to be differently adopted in different settings and contexts.

Multiculturalism however had not been without its critics and as Meer and Modood [14] note, had been “creaking under the weight” of both expectations and criticisms for some time. Reflecting on the past decade or so, multiculturalism has been roundly blamed by its critics for a number of social ills including the inadvertent creation of parallel communities, the threatening social cohesion and the cultivating of enemies within while simultaneously destroying the identities and values that in some not so distant halcyon past, were alleged to have made “us” who “we” once were [15]. If multiculturalism had not died yet, so the argument to have emerged was that multiculturalism most definitely needed to and quick. For Meer and Modood [14] however, the need to query the validity of such claims has to some extent been overlooked. For them, instead of understanding multiculturalism as having gone into “retreat”—till it disappears and eventually “dies” one might presume—it has been, and indeed continues to be subjected to an ongoing process of productive critique that they prefer to describe as a process of “civic re-balancing”. In doing so, Meer and Modood acknowledge that in spite of both the factual and prescribed types of multiculturalism being evident in the British setting lost it has in some ways lost prominence as a political term. Whilst true, the term does however continue to be prominent in political discourses and it is this that this article seeks to focus on.

While debates and re-evaluations of multiculturalism were therefore catalyzed by the events of 7/7, they were not begun by them [16]. As Modood [1] notes, there had been many within the British setting before this who had been actively constructing multiculturalism as a straw man ready to be destroyed at any given and appropriate moment. Pilikington [17] and Kundnani [18] both agree and trace the first noises of discontent to the immediate aftermath of the publication of Parekh’s report on multicultural Britain [19]. Further death knolls were sounded following the 2001 northern mill town riots, the attacks on 9/11 and the growing pace of the Britishness agenda that emerged from different political actors [18]. Since then, multiculturalism’s critics have gathered pace: from New Labour’s David Blunkett and the Conservative Party’s Norman Lamont [20]; through David Goodhart’s [21,22] anti-multiculturalism broadside in Prospect magazine and Rod Liddle’s assault in the Spectator [23]; to the populist discourses of the Daily Express and Daily Mail [20,24] amongst others. One of the most prominent was the call to “kill off multiculturalism” because it suggests separateness by Trevor Phillips, the former Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality and current head of the Equality and

Human Rights Commission [4]. Without doubt, the dominant discourses about multiculturalism were far from positive even before the events of 7/7.

4. The World in One City: Britain's Multicultural Ideal

Given the political antagonism shown towards multiculturalism, it was maybe somewhat surprising that multiculturalism played such a prominent role in the bid to win the London Olympic Games. Played out in Singapore on 6 July 2005 for the International Olympic Committee (IOC), Britain's Bid Committee of politicians and sportspeople lined up to reiterate the value of "our" multiculturalism: not only about how diverse Britain was but how that diversity brought with it significant opportunity. As Winter [25] puts it, Britain's multiculturalism was not only being actively communicated as a living and breathing entity but it was also being communicated in such ways that stressed that Britain's multiculturalism was highly successful. Maybe more importantly, that same multiculturalism was clearly recognised by Britain's Olympic Bid Committee as something that was highly marketable to the rest of the world. Accentuating this before the showing of a multi-story film titled *The World in One City*, the then Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone announced how:

"London is a city that welcomes the world with open arms ... a city where 300 languages are spoken every day and the people who speak them, live together happily..." [26].

One of the stories featured in the film that accompanied the bid focused on a young African boy sitting in what can only be described as a stereotypical and by consequence, indistinguishable African street [27]. Cutting away from images of him throwing stones to pass the time of day, the camera panned between a woman selling what seemed to be her only possessions and a police officer suspiciously and uncomfortably fixing his gaze on the boy. Trapped between representations of abject poverty and state corruption, London—if successful in their bid—would provide with the boy the hope that he and indeed millions of others around the world desperately needed. In stressing this message, the boy in the film then hears a television in the background. On turning to view it, he sees a future being played out where he is the person winning gold at the 2012 Games. As the commentator announces, "... he realised his boyhood dream here in London" [27]. The stories that followed as part of the film communicated similar "rags to riches" stories, each one revolving around the opportunities presented and made possible by Britain's undeniably successful multiculturalism. Lord Sebastian Coe, a former Olympics gold medallist, added: "[London is a] multicultural mix of 200 nations ... families have come from every continent. They practice every religion and every faith. What unites them is London" [27]. Multiculturalism was a lived—and indeed living—experience of London and as Carrington reflected, it was "the ordinary, everyday, lived multiculturalism of contemporary London, its cosmopolitan openness, that was seen to have swayed the IOC voting members" ([28], p. 139).

However, having been awarded the Games, Silk [29] notes how the handover ceremony that followed in Beijing seemed to immediately overlook or at least relegate Britain's marketable multiculturalism, preferring instead to focus on more traditional and staid images of Britain, those relating to bowler hats and bus queues as also such landmarks as Stonehenge, Windsor Castle and the London Eye amongst others ([29], p. 739). Back in Britain, and as Falcoux and Silk [16] note, the announcement was met with near ecstatic delight from both civic and political leaders. Likewise too

in Trafalgar Square, carefully stage-managed celebrations ensured that the positive—and multicultural—message was not lost on those looking on. Similar was also soon being communicated in the media. As Jackie Ashley [30] in the Guardian newspaper wrote:

“What really seems to have won the games for London is what the IOC calls our “outreach”... Those making the final decision were impressed, apparently, with our openness to other countries and cultures ... London is vibrant, alive and open ... with its 50 separate ethnic communities and its more than 300 language groups” [30].

She added, “...if we have won the games partly because of our openness and diversity then we should celebrate that”. Whilst somewhat self-congratulatory—recalling Lewis’ [13] observations about Britain’s tendency to be self-congratulatory about “our” openness and diversity—London’s everyday lived and factual multiculturalism was, at the time of Ashley’s writing at least, being lauded as a cause for collective and national celebration. Without doubt, Britain’s multiculturalism was alive and well.

5. 7/7: The Day after the Night before

Ashley’s article was published the day after Britain won the London Games. In doing so, it was likely to be being read by commuters travelling into London for work, the same time a series of co-ordinated suicide bomb attacks took place on London’s public transport system. Perpetrated by four young British men of Muslim heritage, the attacks targeted civilians during the morning rush hour killing a total of 52 people and injuring more than 700. An act of natural horror, the attacks unsurprisingly featured heavily in news and other forms of media. Reminiscent of the “found footage” horror genre, news reports juxtaposed grainy CCTV images showing the mundanity of the bombers’ actions prior to the attacks—buying train tickets and parking cars at Luton station—alongside the equally grainy but far more chaotic “real” footage that was shot on mobile phones by those caught up in the attacks. The perpetrators’ ordinariness sat in stark opposition to the extraordinariness of the chaos and carnage, images of both victims and survivors alike blurring the lines between what Carroll [31] describes as the realities of natural horror and the spectacle of art horror experienced through the lens of the news media. As Silk [29] noted, such events also sat in stark contrast to the heavily managed and staged sporting spectacle that had occurred the day before in the same city. No longer did London have a cause for celebration. And more pertinently, no longer did Britain have cause to celebrate its multiculturalism because as news voices and indeed other commentators were quick to recount, those behind the attacks were the direct products of Britain’s multiculturalism. As one of those—Gilles Kepel—sought to put it shortly after the attacks, the 7/7 bombers “were the children of Britain’s own multicultural society” [32].

In *Culture of Fear: Risk-Taking and the Morality of Low Expectation*, Furedi argued that in contemporary Western societies fear would be the “next big thing”; its defining feature the “belief that humanity is confronted by powerful destructive forces that threaten our everyday existence” ([33], p. vii). For him, one of the consequences of this would be that any perceived social or political threat would be seen to be capable of being transformed into a matter of survival. Fear would therefore feed itself, creating the disposition to further and repeatedly speculate and exaggerate about ever greater fears, threats and constructed monsters, most of which would be lurking just around the corner waiting

to wreak even further carnage and chaos. For Furedi, these fears, threats and monsters would be uncritically and unquestionably consumed as realities which result in uncritical and unquestionable realities—albeit socially constructed—not only existing but so too detrimentally impacting upon everyday existence, observable in the ordinary and mundane therefore. Consequently, the ordinariness and mundanity of the 7/7's perpetrators as represented in the news media was striking. In doing so, for both media and politicians alike, so the home-grown in “home-grown bomber” as was coined to describe the perpetrators, seemed to make the threat they—and indeed numerous others—posed much more real: closer to “us” and who “we” were [4]. Despite being differentially identified as “Muslim”, as the images from the news confirmed, the perpetrators—those presenting the greatest threat to “us”—were largely indistinguishable from many who lived within Britain's ordinary, factual and convivial multiculturalism. Highlighting the resonance between natural and art horror once more, so the reality became similar to the observation by a character in George A. Romero's 2007 film *Diary of the Dead*. As he put it, “...it's us against them ... except that they are us”.

Following the widespread acknowledgement that 7/7's perpetrators were home-grown and therefore like “us”, numerous debates took place in the public and political spaces focusing on “what went wrong”. These in turn prompted such multifarious political ideas, debates and policy initiatives as the need for greater community cohesion, better integration, improved understandings of what it meant to be “British”, a greater sense of belonging, curbs on immigration, the role of religion in society, and the need to improve understandings about citizenship. Most prominent however were those seeking to interrogate the idea that the home-grown bombers had finally exposed the inherent and undeniable failures of Britain's multiculturalism [19,20]. For example, William Pfaff in the *Observer* declared that the bombers were a “consequence of a misguided and catastrophic pursuit of multiculturalism” while Martin Wolf in the *Financial Times* argued that “multiculturalism must be discarded as nonsense” [32]. Various other forums, journals and institutions published similarly derogatory articles and think-pieces about Britain's multiculturalism while others held or sponsored events around similar themes, some asking “Is Multiculturalism Dead?” and “Is Multiculturalism Over?” [20]. Others set their sights on the future to look “beyond” multiculturalism. But as Allen [20] notes, it was questionable whether all or indeed any of these examples were genuinely concerned with multiculturalism or whether it was the “problem” within Britain's multicultural society that such examples were rather more concerned with. More worryingly, and as Parekh [19] rightly put it, those “problems” were largely equated with Muslims and Islam.

Exploring the links between natural and art horror once more, many of the debates being undertaken reflected the observation of one of the characters from Romero's 1968 film, *Night of the Living Dead*. As he put it, “we're safe for now, but there's going to be more and more of these things ... this isn't a passing thing... We've got to do something and fast.” Consequently in the ensuing months and weeks, the notion of needing to “do something and fast” could be seen in the myriad number of broad “solutions” being posited as regards solving the “problem” by various different commentators [32]. For many though, the only “solution” was to finally destroy the source of the problem; the multiculturalism that had spawned the home-grown bombers. Yet whilst these as indeed others routinely and roundly attacked multiculturalism in turn demanding its death, few articulated what “type” of multiculturalism it was that could actually be killed off and more pertinently, how they intended to do it.

6. Zombie Multiculturalism: The Walking Dead?

As Gilroy [34] put it, Britain's lived multiculturalism is irreversibly evident across the country especially in the vast urban spaces that make up much of the contemporary landscape. In spite of the myriad calls for multiculturalism's death therefore, what many were focusing on was at best a monist abstraction; the discursive construct they themselves were creating through repeatedly referring to it. Consequently, Britain's factual multiculturalism continued to live on in spite of the numerous voices pronouncing its death. One way of trying to understand this might be to consider Ulrich Beck's notion of "zombie categories" [35–39]. Beck defines zombie categories as established concepts and notions that continue to be employed socio-politically and socio-economically despite having seemingly very little contemporary value in terms of their ability and function to accurately describe, explain or conceive. For him, such categories are therefore both "dead" and "alive": dead in that they no longer adequately describe, explain or conceive the complexity of contemporary society; alive because they continue to be employed by various parties—especially within the voices of the state and its institutions—given they have been embedded in the social and political lexicons thereby attributing them with currency. As such, multiculturalism—in line with Beck—functions along the lines of a "zombie category", being neither living nor dead but both thereby zombie.

Whilst Gilroy [34] has himself used the phrase "zombie multiculturalism", his can be understood and seen to be being used in a slightly different way. Responding to what he describes as a series of "noisy announcements" about multiculturalism that emerged post-7/7, he goes on to note how the lack of clarity informing these announcements created a situation where it was difficult to know whether such announcements were about the ideological, socio-political formation of multiculturalism or society's inherent and lived multiculturalism. For him, such announcements tended instead to refer to a distinctly ambiguous concept that was appropriated in order to accommodate a wide range of different woes, especially those relating to security, identity, cohesion and the "menace" of Islamic extremism: the discursively constructed multiculturalism referred to at the outset. For Gilroy therefore, it is here the zombie metaphor becomes pertinent because as he puts it, multiculturalism—"Britain's stubbornly undead diversity..."—continued to live on as a zombie, one that was "...terrifying to the power and destabilising of the order [politicians and others] that pronounced their death" ([34], p. 384). One reading of Meer and Modood's [40] recently could be interpreted as being similar. Arguing that multiculturalism is a zombie "term" rather than a category, for them it is the hollowness of the term and its usage rather than the category—the lived reality of multiculturalism—that can be more appropriately described as being a zombie.

In bringing together both Beck, Gilroy and Meer and Modood therefore, whilst the term "multiculturalism" may in itself be quite "dead" given the inadequacy of it to describe Britain's "stubbornly undead diversity" it continues to be employed and so remains socially and politically resonant. Similarly for those who continue to proclaim it dead, so that same "stubbornly undead diversity" continues to provide a bulwark against them, thereby insisting it lives on in spite of numerous and multifarious claims to the contrary. As such, multiculturalism exists in a condition of being both living and dead and therefore, zombie. And like zombies, multiculturalism—to its critics and detractors at least—is seen to have unfathomable strength, limitless aggression and the ability to contaminate without any sense of cognition or respect for what it is—or might be—seeking to devour [34].

This resonates with the zombie metaphor elsewhere, in the work of Bauman [41], Lentin and Tittle [42], and Giroux [43] for example, all of whom focus on various concepts of “zombie politics”. Whilst Bauman [40] explores this in relation to the role of the state, markets and sovereignty—resonating with Silk’s [29] acknowledgement of the London Olympics being a seductive consumerist union of commerce, sport and television—Giroux [43] does so in terms of the tendency to criminalise those associated with a range of different social problems, again having resonance with the way in which Muslims have been somewhat homogenously seen to be “problems” thereby requiring intense scrutiny and observation [4,43]. As Bauman therefore rightly notes, the cultivation of such politics function by seeking to create:

“a culture of fear and suspicion towards all those others—immigrants, refugees, Muslims, youth, minorities of class and colour, the unemployed, the disabled, and the elderly—who, in the absence of dense social networks and social supports, fall prey to unprecedented levels of displaced resentment from the media, public scorn for their vulnerability, and increased criminalization” ([41], p. 4).

Consequently, there would seem to be something of a symbiotic relationship between zombie politics and zombie multiculturalism. Seizing upon multiculturalism and the need to protect “us”—“our” everyday existence—from harm is therefore interesting. Whilst Gilroy rightly acknowledges how the noisy announcements about Britain’s multiculturalism were rarely directed at anything tangible or reflective of the reality of Britain’s increasing diversity, maybe underpinning those calls for the death of multiculturalism—as a discursive construction of a non-existent, non-tangible entity—was something of a desire to ferment a culture of fear and suspicion even further. Maybe like the multiculturalism that was constructed, so too were the arguments and debates also.

For Canavan [44], such political agendas and activities can be seen as examples of what he describes as “necropolitics”; ideologies and approaches that function upon the logic of quarantine and by consequence, extermination. Despite Britain’s everyday lived multicultural experience being a reality for many, indeed that many Britons are themselves from a wide range of different multicultural backgrounds and heritages, for the politicians as indeed others the discourse was such that multiculturalism was no longer relevant or necessary. As Canavan [44] adds, such political discourses would then have the ability to declare multiculturalism disposable. For those making such claims, British society could therefore rid itself of multiculturalism despite the fact that it was a reality and an inherent part of many people’s self and community identities. If it could not, then it would be necessary to fear and take appropriate action in order to safeguard “us” and what “we” stand for from it. Mbembe and Meintjes [45] explain this by suggesting that such political processes have their origins in colonialism and imperialism as also in the conceptual thinking associated with slaves and slavery. Whilst the slave-owning class may therefore deem the slave dead—both socially and legally—the truth is that in spite of such proclamations, the slave remains alive. More importantly, not only does the slave remain alive but so too does the slave remain a crucial and productive actor in the slave-owner’s socio-economic sphere. Consequently whilst the politicians and others repeatedly declared Britain’s multiculturalism—and its human products—dead, so too did it continue to live on especially when the politicians and various arms and functions of the state wanted it to; especially when Britain was being sold as multicultural—symbolically representing Britain’s state-endorsed values of tolerance, equality,

fairness and more—to a global audience. Britain’s multicultural slave therefore remained a crucial and productive actor in the Britain’s socio-economic sphere in turn reinforcing Lewis’s [13] observation about how the British state and its institutions were undeniably selective as to when and why multiculturalism was allowed to be productive.

7. It Lives: Multiculturalism and the London 2012 Games

In spite of the intervening years between winning the London Olympics in 2005 and the hosting of the Games in 2012 being littered with various debates, discourses and announcements about the death of multiculturalism, multiculturalism was once more placed front and centre when it came to the Games themselves, most evident in the opening ceremony. Silk [29] writes that sport and sporting events serve a very clear function in establishing the narratives of the nation. For him, such events have the capability of defining—indeed, re-defining also—the nation’s sanctioned and state-endorsed identities. If so, then the identity of Britain that was portrayed in the opening ceremony of the London 2012 Games was clearly one that was not only multicultural, but was one that explicitly and undeniably valued it. Winter [25] acknowledges this in his detailed analysis of the opening ceremony. With Oscar winning film director Danny Boyle acting as artistic director for a further globally-focused sporting spectacle, Winter explains how the ceremony began with a short film of the River Thames tracing its way through Britain to London. From there, various large-scale tableaux drew in various junctures of British history and cultural history including the Industrial Revolution, the two World Wars, the swinging sixties and the Beatles, the monarchy, and James Bond among others. As Winter notes, whilst the monarchy and Bond nodded towards notions of empire and privilege, these were counter-balanced by similar nods towards Britain’s more “progressive” politics, evident in references to suffrage, trade unions and the arrival of the first Commonwealth migrants on the Empire Windrush. However, some were unimpressed by this nod towards inclusivity. As Winter [25] put it, despite the inclusion and presence of black and minority ethnic performers, they were used in such ways that they never threatened, criticized or made demands of traditional visions and notions of Britishness.

Still, Boyle used ethnically diverse performers to play out various different tableaux, deliberately—symbolically?—rendering many of Britain’s pre-mass migration historical junctures inaccurate. There were other more subtle and nuanced moments also including the recognition of the role played by migrant workers in the National Health Service and the projection of Britain’s first televised interracial kiss—between actors John White and Joan Hooley—onto the side of the house during the “social media” interlude, itself an interlude that was built around the lives and interactions of two visibly non-white actors. Ironically, it was via social media that the ceremony was decried by some as “multicultural propaganda” [46]. Interestingly for others, it was a celebration of patriotism [47]. Most widely reported were the views of serving Conservative politician, Aidan Burley who tweeted during the ceremony: “The most leftie opening ceremony I have ever seen—more than Beijing, the capital of a communist state! Welfare tribute next?” [48] Soon after Burley further tweeted, “Thank God the athletes have arrived! Now we can move on from leftie multicultural crap. Bring back red arrows, Shakespeare and the Stones!” When asked about the tweets shortly after, Prime Minister Cameron maybe unsurprisingly responded by saying that in terms of his and the Government’s official viewpoint, “Clearly we don’t agree” [48] with Burley.

After the ceremony, Tim Soutphommasane in *The Guardian* newspaper wrote:

“it was Danny Boyle’s opening ceremony that did the most to define the legacy of the Games ... It was a convincing argument that Britishness wasn’t about nostalgic yearning for the stuff of an imperial past, but something that existed in the present and future” [49].

Alex Massie in *The Spectator* went further, echoing Ashley’s celebratory tone from seven years previous: “if this is multi-cultural Britain on stilts then, by gum, given the success of these games then let’s have more of this kind of thing ... That’s worth celebrating.” [50]. And in many ways, the visible manifestation and celebration of Britain’s multiculturalism was recurrent throughout the Games, not least in the faces of the medal winners: Jessica Ennis, Greg Rutherford, Nicola Adams, Anthony Joshua, Chris Hoy and indeed numerous others. As Dunt [51] put it, “If the opening ceremony represented what we have become to the world, our athletes have cemented that impression on the world. Diverse, happy, warm and ambitious; well-to-do rowers mingle with former asylum seekers” before adding, “Multi-culturalism is not, as its detractors claim, an ideology. It is simply a fact. It is not an aim, but a description...It is simply correct.” One of the lasting images of the Games and therefore a part of its legacy will be that of a smiling Mo Farah holding a Union flag above his head. Given that Farah is a former asylum seeker and practising Muslim of black African heritage, “*The World in One City*” could be somewhat cynically argued as being premonitory. Maybe however Dunt [51] got it inadvertently right. While he noted how Britain’s multiculturalism was “simply a fact ... simply correct” maybe it was also much more than that. In line with narratives about the nation, that same multiculturalism for Britain was more important in communicating “what we have become to the world” than what Britain was maybe seen to be at home. But did the Games re-animate multiculturalism, bringing it back to life from its untimely death: did it find a cure to its state of zombification or did it merely leave multiculturalism in the same state of living dead?

8. Conclusions: Neither Living nor Dead

As the period between the winning and staging of the Games shows, Britain’s multiculturalism was undeniably paradoxical. Whilst politicians and others voiced their desire to kill it—some declaring it to be already quite dead—Britain’s multiculturalism was also being employed as an outward facing symbol from behind which the British state was able to communicate a very clear message to a global audience about who and what it was in the twenty-first century. Clearly resonating with Lewis’s [13] recognition of how Britain’s multiculturalism becomes prominent and is shown commitment to when it suits, this was indeed true and recurrent through the placing of multiculturalism not only front and centre throughout the entire London Olympics procedure but so too discursively defending and endorsing it also. Manifested in the Games, the athletes, the people behind the scenes as also those attending, the factual reality of Britain’s multiculturalism would have been clearly prominent to the global audience the British state wanted to communicate with. In doing so, the Games communicated a clear and unequivocal state-endorsed and managed message about what Britain is today; a symbolic vision bought into by the Queen, the politicians, the people themselves, including of course all those who were different and diverse. Might this have changed social and political views about multiculturalism, revitalising it as a cause for celebration? Likewise, might the Games have gone some way to diagnosing

what was “wrong” with multiculturalism, whether applicable to the everyday lived variety or indeed the socio-political form?

In responding to this, it might be necessary to consider what was deemed “wrong” with the discursively constructed manifestation of multiculturalism this article has focused on. In truth, it was this same discursively constructed multiculturalism the British state used to communicate to an external audience, one that was far detached and removed from the everyday lived multiculturalism of Britain’s urban centres. Paradoxically, whilst Britain was self-aggrandizing to a global audience about how successful its world in one city approach had been, about how those like Mo Farah could come to Britain and realise their dreams, about how Britain’s tolerance, equality and sense of fairness was something from which the entire world could learn, so too was the British state—via its politicians and various state instruments—also employing those very same things as a means by which to communicate to an internal audience the complete opposite, repeatedly recounting to them just how unsuccessful—and failing—Britain’s multiculturalism had been. And in doing so, they duly differentiated who “they” were from “us”, to do as much as possible to stop more like “them” coming to “our” shores. Simultaneously, multiculturalism was seen as being needed to be killed whilst also being promoted as alive and kicking.

Whilst 7/7 had a significant catalytic impact on such debates and discussions, multiculturalism had been under assault for a number of years beforehand. As premised at the start of this article, the multiculturalism that could either be symbolically employed or demanded to be killed was both figurative and metaphorical, far removed from the tangible, objective and true manifestation of that convivial and somewhat ordinary multiculturalism that was lived and experienced on a day-to-day basis. As such, the multiculturalism in question was one that was based on inter-subjectivity and viability as opposed to classical objectivity and truth. And that truth, as Gilroy rightly put it, was that Britain’s factual multiculturalism is irreversible. Juxtaposing the discourses of the British state alongside the lived reality of Gilroy’s observations highlights the fact that in terms of subjective truths at least, Britain’s multiculturalism is both “dead” and “alive”: to reiterate Gilroy, multiculturalism is a “stubbornly undead diversity ... terrifying to the power and destabilising of the order that pronounced their death” ([34], p. 384). That irreversibility of multiculturalism—seen in its resilience, superhuman strength, limitless aggression and relentless devouring of Britain’s alleged mono-culturalism without cognition—is that which is being used to discursively feed into and cultivate a culture of fear. As the “next big thing”, the fear created about the insatiable appetite of multiculturalism, of its ability—and indeed desire—to devour its host, is that which is being presented as the destructive force that is currently seen to be threatening our everyday existence. Given the role of the state in terms of perpetuating such debates, clear parallels would seem to exist along the lines of the slave-slave trader relationship analogy put forward by Mbembe and Meintjes [45]. Consequently, what exists is a construct that is controlled by those with the necessary power available to do so. So whilst the British state and its institutions might be selective as to when multiculturalism is seen to be productive, the multiculturalism that it is referring to—whether alive or dead—does not exist. It is neither the factual, everyday lived variety nor is it the socio-political, ideological variety.

Consequently, despite the Games’ potential to re-animate Britain’s multiculturalism, it is likely that its legacy will be short-lived. Instead, the discursive multiculturalism that functions and exists in the public and political spaces is likely to lumber on as a zombie, re-animated back in to full life as and

only when Britain, the state or its politicians choose. It is possible that events in Woolwich and the brutal murder of the serving British soldier Lee Rigby by Islamic extremists in May 2013 as also the atrocities being committed by Islamic State in Iraq and Syria—not forgetting the growing number of “homegrown jihadis” going to fight there from Britain and elsewhere—will once more catalyse those who have previously called for the death of multiculturalism to do so once more. Unlike previous suggestions that multiculturalism will be a straw man that requires destroying, maybe more appropriate will be to recognise it as an “undead man” that can—and indeed will—be recurrently killed and re-animated when deemed appropriate. Until then however, it will remain—as Gilroy rightly suggests—in a state of zombification; maybe more appropriately if Meer and Modood [40] are right, a zombie term for a living category.

The zombie metaphor however provides something of an ominous warning for the future of multiculturalism in Britain. As Drezner [52] writes, movies in the zombie genre only ever have one of two endings: the total elimination of the zombies or the total elimination of humans or host society, either of which in the context of contemporary British have the very real potential to be culminate in a very dangerous and destructive end.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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