Zombie multiculturalism meets liberative difference: Searching for a new discourse of diversity

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Abstract

This paper grapples with an unresolved tension – twenty-first century Britain is indelibly multicultural and yet diversity is increasingly depicted as a threat to social cohesion. A society characterised by superdiverse cities where some suggest that 'multiculturalism has failed'. On the basis of an analysis of three dominant theoretical and ideological discourses – community cohesion, multiculturalism and interculturalism – it will be argued that there is an urgent need to forge a new understanding of diversity that can counter the zombie discourse that characterises current debates about diversity in Britain. Difference will be framed as a potential source of mutual liberation, not a problem seeking a solution. It will be argued that a critical engagement with political theology can help us to fashion a new discourse of diversity that is characterised by a hermeneutics of liberative difference, which can help to defeat the zombies sucking the life out of diverse Britain.

Key words – Multiculturalism, Community Cohesion, Identity, Political Theology, Liberative Difference

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'Multicultural society seems to have been abandoned at birth…The corpse is now being laid to rest amid the multiple anxieties of the 'war on terror.' (Gilroy, 2004, 1)

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Introduction

Activists, academics, politicians and preachers can learn a lot from movies like 'Dawn of the Dead' because the discourse surrounding British multiculturalism is littered with zombies. Beck (2001, 262 and Slater, 2002, 24) contends that academics cling to theoretical terms long after their energy has drained away; they become lifeless shells, or 'zombie categories'. Over the last twenty years multiculturalism has been increasingly appropriated by many leading politicians and commentators as a signifier for segregation. However this article argues that public discourse about multiculturalism in the twenty-first century has become disconnected from lived diversity. According to Sassen (2013, 1), 'The large complex city is a new frontier zone. Actors from different worlds meet there but there are no clear rules of engagement.' In order to negotiate this new frontier we need to fashion a new discourse that is capable of resisting the demonising and homogenising of difference and resourcing the forging of inclusive communities characterised by what Sandercock has called an 'epistemology of multiplicity' (1998, 76). This article examines three current responses to ethnic and religious diversity – community cohesion, multiculturalism and interculturalism and suggests that such analysis has largely failed to respond to a fundamental existential question – Why do we respond to difference in particular ways? Furthermore I will suggest that current discourses of diversity explicitly or implicitly present difference as a problem that needs to be solved.

Writing out of the African-American struggle for racial justice, West (1993, 32) argues that a movement beyond the exclusionary politics of 'race' is vital because it is, 'too costly in mind, body and soul - especially for…downtrodden and despised people.' A movement beyond the myth of 'race' can reinvigorate debates about identity and social cohesion in the UK, revive 'zombie' multiculturalism and enable the articulation of a cultural politics of difference which, according to West (1999, 119), 'trashes the monolithic and the homogeneous in the name of diversity, multiplicity and heterogeneity.'

Arising from this analysis I will argue that a critical dialogue with political theology can breathe life into the 'zombie' discourse that inhibits our understanding of multiculturalism. Drawing on the dub practice used by record producers in reggae music who deconstruct an existing track in order to reconstruct a new piece of music, I will suggest that a hermeneutics of liberative difference can enable the deconstruction of a narrative that problematises difference and paves the way for a new progressive discourse of diversity. Such a re-energised conversation can help us to forge patterns of social cohesion which view difference as a potential source of strength rather than a problem seeking a solution.

Back to the future – The roots of a modern multicultural melancholia

The beginning of the twenty-first century was marked by a deluge of policy initiatives, think-tanks, articles and books analysing multiculturalism but ethnic and religious diversity in the UK is far from being a modern phenomenon. Indeed, according to Fryer (1984, 68) by the end of the eighteenth century there was a Black population of approximately 20,000 in London alone (1984, 68). Such emergent multiculturalism was accompanied during the Victorian era by the assertion of 'racial'[1] hierarchies and the growth of Orientalism - the cultural partner of colonialism (Salmond, 1995, 23 and 41).

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[1] Throughout the terms 'race' and 'racial' are placed in inverted commas to signify that 'race' is a social construction rather than a valid biological category.

Discussions about the impact of Orientalist discourse on contemporary debates about multiculturalism must acknowledge the pivotal importance of the work of Said, whose book *Orientalism* attained an iconic status soon after its publication in 1978. Said (2003, xxii) summarises what he sees as the destructive influence of Orientalism, '…the terrible reductive conflicts that herd people under falsely unifying rubrics like "America," "The West" or "Islam" and invent collective identities for large numbers of individuals who are actually quite diverse…must be opposed.' Binary approaches to identity depicted 'Occident' and 'Orient' as polar opposites, providing European colonialism with its hegemonic justification. Said's style was polemical but this does not diminish the relevance of his thesis in a post-9/11 world that is still in thrall to the language of 'race' and an Orientalist mind-set.

The Cold War was characterised by a bi-polar geo-politics, which divided the world into a communist 'East' and a capitalist 'West', enabling an easy identification of 'us' and 'them'. Such existential and political certainty began to fragment following the 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall. Huntington (1993, 22) stepped into this uncertainty in 1993 when he articulated his contentious but influential 'clash of civilisations' thesis - 'Conflict between civilizations will be the latest phase in the evolution of conflict in the modern world.' Huntington (1993, 23) defines 'civilisation' as a bounded 'cultural entity', arguing (1993, 25) that the, 'differences among civilisations are not only real; they are basic'. He (1993, 25) argues that in a post-Cold War world, 'The most important conflicts of the future will occur along the cultural fault lines separating these civilizations from one another.'

For Huntington (1993, 29) the increasing appeal to the primary identities provided by ethnicity and religion will make the identification of cultural 'insiders' and 'outsiders' more likely. One of his template civilisations is 'Islamic' civilisation, which Huntington (1993, 31) questionably asserts has been in conflict with 'Western' civilisation since its founding in the seventh century CE. Huntington does not make explicit value judgements on the 'truth' or

'falsehood' of Islam. He does, however, make two telling points that implicitly assert the supremacy of 'Western' civilisation. First, Huntington (1993, 40) contends that Western ideals of democracy, liberty and human rights are not mirrored in other civilisations. Second, he (1993, 42) presents diversity as inherently problematic, '…as people differentiate themselves by civilization, countries with large numbers of peoples of different civilizations…are candidates for dismemberment...These are torn countries.'

Huntington's stark 'clash of civilisations' thesis has been widely contested. Fox (2001, 297) argued that Huntington's evidence was 'completely anecdotal' and Ajami (1993, 2) suggested that, 'Huntington has found his civilizations watertight under an eternal sky.' Sen (2006, 11) contends that Huntington's argument was based on the flawed assumption that people could be 'classified into distinct and discrete civilisations', which ignored the, 'internal diversities within these civilizational categories.' In spite of this critique Huntington's 'clash of civilisations' thesis paved the ideological way for the so-called 'War on Terror', attempts by the Blair New Labour government to define 'Britishness' in reductionist terms, the assertion of an accompanying homogenising community cohesion agenda and increasingly strident critiques of multiculturalism. An important question to consider, therefore, is what the Orientalism that characterises Huntington's thesis and the social policies of successive governments say about British self-understanding in a century where multiculturalism has become an unremarkable descriptor of everyday life.

Gilroy (2004, 107ff) supplements this excavation of Orientalism with an exploration of an unresolved psycho-social disorder that is intertwined with Britain's imperial past. Contemporary approaches to British multiculturalism are inhibited, contends Gilroy (2004, 109), by a 'post-imperial melancholia'. Amplifying this suggestion he (2004, 108) argues that a collective psychological disorder characterises an ambivalence towards ethnic and religious diversity that is unable to acknowledge, 'the grim details of colonial history' yet remains,

'phobic about the exposure to strangers or otherness.' Gilroy (2004, 108-109) highlights two conflicting visions of life in contemporary Britain. There is a multiculturalism that, '…is oriented by…everyday exposure to difference' and also a seemingly self-contradictory perspective whereby an, 'Antipathy towards asylum seekers and refugees cannot be concealed but the idea that it has anything to do with racism…remains shocking and induces yet more guilt.' (2004, 114)

Zombie Multiculturalism – Diversity And The Living Dead

The approach taken to multiculturalism by successive British governments since the 1997 election of New Labour has been shaped, to a large degree, by two unrelated events in 2001 – street violence in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford and the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington DC on 9/11. The mass-murders of 9/11 gave rise to a political culture, which echoed Huntington's 'clash of civilisations' thesis. However, I suggest that it is the street violence in North West England that had a more culturally significant impact on the thrust of government policy in the UK.

The affected neighbourhoods in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham were amongst the most socially deprived local government wards in England and Wales. The response from Labour Home Secretary David Blunkett was far-reaching. Individual reports were published focusing on the rioting in each town and a team led by Home Office Minister John Denham published the *Building Cohesive Communities* report in 2001. However it is the more wide-ranging *Cantle Report*, produced by the Independent Review Team led by Ted Cantle that has had the longest lasting impact on British government social policy. Whilst it was written on the basis of evidence drawn from just six urban areas and largely ignored the impact of economic social exclusion, the *Cantle Report* paved the way for the assimilationist

approaches to diversity and questionable claims about segregation, which have permeated political and public discourse around multiculturalism for the last fifteen years.

Three key themes within the report merit further consideration. First, the report (Cantle, 2001, 9) asserts that, 'many communities operate on the basis of…parallel lives.' The assertion that large parts of urban Britain were becoming increasingly segregated along ethnic/religious lines was widely accepted and rapidly translated into social policy. In a 2004 interview the head of the Commission for Racial Equality, Trevor Phillips, argued that 'multiculturalism suggests separateness'.[2] Speaking just after the London terrorist attacks of July 2005, Phillips went further, suggesting that the UK is 'sleepwalking into segregation'.[3] In a similar vein Prime Minister David Cameron interlinked multiculturalism, Islam and segregation in his 2011 speech at the Munich security conference, arguing that,

> 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 even tolerated these segregated communities behaving in ways that run completely counter to our values.[4]

The message appears clear – Britain is becoming a more segregated society. However, first impressions are not always the most accurate. Finney and Simpson (2009, 124-133) note that a closer examination of demographic data paints a different picture. Britain is actually becoming less segregated as Simpson (2013) and Jivraj and Simpson (2015) demonstrate in their comparative analyses of 2001 and 2011 National Census returns. The ongoing assertion

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[2] Web site http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/uk/article1905047.ece accessed 4 December 2015.
[3] Web sites http://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/sep/19/race.socialexclusion and http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1498695/Race-chief-criticised-for-ghetto-warning.html accessed 4 December 2015.
[4] Cameron, David (5 February 2011, Munich), Web site https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pms-speech-at-munich-security-conference accessed 22 July 2015. See too http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/david-cameron/8305346/Muslims-must-embrace-our-British-values-David-Cameron-says.html James Kirkup, 'The Telegraph', 'Muslims must embrace our British Values, David Cameron says', 5 February 2011, accessed 22 July 2015.

of segregation appears to reflect an ideological unease with diversity rather than social reality.

Secondly, Cantle (2001, 9) contended that there had been,

> …little attempt to develop clear values which focus on what it means to be a citizen of modern multi-racial Britain…many still look backwards to some supposedly halcyon days of a mono-cultural society, or alternatively look to their country of origin for some form of identity.

Following the report's publication Blunkett introduced plans for a 'Britishness' test for immigrants.[5] Attempts to capture identity can turn dynamic cultures into static and homogeneous categories. In spite of this Phillips (2005) argued that effective community cohesion needs to be based on what he called 'a core of Britishness.'[6] Writing in the aftermath of Phillip's speech Harris (2004/5, 10-11) argued that attempts to identify a set of common values, which could underpin a shared sense of Britishness, amounted to an exercise in one-sided assimilation. Modood also (2004/5, 9) argues for a more interactive understanding of Britishness, 'We require Britishness to be an inclusive identity, not one that says to some people, "…you are here but you are not British until you are sufficiently like us"'.

Third, Cantle (2001, 10) raised questions about 'insiders', 'outsiders' and citizenship. He (2001, 20) argued that diversity enriches British society but made it clear that this must be premised on a 'primary loyalty to this Nation', a perspective reflected in the 2002

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[5] See http://www.theguardian.com/society/2001/dec/10/asylum.raceequality ['The Guardian'] and http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1364834/Blunkett-in-furore-over-British-test.html ['The Daily Telegraph'] both accessed 10 December 2015.

[6] Web site https://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/sep/19/race.socialexclusion 'Britain Sleepwalking to Segregation', The Guardian, 19 September 2005, accessed 31 January 2017.

Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act, which included the introduction of citizenship tests and ceremonies, the first of which took place in 2004.[7]

Is it credible to suggest that multicultural Britain can unite around a single Anglo-centric cultural narrative? Questionable claims within the *Cantle Report* about segregation, assimilationist approaches to community relations, reductionist understandings of identity and the problematising of difference have arguably perpetuated an ethnocentric vision of 'Britishness'. Alam and Husband (2012, 139ff) offer a strong critique of Cantle, arguing that the community cohesion agenda, which his work gave rise to, was implicitly Islamophobic and placed the blame for poor levels of social cohesion on the alleged self-segregation of British-Muslims rather than offering a critique of 'the structural reproduction of inequalities' and the 'failures of state policies'. This neglect of the impact of structural inequality and endemic social exclusion within the *Cantle Report* arguably paved the way for a one dimensional community cohesion agenda under new Labour, which paid little attention to the corrosive effects of inequality on attitudes to diversity in urban Britain. Commenting on its strong focus on the Muslim community, linkage with counter terrorism strategies under New Labour and echoes of Huntington's 'clash of civilisations' thesis, Alam and Husband (2012, 142) argue that community cohesion was, 'from the outset 'racialized'' fuelling the depiction of, '…Islam as marker of difference…that invoked notions of threat and inalienable difference.' Such narratives of difference reflect an excluding camp mentality, which frames identity around a binary understanding of cultural 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. Gilroy (2000, 32) argues that, 'The national camp puts an end to any sense of cultural development...it is impoverished by the national obligation…to recycle the past continually in an essentially unmodified mythic form.'

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[7] Web site http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/41 accessed 10 December 2015.

Ring-fencing national identity makes it easier to scapegoat (Girard, 1986) groups that are presented as 'outsiders'. In recent years complex social problems have increasingly been blamed on British-Muslims (Allen, 2007 and 2010 in relation to Islamophobia and O'Toole et al, 2012, 377ff in relation to Preventing Violent Extremism). Such scapegoating continues unabated as the public and political discourse surrounding the 2015 refugee crisis, which unfolded as one million people crossed the Mediterranean, fleeing civil war and persecution to seek asylum in Europe demonstrates. The language used in sections of the British media and by the Foreign Secretary scapegoated these perceived cultural outsiders.[8] In a statement to BBC News in July 2015 David Cameron described the people crossing the Mediterranean as 'a swarm' and The Daily Express newspaper insisted that there was a need to 'Send in the army to halt the migrant invasion.'[9] Crawley (2015) writes of the Calais migrant camp, 'When people gathered at the New Jungle to protest…they were dispersed by police using tear gas and batons. "We are humans, not animals" they cried. British and French politicians would do well to remember that.'[10] Even the erection of a makeshift chapel was presented as a threat to the UK when it featured on the BBC television religious affairs programme 'Songs of Praise' in August 2015 before its destruction by police in January 2016.[11]

A largely neglected counterpoint to the *Cantle Report* was the report of the 'Commission on the Future of Multi-ethnic Britain' chaired by Parekh. The report (2000, x) suggests that, 'Such terms as 'minority' and 'majority'…obscure the fluidity and heterogeneity of real life.' Parekh (2000, x) critiques the use of the term 'integration', which, he suggests, 'implies a one-way process in which 'minorities' are absorbed into the non-

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[8] Steve Swinford, 'Millions of African migrants threaten standard of living, Philip Hammond says', The Daily Telegraph, 9 August 2015, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/immigration/11792798/Millions-of-African-migrants-threaten-standard-of-living-Philip-Hammond-says.html accessed 15 December 2015

[9] Web sites http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-33716501 and http://www.pressreader.com/uk/daily-express/20150730/281479275121172/TextView both accessed 15 December 2015.

[10] Heaven Crawley (21 August 2015) 'Fences in Calais Protect Ministers – Not Refugees' in the online journal *The Conversation*, web site https://theconversation.com/fences-in-calais-protect-ministers-not-refugees-46366 accessed 15 December 2015.

[11] Chris Shannahan (8 September 2015), 'The Chapel in the Jungle and Our Shared Humanity', Coventry University Research Blog, http://blogs.coventry.ac.uk/researchblog/chapel-jungle-shared-humanity-migrant-refugee-crisis/ accessed 15 December 2015.

existent homogeneous cultural structure of the 'majority'.' Unlike Cantle's search for a stable set of shared 'British values' - the essential building blocks of community cohesion - Parekh (2000, xv and 27-39) spoke of a diverse Britain where identities are 'in transition'. The *Parekh Report* has largely been ignored in favour of the reductionist approach exemplified by Cantle.

This combination of the 'clash of civilisations' thesis, resurgent Orientalism and an assimilationist community cohesion agenda has created a perfect storm, which advocates of more inclusive approaches to social cohesion must navigate with imagination and care. It is time, therefore, to tackle the theoretical zombies that still stalk the academic landscape.

It's a Zombie War Part One - Getting to grips with theoretical 'zombies'

Beck explores the challenge facing theoretical discourse in a postmodern context. He (2001, 262) suggests that 'we are living in a world, where basic sociological concepts are becoming…'zombie categories'.' Beck (2001, 262) uses this evocative term to refer to enduring conceptual frameworks that have become 'living dead categories'. The zombie beloved by Hollywood gives an impression of life even though it is nothing more than an empty shell.

Beck (2001, 263) suggests that we face an enormous intellectual shift, 'If the fundamental…criteria that we have always identified with modern society no longer apply.' Drawing on Kant (1965, A 51/B 75), Beck (Slater, 2002, 24) suggests that when theory fails to reflect contemporary social realities the resulting analyses become culturally meaningless. Has the conceptualisation of multiculturalism become such a 'zombie'? Beck (2002, 17) implies that the apparent solidity of multicultural discourse sits in contrast with the fluidity of the 'second modernity'. Within this context, he argues (2002, 18), there is a need to forge a 'dialogic imagination', which can enable people to reconcile, 'the clash of cultures and rationalities within one's own life.' For Beck (2002, 18) the cultivation of such a perspective

can counter a, 'monologic imagination which excludes the otherness of the other'. However, Beck's (2002, 36-7) assertion that, ''zombie' multiculturalism subsumes individuals within collective identities' does not bear scrutiny any more than his debatable claim that (2002, 37), 'According to the multicultural premise, the individual does not exist. He is a mere epiphenomenon of his culture.'

Gilroy (2012, 384) argues that in spite of the inherent diversity of urban Britain, 'Multiculturalism…is repeatedly...pronounced dead, often as part of anxiety-inducing arguments about security, national identity and the menace of Islamic extremism.' Gilroy (2012, 380) argues for a new discourse of diversity, 'The spectacle of racialised truths and ethnic conflicts endures, but it is being punctuated by a growing sense that the analyses forged in order to make sense of earlier struggles may have reached the end of their use.' Meer and Modood (2014) draw on Beck in their exploration of the possibility that the term 'multiculturalism' has become a 'zombie category'. They (2014, 668) point to, a 'coupling of diversity and anti-terrorism agendas that has implicated contemporary British multiculturalism as the culprit of Britain's security woes.' In light of this Meer and Modood (2014, 666) ask whether this perspective offers, 'a persuasive account about the fate of British multiculturalism at a deeper level: as a category'. In response to their own question they (2014, 670) suggest that 'while multiculturalism may be a zombie term, it is far from a zombie category.' Allen (2015, 26) contrasts the political discourse about multiculturalism with the lived experience of diversity - 'multiculturalism exists in a condition of being both living and dead.' In spite of its critique as the source of segregation, Allen suggests that, multiculturalism has also provided a narrative of harmony in diversity, which Britain has presented to the world, as exemplified by the 2012 London Olympics. For Allen (2015, 30-31) British attitudes to diversity reflect a schizophrenic response to difference. Depending on the context and perceived audience, emphasis can be placed on the cosmopolitan dynamism

lauded by former London Mayor Ken Livingstone in 2005 when he described London as the 'world in one city' or on a dysfunctional Babel of confusion and 'parallel lives'. Can the term 'multiculturalism' capture the dynamic plurality of the Britain in 2016 or must the 'zombie' be destroyed for new life to emerge?

Moving on from his focus on community cohesion Cantle (2011, 2) has argued that, 'Interculturalism provides the opportunity to replace multiculturalism as a conceptual and policy framework.' Implicitly echoing Huntington, he (2011, 9) claims that, 'The more diverse societies have become…the more they seem to…embrace identity politics and support separatist ideologies...'; although he provides no evidence to support his assertion. Cantle (2011, 2) suggests that interculturalism can, '…contribute to a new vision for learning to live together in a globalised and superdiverse world.' Cantle's (2011, 15ff) examination of what he claims is the failure of multiculturalism is prone to unsubstantiated generalisations. He (2011, 35) argues that interculturalism must, 'develop the interaction and belonging programmes initiated by community cohesion; and create a culture of openness which challenges identity politics and…and the entrenchment of separate communities.' One might reasonably ask, therefore, how Cantle's articulation of interculturalism differs from his earlier advocacy of community cohesion. For Cantle (2011, 42), 'multiculturalism was founded…upon spurious notions of physical distinctiveness, or on other salient differences such as language or religion which were then taken to define a 'culture'.' His reductionist depiction of multiculturalism appears to betray a lack of openness to alternative analyses of diversity, such as those offered by Meer and Modood, Allen and Gilroy.

Meer and Modood (2012a, 176-177) recognise the traction that interculturalism has gained in recent years, pointing to four claims that have been made in its defence. First, it is claimed that interculturalism is, 'more geared toward interaction and dialogue than multiculturalism.' Second, it is asserted that 'interculturalism is more focused on the

individual than multiculturalism'. Third it is claimed that, 'interculturalism is more committed to a stronger sense of…societal cohesion and national citizenship' than its multicultural counterpart and fourth that '…where multiculturalism may be illiberal and relativistic, interculturalism is more likely to lead to criticism of illiberal cultural practices.'

Meer and Modood (2011, 8) argue that to depict interculturalism as inherently convivial and multiculturalism as anti-dialogical inexplicably neglects Taylor's (1992, 33-39) work on the 'politics of difference' and the 'place of the dialogical in human life' (1992, 33) as a necessary precondition for social cohesion within multicultural societies. Furthermore this assertion takes no account of the work of Modood (2007, 91-114) whose examination of multiculturalism uncovers an open-ended cultural form that can address the needs of individuals as well as cultural groups. Meer and Modood (2012, 31) insist that, '…leading theorists of multiculturalism give dialogue a centrality…missed by interculturalist critics.'

Second, Meer and Modood (2011, 13) respond to the charge that, 'multiculturalism, unlike interculturalism, speaks only to and for minorities.' This criticism of multiculturalism fails to recognise that, 'forms of prescribed unity…usually retain a majoritarian bias that places the burden of adaptation upon the minority, and so is inconsistent with interculturalism's alleged commitment to 'mutual integration'' (2011, 14). Where particular communities continue to be framed as cultural 'others' and the terms of integration are solely defined by representatives of the majority the model of community cohesion, which emerges inevitably remains wedded to a one dimensional image of Britishness.

Third, Meer and Modood (2012, 33) note the charge that, 'multiculturalism lends itself to illiberality and relativism'. Advocates of multiculturalism can fail to critique repressive cultural practices within some minority communities as a result of an uncritical commitment to inclusion. However, Meer and Modood argue that challenging the illiberal exclusion of minority ethnic communities, articulating a 'politics of dignity' (Taylor 1992)

and egalitarianism lie at the heart of multiculturalism. As Modood (2007, 53) observes, '…we must not lose sight of the fact that *both* equal dignity and equal respect are essential to multiculturalism.' Meer and Modood (2011, 18) contend that until interculturalism is able to address, '…concerns emanating from complex identities and matters of equality and diversity in a more persuasive manner, it cannot, intellectually at least, eclipse multiculturalism.''

Whilst acknowledging the danger of conflating the failed multicultural policies with the failure of multiculturalism persē, Cantle (2012, 38) maintains the urgent need, '…for a new and progressive conceptual framework, based on interculturalism…' because, 'the multicultural brand has become toxic.' Is Cantle right or is there life in multiculturalism yet, as Modood asserts?

It's a Zombie War Part Two – Re-inventing Identity in the Plural City

It is time to consider whether such academic discourse captures the dynamic life of the superdiverse city. I suggest that whilst politicians have framed their legislation and theorists have honed their arguments identity has been re-invented. Debates about multiculturalism may in fact have become a zombie conversation. Two examples illustrate the ways in which the re-invention of identity challenges the increasingly zombie-like debate about multiculturalism - the growth of the dual-heritage community and the emergence of superdiversity.

Cross-cultural relationships are not a new phenomenon. However the rapid growth of the number of British people of dual-heritage in recent decades reflects the opening of a new chapter in the unfolding story of Britishness. Writing in 2012 Ford et al. (2012, 1) suggested that, 'Jessica Ennis was not just the face of the Olympics this summer; she could stake a fair claim to be "the face of the census" too.' The Sheffield born Olympian is one of 1,200,000 Britons who self-defined as dual-heritage in the 2011 National Census. Doubling in size from

660,000 in the 2001 Census, the dual-heritage community is not only the fastest growing ethnic group in the UK but the youngest, with 45% of people under the age of 16 years (Office for National Statistics, 2014, 2).[12] The rise of the dual-heritage community raises important questions about the nature of 'Britishness' and narratives of segregation. Difference, it appears, is not as widely feared as some suggest, especially amongst younger Britons. However dual-heritage relationships continue to be transgressive in a society still in thrall to the language of 'race', subverting the ethnic security that essentialism provides in a changing world.

Gilroy (2004, 161) acknowledges that against the backdrop of the so-called 'war on terror', '…hybrid urban cultures…go out of the window. Instead we get transported into the frozen realm of mythic time that has been shaped around the master analogy of immigration as a form of warfare.' Having emerged from its use in botany to describe the grafting of one plant species onto another the language of hybridity has gained traction in the social sciences and political theology in recent decades as a way of talking about identity in diverse societies. For Bhabha (1994, 226ff) hybrid identities arise from the 'in-between' discursive 'third space', which Baker (2009, 16) describes as, '…the space produced by the collapse of the previously defining narratives of modernity.' The fraying of ethnic certainties in diverse postcolonial contexts enables, suggests Bhabha (1994, 226), the forging of a new counter-hegemonic space of self-definition. Hall (2003, 244) argues that the resulting hybrid society is characterised by fusion and not so called purity. Gilroy (1993, 2) warns that, 'From the viewpoint of ethnic absolutism this would be a litany of impurity.'

Is the language of hybridity a helpful way of discussing identity in an increasingly diverse Britain? It is this question that Hutnyk (2005, 80ff) considers, noting that hybridity

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[12] Emily Duggan, 'One in 10 relationships now cross racial boundaries', The Independent, 3 July 2014, http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/one-in-10-relationships-now-cross-racial-boundaries-9582976.html accessed 4 January 2016 and The Economist, 'Into the Melting Pot', 8 February 2014, http://www.economist.com/news/britain/21595908-rapid-rise-mixed-race-britain-changing-neighbourhoodsand-perplexing accessed 4 January 2016.

implies an *a priori* understanding of so-called 'purity', which becomes subverted. I have argued elsewhere (Shannahan, 2010, 51ff and Shannahan, 2014, 100-101) that the language of hybridity is best left in botany because people of dual-heritage cannot credibly be described as the fusion of one Black parent and one White parent – people aren't plants! The discourse of hybridity implicitly gives credence to the flawed assertion that there is more than one human 'race'. Rather than grappling with its capacity to resuscitate 'zombie' multiculturalism difference is again problematised and smothered, not beneath an assimilationist blanket of community cohesion but in a liberal socio-cultural stew within which distinctness is lost.

The second example of the ongoing re-invention of identity is described by Vertovec (2007) who considers how increasingly complex patterns of migration effect identity in a globalised century. Analyses of diversity in the UK have historically focused on large and stable ethnic groups of people of Caribbean and the Indian sub-continent heritage (Vertovec, 2007, 1027). Vertovec (2007, 1025), however, suggests that in the twenty-first century diversity has become increasingly complex. In such a superdiverse context debates about multiculturalism increasingly represent a 'zombie' dialogue about a social landscape that is fast fading from view. Furthermore, Vertovec (2007, 1029) reminds us that, 'new migration' is characterised by 'the multiplicity of immigrants countries of origin' and by the fact that the, '…UK is now, 'home…to people from practically every country in the world' He (2007, 1029) notes that London is now home to people from at least 179 countries speaking more than 300 languages. Such superdiversity is also evidenced in other British cities such as Leicester, Manchester and Birmingham as demonstrated by the 'Superdiverse Streets' project at the London School of Economics, the University of Manchester 'Multilingual Manchester'

project and the work of the Institute for Research into Superdiversity at the University of Birmingham.[13]

What challenges does emerging research into superdiversity pose for ongoing debates about British multiculturalism? I suggest that a narrative of superdiversity, which relates exclusively to immigration, neglects the rapidly growing diversity of the existing British population. An engagement with Crenshaw's (1991, 1241-99) theory of intersectionality can enable the development of a more multidimensional analysis through its focus on the multifaceted nature of identity in diverse societies. When supplemented by an engagement with intersectionality, superdiversity studies can enable a movement beyond a dated focus on large, settled and integrated communities onto a more unsettled landscape on which ethnic diversity is increasingly multidimensional. Such a shift has the potential to resource an engagement with small, fragile and largely invisible communities. Furthermore, understanding diversity in more intersectional terms can help us to develop a more holistic picture of multicultural Britain by drawing our attention to the multidimensional nature of diversity and the plethora of factors such as ethnicity, immigration status, employment, age, gender and religion that impact on the way we experience the superdiverse city.

This re-invention of identity challenges the ways in which academics think about multiculturalism. Where might we find a new conceptual framework, which can provide us with the tools to re-examine ethnic and religious diversity in such a way that difference is not presented as a problem seeking a solution but as a potentially liberative driver of inclusive social cohesion? A critical engagement with political theology can help us to respond to this question.

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[13] Web sites http://mlm.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/; http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/activity/superdiversity-institute/index.aspx and https://lsecities.net/research/data/cr/phase-1-super-diverse-streets-survey-comparisons-2015/en-gb#/ accessed 5 January 2016.

It's a Zombie war Part Three – Lessons from Political Theology

I have argued that current debates about diversity are hindered by an ongoing attachment to 'zombie categories'. If we are to forge a new discourse of diversity that is capable of asserting the liberative potential of difference there is a pressing need to identify new analytical approaches that can help us to dig beneath the 'what', 'who', 'where' and 'how' of social theory. The task before us is to fashion a new hermeneutical framework that enables us to engage with the values that shape our response to difference – the 'why' question. I suggest that a critical dialogue with political theology can help us in this enterprise because of its engagement with the ethical and belief systems that shape attitudes to diversity. The ideas of Chris Baker, Robert Schreiter and Luke Bretherton can help us to begin the development of this new and more holistic approach.

Chris Baker – Doing Theology in the Hybrid City

Baker (2009) draws on debates about hybridity and Bhabha's 'third space' theory in his search for models of ecclesiology and theology that can engage in a culturally credible manner with the superdiverse world of the twenty-first century. For Bhabha (1994, 37) the 'third space' is a liminal context within which meaning and identity are in transition; a space of negotiation, translation and interpretation.

Baker's work invites us to re-frame our understanding of identity, (2009, 2) - 'we are moving further and further away from the binary either/or definitions that the Enlightenment and Marxism bequeathed to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.' Baker (2009, 3) argues, 'Today binary systems and hierarchies have lost considerable power to influence and dictate behaviour.' In light of the enduring appeal of essentialism, the cultural resonance of the 'clash of civilisations' thesis and the grip of homogenising community cohesion narratives, discussed above Baker's reflections can help us to engage with the fluid and plural identities

that characterise the superdiverse city. Baker challenges us to look beyond seemingly solid identities, outmoded theological anthropologies and apparently fixed communities towards the blurred context of the twenty-first century city as we strive to articulate meaning in the 'third space'. Baker's work considers the implications that this liminal cultural space has for the ways in which people of faith think about the nature of community, the cultural 'other' and hospitality. Baker (2009, 139) argues that, 'once one sets boundaries…or criteria to one's hospitality there is a danger that…both religious and secular ideals of hospitality…will be contravened.' The feast, which Jesus uses as an image of the Kingdom of God, is a banquet where demonised outsiders sit at the top table (Luke 14: 15-24): blurring closely guarded ethnic, religious and class-based boundaries. Such 'risky hospitality' (Baker, 2009, 139) can humanise arid debates about multiculturalism, placing people at the centre rather than policy agendas. Whilst one-sided hospitality can reinforce a binary 'host' <> 'guest' dichotomy, when it is characterised by mutuality difference ceases to be a problem to be solved, becoming instead a source of potential mutual enrichment. Take, for example the practice of '*langar*' within Sikhism – the community kitchen within all Gurdwaras where free food is given to anybody who is hungry, regardless of class, ethnicity or religion. Hospitality is seen here as a sacramental act that speaks about the innate worth of every human being, a reflection of the welcoming nature of a loving and hospitable God, rather than just the act of sharing food. 'Risky hospitality' can challenge the demonising of difference as seen in the response of worshippers at a Mosque in York to protestors from the English Defence League in May 2013.[14] Members of the Mosque brought out tea and biscuits, which they gave to the EDL protestors before playing football together – hospitality trumping hatred.

Baker (2009, 140) invites a further exploration of openness and change, 'To open oneself unconditionally to the Other is…to allow one's own identity to be

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[14] Web site http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-york-north-yorkshire-22689552 accessed 12 January 2016

deconstructed...allowing the normal barriers that separate...yourself from the demands and cultures of others to be blurred.' A genuine openness to the person presented as a cultural 'outsider' can help to re-frame the ongoing debate between Cantle and Modood about belonging, diversity and dialogue in the twenty-first century city referred to above. Such a subversive step however demands that we re-examine the values upon which we base our attitude to difference. An openness to such 'blurred encounters' has the potential not just to foster creative approaches to social cohesion but to transform attitudes to difference and hegemonic ideas about 'insider'/'outsider' relations in multicultural societies.

Luke Bretherton – Encountering the Stranger

The political theology of Bretherton can help to resuscitate 'zombie' debates about multiculturalism in three ways. First Bretherton (2010, 50) critiques the exclusionary politics that has characterised the approach taken to multiculturalism by successive British governments, 'What we need is a politics that can live with deep plurality over questions of ultimate meaning and…the fact that many communities and traditions contribute to the common good.' For Bretherton this plural politics needs to draw on the narratives of meaning articulated by a diverse range of faith-based and non-faith traditions if it is to fashion a vision of the common good, which reflects contemporary diversity. Bretherton's work invites us to consider the inadequacies of pragmatic multiculturalism and to search instead for a more expansive cosmopolitan ethic.

Second, Bretherton argues that dialogical politics must be rooted in specific struggles, rather than being confined to disengaged academic debate and that our attitude towards the treatment of refugees provides a litmus test for a dialogical Christian cosmopolitanism. Guided by the Christian understanding of creation, which emphasises both the commonality and the uniqueness of all people that issues from being made in the image of God, Bretherton

(2010, 147) argues that, 'To welcome the other is to recognize one who is the same as me...to truly welcome another is to welcome one who is like nobody else.' Our attitude to the 'stranger' is, therefore, of existential as well as cultural and political importance. Echoing Modood's assessment of multiculturalism, Bretherton reminds us that a respect for diversity and an equal commitment to social justice are completely compatible. Exemplifying the vision outlined in Matthew 25:31-46 and Hebrews 13:2 Bretherton (2010, 211) contends that welcoming the 'stranger' is a fundamental feature of Christian spirituality, 'hospitality towards strangers constitutes part of the church's witness to the Christ-event.' As such the critique of intolerant social policy and media reporting, which demonises or dehumanises the 'stranger' should be seen as an expression of Christian discipleship. Such a perspective foregrounds the existential significance of hospitality, '…welcoming the vulnerable stranger inherently involves a process of decentring and re-orientation to God and neighbor...by raising a question mark about the "way we do things round here."' (Bretherton, 2011, 360)

Third, Bretherton draws parallels between the first phrase within the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-15) and the treatment of refugees. The prayer begins 'Our Father in Heaven hallowed be your name.' As Bretherton (2010, 146) notes, 'To hallow something means recognizing the irreducible worth of what is before one.' Such a mind-set (2010, 145) has radical implications, 'To hallow the name of God involves us in standing against that which desecrates God's holy name.' For Bretherton to hallow asylum seekers and refugees is about more than being kind – It is an act of prophetic resistance to anything that excludes the cultural 'other' and an affirmation of the liberative potential of difference.

Robert Schreiter – Towards a new Catholicity

Schreiter (1997) explores the theological significance of globalisation and the liberative potential of a re-imagined catholicity. The doctrine of catholicity emerged from the patristic

period of Christian theology to describe the unity of the Church – dispersed and diverse but united around a common faith. Since the adoption of the Nicene Creed in 325CE discussion of catholicity has largely focused on the character and doctrine of the global Church. Schreiter attempts to re-frame catholicity in order to explore the liberative potential of its focus on the interplay between diversity and commonality in a globalised world. Whilst, not commenting specifically on multiculturalism Schreiter can help us to fashion the new language needed as we explore increasingly interwoven diversity in the twenty-first century.

Schreiter's work concerns the existential, theological and political challenges posed by the normative character of diversity in a globalised world. Globalisation impacts not just on politics and economics but on our articulation of meaning and belonging. Schreiter (1997, 26) argues that, 'Boundaries today are increasingly not boundaries of territory but boundaries of difference... (*which*)...intersect…in often bewildering fashion.' In this context a re-imagined catholicity that holds together our commonality and our uniqueness could resource new conversations about glocal identities and belonging in a diverse urban world, thereby critiquing the cleaving to a reductionist 'clash of civilisations' ethic. Schreiter (1997, 15) reminds us that the fluidity of contemporary society re-defines who we are as well as how we relate to each other. For Schreiter (1997, 59) a focus on movement is vital, 'For it is in the experience of moving from one place to another...of negotiating multiple identities…that insight into where God is at work in a globalized culture will be found.' The challenge becomes that of learning to live creatively with difference rather than seeking to regularise identity.

Secondly, Schreiter's ideas provide an implicit critique of assimilationist models of community cohesion. Schreiter valorises difference without romanticising it. He (1997, 28) recognises the challenges embodied by inclusive intercultural conversation in contexts, 'where a common world is not shared by the speaker and hearer.' Schreiter (1997, 43)

challenges us to honour socio-cultural catholicity, 'Denial of difference can lead to the colonization of a culture. Denial of similarities promotes an anomic situation where no dialogue appears possible.' Responses to difference, therefore, impact on the way we think, feel and believe. For Schreiter the denial, demonising or homogenising of difference can foster an existential anomie, comparable to the post-imperial melancholia to which Gilroy points.

Thirdly, Schreiter's emphasis on reconciliation can enable us to rescue 'zombie' multiculturalism from those who present it as a failed venture. For Schreiter (1997, 60) the Biblical understanding of reconciliation has the capacity to resource a liberative intercultural catholicity because it rests on an ethic of mutuality, which recognises both the corrosive effects of xenophobia and the psycho-social, political and spiritual benefits of an affirmation of our diversity. Schreiter's conception of reconciliation and the new catholicity (1997, 95) critiques the problematising of difference. Rather than being a problem in need of a solution difference becomes a resource capable of underpinning a new social contract premised on genuine mutuality because, 'respect for difference…goes beyond acknowledgement of the otherness of diversity; it explores the nature of difference and the consequences for living together.' For Schreiter (1997, 95) commitment to a new catholicity that is characterised by reconciliation demands a clear commitment to the struggle, 'against those forces in society that, using the signifier of race or other means of demarcation, make difference a warrant for discrimination and oppression…' for we are 'strangers no longer' but one people committed to the liberative potential of difference.

Dub Practice, Zombies and a Hermeneutics of Liberative Difference

In this concluding section I build on the discussion above through the use of 'dub practice' in order to suggest a new approach, which can breathe life into 'zombie multiculturalism' – the

hermeneutics of liberative difference. Dub is used within reggae music to strip away the melodic layers of a piece of music in order to uncover the rhythmic foundation of the track upon which a new and original piece of music can be built (Gilroy, 1987, 201ff and Beckford, 2006, 26ff, 67 and 91-92). I have argued elsewhere (Shannahan, 2010, 237ff) that dub practice can provide urban theology with a new methodological approach capable of resourcing the forging of a hermeneutics of liberative difference. Such a perspective will dub the problematising of difference that has characterised the work of conservative and liberal theorists for decades and help us to meet the 'zombies' head-on.

The cultural politics of difference articulated by Young and West offers us a way to move beyond the current 'zombie' multiculturalism dilemma. Young (1990, 163-91) suggests that the universalising tendencies of the post-Enlightenment liberal ideal of justice reflect the interests of a White European and North American social elite. She (1990, 157), critiques the definition of 'liberation as the transcendence of group difference' as a form of cultural imperialism, which normalises the experience and values of a dominant cultural group, thereby pathologising minority communities (Young, 1990, 59). Young (1990, 97) argues that the, 'ideal of impartiality in moral theory expresses a logic of identity that seeks to reduce differences to unity.' In words later echoed by Gilroy (2000, 163) in a British context, West (1990, 109) argues that advocates of the cultural politics of difference should be bold and, 'refuse to limit their vision…The aim is to dare to…redefine…the very notions of…"main-stream," "margins," "difference," "otherness".'

Hermeneutics explores the way we attribute existential significance and social meaning to our experience and to social phenomena. Such meaning-making is not neutral but reflects the ethical, ideological and theological values upon which we base our lives. The hermeneutics of liberative difference (Shannahan, 2010, 222ff) is influenced by the cultural politics of difference and the core values espoused by liberation theology (Gutiérrez, 1988,

165 and Tamez, 1982, 73). This hermeneutical stance is founded on a liberative re-reading of core Biblical themes in light of contemporary experiences of multiculturalism – the affirmation of diversity and the unique value of all people articulated in the myth of Creation (Genesis 1), the salvific potential of the 'stranger' (Hebrews 13:2), the subversion of ethnic stereotypes within the ministry of Jesus (John 4: 1-38 and Luke 10: 25-37), the cosmopolitanism of the Pauline vision wherein there is 'no Greek [and]….no Jew' (Galatians 3:28) and the depiction of interconnected uniqueness found in 1 Corinthians 12.

The hermeneutics of liberative difference is counter-hegemonic because it subverts the assimilationist model of community cohesion advocated by successive British governments. It is counter-cultural because it resists the prevailing public and political discourse, which demonises difference and scapegoats so-called cultural 'others' – asylum seekers, refugees, migrants and the British-Muslim community. It is counter-intuitive because it gives the lie to everyday articulations of the 'clash of civilisations' thesis and regularly repeated assertions that multiculturalism has made the UK a more segregated society.

A hermeneutics of liberative difference can resuscitate the 'zombie'-like community cohesion-multiculturalism-interculturalism debate. It critiques attempts to resolve the so-called problem of difference through an appeal to an unspecified set of core British values, assimilationist community cohesion, relativist multiculturalism or cultural hybridity. This hermeneutical perspective posits difference not as problem but as the source of a new and liberative ethical framework and model of civil society politics in a superdiverse age.

Reductionist Britishness

Parallel Lives

Intersectionality

Creation

Diversity as Strength

Difference

Dominant Narrative

Dub

Liberative Difference

Assimilation

Clash of Civilisations

Superdiversity
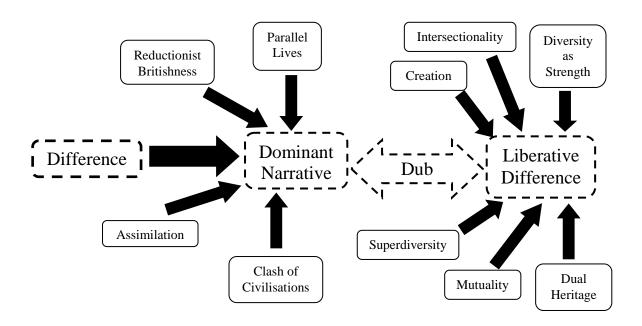
Mutuality

Dual Heritage

Figure 1 – 'Dubbing Difference'

The hermeneutics of liberative difference dubs the problematising of difference as seen in Figure 1 above. The cacophony of hegemonic approaches to difference are stripped away in order to construct a new narrative, which posits difference, not as weakness but as strength. However a hermeneutics of liberative difference does not claim that difference is inherently liberative – it can be a mask for intolerance as well as the source of progressive dialogue. As I have noted elsewhere (Shannahan, 2010, 224), 'Liberative difference is not an invitation to liberal inner city tourism where the complexity of normative difference is reduced to a sea of smiling friends sharing stories about happy co-existence.' Consequently a hermeneutics of liberative difference needs to avoid the pitfalls of assimilationist community cohesion on the one hand and a reluctance to critique oppressive cultural practices such as female genital mutilation or the violent exorcism of young children believed to be possessed for fear of causing offence on the other. A new civil society politics shaped by a hermeneutics of liberative difference will therefore be premised on the 'divine bias to the stranger', 'a hermeneutics of the demonized' and a fundamental commitment to resourcing 'multiple struggles for holistic liberation' (Shannahan, 2010, 225 and 227).

In the superdiverse world of the twenty-first century the 'zombie' debate about multiculturalism continues to rehash perspectives forged a generation ago. Identity in Britain is being re-invented but public, political and much academic discourse has largely failed to catch up. The term 'multiculturalism' has, I suggest, become a shell. Once full of life, it continues to be used but has been largely drained of its progressive intent. It has become a 'zombie' category that no longer reflects the lived diversity that increasingly characterises Britain in the twenty-first century. Only the affirmation of the potentially liberative energy of our difference can breathe life into the 'living dead'.

Conclusion

This article has argued that the time has come to resist the problematising of difference and to embrace diversity as a source of potential liberation. I have suggested that only such a hermeneutical shift can overcome the post-imperial melancholia identified by Gilroy and the ahistorical divisiveness of Huntington's 'clash of civilisations' thesis. I have demonstrated how the hermeneutics of liberative difference and a critical embrace of political theology can rescue diversity from the hegemony of assimilationist community cohesion narratives, inaccurate assertions of increasing segregation and a disengaged debate that is turning vibrant lived multiculturalism into a lifeless 'zombie'. As identity is re-invented in superdiverse Britain the hermeneutics of liberative difference can resource resistance to the problematising of difference by liberal and conservative commentators alike and posit our diversity not as a problem seeking a solution but as the basis for a new politics of hospitality and mutuality. Maybe the 'zombies' haven't drained the life out of us just yet.

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