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Multiculturalism's double bind

Creating inclusivity, difference and cross-community alliances with the London-Irish

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ABSTRACT Critical literature has questioned British state-sponsored multiculturalism's capacity to confront racism and facilitate cross-community alliances; instead, multiculturalism is perceived to constitute groups in ethnically defined communities and essentialist cultures. Exploring two ethnographic examples – an Irish arts centre and St Patrick's Day – this article considers attempts by the London-Irish to make Irishness inclusive and to create cross-community alliances under government-sponsored 'multicultural' initiatives. Invoking Bateson's 'double-bind', I argue multiculturalism is characterized by a paradoxical injunction that curbs the possibility for 'ethnic minorities' to withdraw from their circumscribed status. On the one hand, groups such as the Irish are often encouraged, within multiculturalism, to make their cultures inclusive in order to contribute towards a celebration of 'cosmopolitan' diversity; on the other, it is explicitly forbidden to threaten their particularism; to do so would threaten their claim to resources as a distinctive group.

KEYWORDS Celticism ● cosmopolitanism ● essentialism ● Irishness ● new social movements ● whiteness

INTRODUCTION: MULTICULTURALISM'S DOUBLE-BIND

The challenge that constantly confronts and defeats us, states Mayo (2000: 63), is how to move beyond the particularism of isolated located struggles to construct an alternative founded on universal solidarity. The constitution of this politics appears remote when particularistic issues of ethnicity, race and culture are codified within the paradigm of British multiculturalism.

Whilst writers have identified the way that the 'cosmopolitan imagination' (Gilroy, 2004) – the thinking required to overcome racialized and cultural differentiation – has been rendered moribund by a form of multiculturalism predicated on maintaining absolute cultures and differences, this article considers the problematic attempts by London-Irish groups to make Irish cultural forms inclusive and to create cross-community alliances under government-sponsored 'multicultural' initiatives.

Invoking Bateson's (1973) notion of the 'double bind', I argue that multiculturalism is characterized by a paradoxical injunction that limits, but doesn't completely negate the possibility for 'ethnic minorities' to withdraw from their circumscribed status. On the one hand, 'ethnic minority' groups are encouraged, within the multicultural paradigm, to make their cultures inclusive and accessible in order to contribute towards a liberal-pluralist celebration of 'cosmopolitan' diversity; on the other, it is forbidden to threaten their particularism, as to do so would contradict their claim to resources as a distinctive group. This 'double-bind' hinders the development of a politics of solidarity beyond a recognition that difference is good in itself, which 'makes it all the more difficult for a serious cross-cultural dialogue to take place, the only action which could overcome the current incapacitating fissiparousness of the potential political agents of change' (Bauman, 2001: 106).

IS SOLIDARITY POSSIBLE WITHIN THE MULTICULTURAL PARADIGM?

November 2006, the west London Hammersmith Irish Centre's mission statement advocates an 'open door policy' at the centre: it is available 'to everyone of all backgrounds and cultures who want to enjoy, share, experience and participate in quality Irish arts, education and culture' (Hammersmith and Fulham Irish Centre, 2006). London's first major St Patrick's Day, Ireland's national saint's day, took place on 17 March 2002. The parade organizers, rather than restrict participation to the London-Irish, stated: '[o]n St Patrick's Day everybody is Irish. You don't have to be Irish to join in – Chinese dragons, Bhangra drummers . . . All are welcome to join in this big celebration' (Greater London Authority, 2002). These initiatives, designed to make Irishness inclusive and a part of a concerted struggle to contest anti-Irish prejudice in Britain, were conducted within the remit of state-sponsored multiculturalism. The Hammersmith Irish Centre is funded by its local London council as part of its commitment to 'equal opportunities'; the St. Patrick's Day celebration is sponsored by London's top-tier citywide government, the Greater London Authority (GLA). Critical literature on multiculturalism in Britain has derided

state-sponsored multiculturalism's capacity to overcome racism and expedite cross-community alliances (Malik, 1996; 2002); instead, multi-culturalism typically works in the service of neocolonialism by constituting groups as bounded in ethnically defined communities and essentialist cultures. Calgar summarizes the issue thus:

> Multiculturalism does not involve merely a recognition of collective cultural differences but the need to guarantee politically the *survival* of the cultural communities bearing these differences. This implies an institutionalisation of cultures in the public sphere, a freezing of cultural differences and a reifying of cultural 'communities'. Moreover, as the assertion of rights is based on the identity of groups recognised within the multicultural framework, only those group identities will be publicly endowed and given 'rights'. (1997: 179).

The inevitable acrimony resulting from institutional multiculturalism has been observed best in the equal opportunities paradigm (in which 'minority' groups are afforded 'equal opportunity' to gain public money to deal with specific 'community' issues). The demand for 'community' funding has ensured 'a struggle between different groups to prioritize their cultural differences' (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1995: 184), as well as constituting hierarchical claims of victimhood. As Bauman (2001: 103–4) argues, instead of instigating a political will to break 'the vicious circle of mutually reinforc-ing exclusivities', the 'most potent forces conspire . . . to perpetuate the exclusivist trend' (2001: 104). These forces operate by the mechanism of *divide et imperia*. The constant bickering over the allocation of resources, allied to an emphasis on the narcissism of minor differences between 'minority groups', hinders the opportunity to act collectively and obscures the real sources of inequality and deprivation.

It is because current legislative forms set in place to deal with racism have failed abjectly that Hesse (2000: 5) and Gilroy (2004) have announced the 'death of multicultural society'. Despite the nominal title of 'multi-culturalism' to define Britain's current 'self-conscious identity' (Young, 1995), this, Hesse argues, reveals 'the failure of multiculturalism as a *partic-ularized* discourse to overcome the specific critiques from anti-racist politics that came to dominate radical thinking throughout the 1980s' (Hesse, 2000: 5; emphasis in original). What is required in response are new forms of creativity to disrupt the normative transmission of essentialist and divisive multiculturalism. In a vocal exposition on the death of British multicultural-ism, and one in which the author provocatively proposes an alternative, Gilroy (2004) calls for the 'planetary humanism', the 'cosmopolitan imagin-ation' required to overcome racialized differentiation. It is here that Gilroy demands an internationalist perspective, fashioning 'new networks of interconnectedness and solidarity that could resonate across boundaries' (2004: xi). Gilroy implores us to go beyond the confines of the 'raciology' of living our lives in camps defined by racial boundaries and the political

particularism of maintaining 'cheap antihumanism and vacuous identity politics alike' (2004: xi).

Noting the examples of the London-Irish advocating inclusivity, which I mentioned earlier, I cannot make claims that they have constituted the 'planetary humanism' Gilroy requests. Nevertheless, the London-Irish and their strategic manoeuvres to create inclusivity and cross-cultural dialogue ill fits the constraints of contemporary multiculturalism outlined by critics. For Bauman, ethnic minority status in multicultural society is the antithesis of free choice supposedly 'imputed to the liberated consumer in liberal society' (2001: 89). Ethnic minorities, argues Bauman, are doomed to their marginal status, their perceived natural communalism is the result of the host nation's enforcement. Constantly under threat from the host nation, such 'ambient insecurity' engenders 'ethnic minorities' to engage in boundary construction, in which:

> 'culture' becomes a synonym for a besieged fortress, and in fortresses under siege the inhabitants are required to manifest their unswerving loyalty and to abstain from any hob-nobbing with outsiders . . . [c]ommunities so constructed become expedients aimed principally at the perpetuation of division, separation, isolation and estrangement. (2001: 141–2)

It is only when groups attain a sense of 'security' about their position that there is a greater chance for 'cross-cultural dialogue': 'feeling secure makes the fearsome ocean separating "us" from "them" seem more like an inviting swimming pool' (2001: 142).

Rather than viewing cross-cultural dialogue relative to the degree of security to which an 'ethnic minority' group experiences it, paradoxically it can be facilitated by the way a group asserts its marginality and difference. Ethnic difference, instead of being an indicator of boundaries dividing 'us' from 'them', can appear an attractive identity for individuals seeking to engage in alternative lifestyles and cultures. The way in which Irishness is promoted by London-Irish cultural groups operating within state-sanctioned multiculturalism is one in which a putative primordial Irishness is emphasized. By promoting expressivism, emotion, belonging, symbolic totemic identifications often associated with the Otherness of non-modern lifestyles, Irish cultural expressions appear oppositional to the inauthentic, disenchanted instrumentality of interpersonal relations embedded in a routinized everyday life. London-Irish groups thus try to promote Irishness, not as an ascriptive identity – an identity the result of external enforcement and the restriction of choice – but as the result of 'lifestyle' affiliation.

Irishness is not a unique example of inclusivity, however. Ethnicity, 'the consumption of the Other' (Sharma et al., 1996: 1), is all the rage. Noting the manufacturing of everything South Asian into 'Asian Kool' in late 1990s Britain, for example, Banerjea argues that the music of the self-styled 'Asian Underground' in London clubs 'allow[s] for white folk to rub shoulders with

a carefully constructed "exotica" and for the perpetuation of the myth of multiculture' (2000: 65). Here, white encounters with South Asians 'becomes a kind of licentious cultural playground where voyeuristic clubbers not only get to taste the Other but to eradicate his/her presence altogether' (2000: 76).

The anxiety with 'Asian Kool' is concerned with how 'ethnic marketing categories . . . pass for intercultural relations today' (Hutnyk, 2000: 21) rather than with state-sponsored multiculturalism. Moreover, the mainly white co-option of Indian exotica is based on the supposed oppositional identities of the West and the 'Oriental East'; the consumption of the eastern exotic fulfils the white colonial fantasy of devouring identities that appear utterly alien and alluring (Young, 1995). However, before whiteness became mimetically ethnicized through forms of cultural appropriation gained in the colonial encounter with the eastern 'Other', the presence of the Irish Celt, I will subsequently demonstrate, has provided a barometer through which Britishness has been able to define itself against and within. Indeed, having '"a touch of the Celt" in one's ancestry has, since the 18th century, been a frequently desirable designer accessory of Britishness' (Pittock, 1999). A poll in 2001 highlighted that 30 percent of Londoners who took part in the survey claimed Irish ancestry (ICM Research, 2001).

One reason why Irishness is an identity that appears appealing is that it is predominantly viewed as a white identity. Whilst 19th-century anti-Irish rhetoric in Britain meant that the Irish were excluded from the white category, as whiteness attained its totalizing, totemic status in the 20th century, the assimilation of the Irish into an umbrella whiteness occurred (Gray, 2002: 259). Whiteness is one construct that allows Irishness to lend itself to accessibility for the white English, like those who came to the Hammersmith Irish Centre and St Patrick's Day in 2002. Significantly, the uneasy absorption of the Irish into the monolithic 'white' category in Britain is disrupted by the inclusion of an Irish category into the ethnic origin category of the 2001 British census (Hickman et al., 2005). Marking the distinctiveness of the Irish constituent of the British population and the diversity within whiteness, the census reveals the uneasy insider/outsider binary characterizing the Irish presence in Britain.

Beyond the white English, the London-Irish groups I discuss create alliances with non-white minority groups in the capital. One practical reason for this is to contest a restrictive race relations model that once solely focused on a black/white duality. Discrimination is not purely an issue of 'white' versus 'black' power relations, but largely the reproduction of the colonial experience (Breen and Hickman, 1984). If the Irish were once, on the basis of their whiteness, excluded from debates on multiculturalism, by demonstrating shared histories of colonization, displacement, and racialization with other minority groups, this could form the basis for political coalition, just as the 'anti-Thatcherite alliances of '"Black Britain" . . .

mobilized Africans, Afro-Caribbeans, and South Asians' (Clifford, 1997: 260). The rest of this article explores two ethnographic examples – the Irish Centre and St Patrick's Day – where Irish cultural initiatives have fomented inclusivity and cross-community dialogue.[1] Before doing this, I will give an overview of the construction of Irish-Celtic identity in London. I will also describe how the cultural initiatives designed to contest what is perceived to be a negative Irish identity resemble a new social movement.

THE LONDON-IRISH: 'BINARY OPPOSITES'?

Though there have been successive waves of major Irish migration to Britain since the 18th century, Irish settlement has been problematic. Hickman (2000) argues that the Irish in Britain have been racialized by the host nation to the extent that they have provided an inferior 'binary opposite' identity to Britishness. Because anti-Irish sentiment is always historically specific, the construction of negative Irish stereotypes has been connected to the moral justification of English colonization in Ireland (see Curtis, 1984). The apotheosis of anti-Irish prejudice was 19th-century scientific-racism in which the Irish, in comparison to the Anglo-Saxon English, 'were collectively figured as racial deviants, atavistic throwbacks to a primitive moment in human history' (McClintock, 1995: 43).

In more recent times, forced as they were within the matrix of the conflict in Northern Ireland since 1969, and with IRA bombs detonated in London, the London-Irish were viewed as a 'suspect community' (Hillyard, 1993), prone to excessive panoptic surveillance and distrust by the authorities and media. The most visible manifestation of observation was The Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA).[2] The PTA harassed Irish people in Britain and deterred them from political activity by making Irish nationalist persuasion indivisible with Irish republican militancy. Within this milieu, anti-Irish sentiment flourished, filtered by a complicit media only too willing to portray crude stereotypes and jokes of the 'stupid and violent Irish' (Curtis, 1984).

The Irish in Britain occupy an ambivalent position (Gray, 2000). Under the auspices of the British Nationality Act (1948), Irish people born in the Irish Republic resident in Britain were automatically granted the same treatment as British citizens under British law (Gray, 2002). However, research conducted since the 1980s has corroborated the suspicion that just because the Irish generally share phenotypic characteristics, language and citizen rights with the host nation, such qualifications do not grant dispensation from forms of discrimination and racism assumed to be the reproduction of skin colour differences. The Irish, as The Commission for Racial Equality report highlighted, experience 'inequality, discrimination and

prejudice' (Hickman and Walter, 1997: 2). When I attended the Hammersmith Irish Centre in 2002, the centre experienced racist threats, arson attacks, was daubed with racist graffiti and its ground floor windows displaying an etched map of Ireland was broken at a cost of £50,000 in a racist attack (*Hammersmith Chronicle*, 2002).

In order to deal with disadvantages affecting the London-Irish, London-Irish agencies mobilized in the 1980s to gain recognition within state-sponsored multiculturalism. The selection in 1981 of Ken Livingstone as a left-wing leader of the then city-wide government, the Greater London Council (GLC), provided 'a significant impetus for the increased activism of the Irish in London by recognizing the Irish as an "ethnic minority", thereby legitimating the funding of specifically Irish welfare and cultural projects' (Gray, 2000: 71).[3] Groups such as The London Irish Commission for Culture and Education sought to 'identify and articulate the special needs of the Irish in London in the areas of culture and education, and to develop an anti-racist programme that will reflect the history and heritage of the Irish' (London Commission for Culture and Education, 1987). This group further argued the importance of Irish culture as a means to create political alliances with other 'ethnic minority groups', by 'reach[ing] out to other communities in the capital' to allow a dialogue on 'matters of common historical experience' (London Commission for Culture and Education, 1987). The abolition of the GLC in 1985 acted to exclude the Irish from significant multicultural provision. A nationwide survey of local authorities undertaken in 1994 revealed that only 14 London authorities included Irish as a category for ethnic monitoring purposes (Hickman and Walter, 1997). Struggling within the limited remit of contemporary equal opportunities, fashioning inclusivity for the Irish Centre and the organizers of London's St Patrick's Day assists in the 'multicultural numbers game'. The 100,000 attendance of the 2003 London St Patrick's Day, for example, helped Irish groups claim increased government funds by pointing to the huge community they serve.

CELTICISM

Though writers have emphasized the oppositional position of the Irish in Britain, representations of Irishness have been complexly articulated. One portrayal of Irishness is through the prism of the Celt.[4] Originating as a form of representation in the 18th century by the Romantics, Celtic identity oscillated between the atavistic epithets of the celebratory: 'natural', 'creative', 'spiritual' – to the abusive: 'superstitious' and 'violent' (Watson, 1994). Pittock (1999: 2) argues that the specifically English discourse of 'Celticism' was developed for the exigencies of portraying the 'Celtic'

peoples like the Irish as tamely ethnocultural rather than threateningly territorial in the form of coveting independence from English rule. The supposed non-rational, this other-worldly character of the Celt, their propensity for emotional instability and violence, appeared to render them unfit for self-rule and thus beneficiaries of guardianship from 'Mother England'. Certainly, the negative aspects of Celticism have often been applied to the Irish when they have sought national independence. Irish republican violence, for instance, is viewed as part of the Celt's mindless capacity for violence; the myth of the drunken Irish fulfils the stereotype of the Celt lacking self-control, the attribute required for political rule.

The more celebratory aspects of the Celt have co-existed with the abusive. The Romantics' critique of modern society was that of alienation resulting from the Enlightenment's totalizing vision of order and control (Hetherington, 1998: 77). The Romantics turned their gaze to the Celt, a figure they believed represented authentic lived experience, a sense of belonging within an organic community, and conditions of harmony with others and with nature. In an era undergoing rapid industrialization and social transformation, the Celt was a primordial presence whose apparent eternal rusticity 'proved a cultural counterweight to the modernization and rationalization of society encompassed by the enlightenment' (Pittock, 1999: 36).

Ever since, the image of the Celt has provided a focus for the existential goal for self, and a preference for Celtic marginality over stolid metropolitan respectability is an attractive badge for the artistic poser (Pittock, 1999: 73). Celticism, as a form of primitivism, also persists as raw product for the culture industries; it is a catch-all marketing category synonymous with New Ageism. The ability of Celticism to morph into a raft of alternative lifestyles sells this mythical ethnicity. Celticism fits neatly into the contemporary 'cultic milieu' (Edensor, 2002: 4), where perceived 'vernacular' cultural elements flourish, a 'rejected knowledge' (Webb, 1974: 191) that offers a critique of instrumental-rationalism in favour of spiritual and expressive forms of understanding derived more from feelings than rational calculation (Hetherington, 1998: 74). This renewal of Celtic appeal is also connected to the Celts' supposed rural pursuits and a primitive addiction to partying.

Cultivating Celticism for the London-Irish is a foundation on which to achieve inclusivity by accommodating non-Irish people interested in 'authentic' and 'alternative' cultures. This focus on cross-community collaboration is part of a strategy adopted by London-Irish political and cultural agencies to contest what they view as anti-Irish prejudice and negative stereotyping. If Britain's narrative once told of a discrete, homogeneous and autonomous culture, characterized by racial violence and exclusion, Irish agencies believe they are contributing to the notion that cultural interchange and pluralism provide new models of interaction.

NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND THE LONDON-IRISH

Although specifying what is 'new' about new social movements (NSMs) is debatable, for advocates of the 'new', contemporary social movements represent features different from previous generations of collective action. Most obviously, advocates of NSMs, particularly Melucci (1989, 1995, 1996), do not view collective action as the manifestation of class consciousness characteristic of an industrial society, which was concerned with obtaining material resources. NSMs, instead, focus their aims on appropriating symbolic resources, which Melucci (1989) calls 'information' or 'codes'. Contemporary modes of production, according to Melucci, are not confined to material goods; they also produce symbolic codes, which furnish the raw material to allow individuals to construct identities and social relations.

As capitalism develops sophisticated control mechanisms to intrude further into people's 'inner nature', NSMs raise counter-demands for participation and personal autonomy concerning lifestyle and values (Mayo, 2000: 50). For Melucci, these demands further involve attaining 'information', which has a dual meaning: the NSM tries to gain information on 'things' (for instance, the Irish tried to obtain 'factual' information about the numbers of London-Irish detained by the PTA), and it also challenges erroneous information (challenging negative stereotypes of the Irish in London). Crucially, NSMs are not only looking to achieve political goals through direct confrontation with authorities; the movement also maintains its difference from instrumental-rational society. NSMs are highly self-reflexive, they constitute 'alternative experiences of time, space and inter-personal relationships, which in turn challenge the technological rationality of the system' (Melucci, 1989: 60). The organizational structure of the NSM is not just instrumental for achieving a specific goal; it is a goal itself. Since collective action is focused on cultural codes, the form of the movement is itself a message, a symbolic challenge to the 'dominant codes'. The desire to express different ways of experiencing reality – of changes in language, affective relationships – becomes a central goal. Movement actors thus self-consciously practise in the present the future social changes they seek (1989: 5–6). This articulation of difference is essentially 'a conflict of nomination' (Melucci, 1996: 161): 'a conflict over the meaning of words and things in a society in which the name to an increasing degree supplants reality'. Naming the world in a different way challenges cultural homogenization. By expressing difference, NSMs strive to make power visible in the public and private arena by forcing society to address the larger questions affect-ing human life (Melucci, 1989: 79). Utilizing Celticism to promote inter-cultural relations and anti-racist struggle, the London-Irish groups I discuss constitute a NSM, which instead of trying to politically revolutionize society, seeks to pluralize it with Irish Celtic culture.

THE IRISH CENTRE

Opened in November 1995, the Hammersmith and Fulham Irish Centre (2006) currently proclaims to be the 'heart of Irish west London'. Although the Irish Centre provides a support and advice centre for social issues, it hosts 'a wide-ranging programme of free and affordable community activities, alongside an innovative programme of high profile events, its aim has always been to present the very best of Irish culture' (Hammersmith and Fulham Irish Centre, 2006). The centre is funded by revenue generated from its educational classes and entertainment services, Hammersmith and Fulham council with assistance from The Irish Youth Foundation and The Ireland Fund GB. The Irish Centre's director, Rosalind Scanlon, who is responsible for drafting funding applications, explained to me in 2002 that 75 percent of the centre's funding came from the local London councils, and Hammersmith and Fulham's Equal Opportunities programme. When requesting funding from the council, the Irish Centre, Ros Scanlon stated, emphasizes not only that it provides important cultural initiatives for the local 'minority' Irish community, but in an open door policy the centre is fully accessible to the non-Irish (interview with the author, 2002). This is emphasized in the mission statement: 'the Centre sets out to encourage new people and new audiences to experience Irish arts and culture for the first time' (Hammersmith and Fulham Irish Centre, 2006). This is reflective of the GLA's commitment, outlined in the Mayor's 'Cultural Strategy' (GLA, 2004: 56–7), to identify and support initiatives by showing that 'raising the profile of these events can bring new audiences, building bridges between London's different communities . . . promoting greater understanding and tolerance'.

As the 'heart' of the Irish in west London, the centre provides traditional culture: 'traditional Irish music, dance, storytelling, language, theatre' (Hammersmith and Fulham Irish Centre, 2006). When I enquired what role the centre's adult educational cultural classes had in anti-Irish struggles, Ros answered that the purpose of the centre is to 'celebrate and promote Irish culture and counteract the negative discrimination the Irish people face as an ethnic minority' (interview with the author, 2002).

The idea that arts and educational classes attain a radical potential is two-fold. First, since the end of the Second World War, British socialists (see Mayo, 2000: 16–17) have advocated educational classes as a means to empower working-class people to challenge prevailing bourgeois ideology and to promote a new popular critical consciousness. Since the mid-1990s, there has been growing recognition by the British government of the contribution of the arts, sport, and cultural and recreational activity as part of wider strategies, including strategies to promote regeneration and to combat social exclusion in Britain (Mayo, 2000: 16–18). Second, since the

1980s, multicultural approaches to education 'put a lot of emphasis on developing curricula, in which different ethnic cultures . . . were taught in school, for the children both to learn to be proud of "their heritage", and to respect other ethnic minorities' (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1995: 160). The assumption underlying this anti-racist strategy is that prejudice is the result of cultural ignorance and attitudes can be ameliorated by an appreciation of difference.

Governed by this logic, the Irish Centre seeks to include local Irish and non-Irish. For the local Irish, educational classes in traditional Irish culture provide a 'positive self-identity' of the Irish. The determination of the Irish Centre to raise cultural consciousness and self-esteem indicates a willingness to confront the manifestations of inferiority, such as poor health.[5] This perspective resonates with Freire (1972), the Brazilian educator, for whom informal and conversational education provided a means for people 'to get the oppressor out of their own heads'. As Ros Scanlon stated when I asked her what she meant when she said the educational classes provided a 'positive Irish identity', it was to:

> create positive images of Irish people, meaning that they're proud to be Irish and we're not living in a time now where people felt ashamed to be Irish in Britain. There was a time in the early 1970s when people were afraid to admit they were Irish. People felt it was a negative thing to be Irish at that time. Now, however, it's a time to be proud of your Irishness; it's a positive thing and not just keep your head down. (interview with the author, 2002)

Educational classes are also used to reach out to the non-Irish. The centre hopes it is helping to build links with white Londoners to sweep away their accumulated misconceptions, to join in the task of working to build a new future beyond division. The critiques of this form of multiculturalism, predicated on the axiom that knowledge of the Other is attained by learning to live in each other's shoes, is legion. Cohen (1988: 12–13), for example, states that 'the multicultural illusion is that dominant and subordinate can somehow swap places and learn how the other half lives whilst leaving the structures of power intact'.

I asked Ros Scanlon in 2002 whether the Irish Centre was part of a political movement for the non-Irish; she said it was 'a natural not a thought out thing. So in that respect it's not political.' 'Natural' referred to what is perceived to be an unconscious and organic movement; participants are drawn to the Irish Centre chiefly by their love of Irish culture rather than any desire to engage in political activity. What is important for the Irish Centre is cultural preservation. Irish traditional culture was cultivated because the Irish owned their traditional culture, unlike the English who, stated Ros, have 'lost their sense of culture'. Preserving Irish culture is extremely important, Ros said, in a global environment characterized by indigenous ways of life increasingly coming under threat of extinction. The

centre often attracted people, Ros explained, who wanted to 'experience different parts of the world and Irish culture is part of that. Young people are much more interested in not just their part of the world, but they're looking after the environment' (interview with the author, 2002).

This notion of Irish traditional culture locked outside forces of social change has its roots in the discourse of Celticism. It is assumed that Irish traditional culture evokes themes of organic and vernacular *gemeinschaft* community, which links with the search for authenticity in an artificial modernity. I often encountered the notion that Irish culture attained an ontological category that possessed qualities deeming preservation because of its ability to locate subjects by giving them community. An example is traditional music, which because of its emphasis on non-hierarchical, group-based music-making is celebrated for its collectivist ideal and is thus the 'antithesis of individualist, and essentially capitalist nature of intellectual property regimes' (McCann, 2001: 89). Classes in group storytelling at the Irish Centre gave students an access to oral modes of folklore. London's 2003 St Patrick's Day hosted an Irish Tourism Village showcasing the virtues of Irish rural, communal life uncontaminated by modernity.

In the context of 'multicultural Britain', Britain appears to have lost its national culture in the mire of modernity, and the Irish play a vital role by providing a pre-industrial culture that contributes to the nation's hetero-geneous fabric. The supposed primordial authenticity of Irish culture reveals the terms of alterity that characterize the role 'minorities' are allowed to nurture within Britain. Bhattacharyya's (1998) observation that multiculturalism was transformed in 1990s Britain as a part of a liberal version of the 'heritage industry' is witnessed in how 'minorities' are 'invoked as representing that "sense of community" that liberal society is supposed to have lost' (Hall, 2000).

For some English-born students at the Irish Centre, 'multiculturalism' is exclusive only to 'ethnic minorities', such as the Irish, whilst the 'white' British no longer preserved their own cultural forms. One evening after class I spoke to an English student who claimed no roots in Ireland. She told me she came to the singing class because she loved singing, and since the Irish Centre was near her home, it was convenient to attend:

> I would love to go to an English community centre if there was one. I love English folk song, but there aren't any centres locally. The English are quite tolerant really. They allow Irish, Indian and West Indian centres to thrive over here, but people would never want to have an English cultural centre. It's like the English are incredibly liberal when it comes to allowing Muslim mosques, but we are less vociferous when encouraging Christianity. (interview with the author, 2002).

This discourse replicates the scepticism regarding British multiculturalism. Politicians, not exclusively located to the right, have countered pluralism by

framing it as the resignation of citizenship and privilege to minorities to the cost of the majority white British population (Hesse, 2000). According to this discourse, the pendulum has swung too far as ethnic minorities manage to ingratiate themselves with the best economic and cultural resources from the British government. The host population, alternatively, are doomed to suffer their own cultural impoverishment as the liberal-constitutional state dissolves around them into the nether world of pluralism. An example of this was when a London councillor for the Conservative Party, Graham Whitton, managed to garner some publicity in 2002 by stating the GLA should not sponsor St Patrick's Day when St George, England's saint's day, was unfunded. The English, he stated, are the biggest community in London.

At the end of the first term of education classes I attended at the Irish Centre, I had spoken to a Japanese accordionist, German flautists and speakers of Irish from France. That a considerable number of students in the Irish Centre were non-Irish demonstrated that the centre's strategy of inclusivity was successful. One interesting way the centre unwittingly facilitates inclusivity is the building's design. The centre promotes itself, as part of its commitment to providing Irish culture, as a heritage/preservation centre: 'the Centre aims to ensure . . . Irish traditional culture is kept alive' (Hammersmith and Fulham Irish Centre, 2006). The Irish Centre's claim of authenticity is through making the centre not modern Ireland, but authentic Ireland made old and new. The term 'preserve' to describe the Irish Centre's role is crucial, implying 'authentic' Irish culture is newly available in the centre.

Contradicting this, the strange juxtaposition of the old and new – emphasized by glass cases on the walls containing old Irish musical instruments, books penned by Irish prominent writers and bric-a-brac connected with rural Ireland – confuses a sense of ordering, belonging and a settling into a unity of meaning through direct resemblance to some anterior reality of what is 'authentic' Irish culture. This uncertainty is augmented by the role of the Irish second generation in the centre. Because the centre is led by a second-generation Irish person, Ros Scanlon, and many of the students and tutors are second generation, often with one non-Irish parent, these subjects are interested in cultural initiatives expressing diverse identities. The second-generation input into the centre reflects recent analysis of this group who go beyond reductive 'caught between two cultures' models by looking for complexity of identifications and positionings (Hickman et al., 2005). The second generation's influence in the centre also occasionally draws adverse attention from some Irish born who deride the centre's 'inauthenticity'.

Foucault's (1986) notion of the 'Heterotopia', an 'other place', characterized by uncertainty and incongruity, a space that subscribes to a vast rage of alternative discourses and practices, is useful. These spaces set up

unsettling juxtapositions of incommensurate objects that challenge the way our thinking is ordered (Hetherington, 1998). Thus, because the Irish Centre represents unsettled, multiple meanings for agents, it signifies its ambiguity. The Irish Centre, as a Heterotopia, engenders inclusivity because it allows subjects the possibility to imagine different narrations of Irishness.

More consciously, the Irish Centre stimulates inclusivity by hosting 'cross-cultural' fusions. Alliances are fashioned between the music of 'Celtic' peoples in for example, an 'Irish Spanish Gaeletic Crossings' performance at the centre or, when I was there, when a dancer who told me she was from 'Afro-Caribbean and Irish parentage', started a 'Celtic/Caribbean Crossings' dance show, which imagined a political affinity between two 'ethnic minorities'. This alliance provides a narrative in which racial discrimination in post-war Britain is not exclusively retold as a story confined to those New Commonwealth 'black' or South Asian migrants and that the experience of British discrimination is not restricted to skin colour, but is germane to migrants' shared histories of colonization, dislocation and discrimination. Also, every year the centre hosts a collaboration between the 'acclaimed Cuban, Caribbean and Jazz musician Keith Waithe and his band The Macusi Players with the dynamic Irish traditional band "Hooley" to bring a night of Irish Afro-Celtic musical fusion'. Importantly, by rendering the Irish experience in Britain as generally analogous to that of other 'minorities', it helps make the Irish visible in debates on 'ethnic minority' funding when it has been assumed that this status is wholly confined to minorities of 'colour'. These alliances have a long history. In 1987, for instance, the Irish-Nigerian playwright Gabriel Gbadamosi's play *No Black, No Irish* premiered under the aegis of the Síol Phádraig (Festive Gathering) London-Irish arts festival. The play told of a Nigerian man and his Irish wife facing racial hostility when looking for lodgings in an English town in the 1950s.

ST PATRICK'S DAY: 'EVERYBODY IS IRISH'

Melucci states that NSMs entail a relationship between the 'latent' and 'visible' (1995: 114). The 'latent' refers to NSMs existing in semi-autonomous spaces, partially under state control, like the Irish Centre does. Here, the NSM is latent, a 'submerged network' engaging in 'the production of new codes' to 'challenge the dominant logic of technological rationality . . . these networks are the laboratories in which other views of reality are created' (1995: 114). The public sphere, which complements the latent, is where the NSM emerges to become visible, often to air a specific viewpoint. St Patrick's Day 2002 was an example of Irish cultural-political agencies becoming visible in public space.

A St. Patrick's Day festival in London was state funded for the first time in 2002. Encouraging inclusivity, the organizers[6] stated:

> [t]he Irish in London have always played a key role in many facets of society. There could never be a better time to celebrate the rich tapestry of life in our multicultural capital and we would like to extend a warm invitation to all Londoners to join the Irish community in celebrating this special day. (GLA, 2002)

Routing the celebration through central London was planned to provide the London-Irish visibility, a positive representation of Irishness and a public focus to gain precious government funds. Such visibility of the Irish in London was considered to represent the formal acceptance of the contribution that the Irish endow 'multicultural' London, when previously the Irish have been rendered invisible by being represented as a 'suspect community'. The parade, GLA leader Ken Livingstone subsequently acknowledged, helped some with 'no Irish roots . . . come away with a better understanding of the contribution the Irish have made to London' (Murphy, 2005).

Routed past the Houses of Parliament, Whitehall and Downing Street, the location of the British government, and ending in Trafalgar Square, the parade journeyed through 'the very heart of London' (O'Neill, 2002). That the parade had ended with a concert in Trafalgar Square was vital, because for decades Irish related gatherings had been proscribed from the square as the authorities sought to deny the IRA the 'oxygen of publicity' and the potential to recruit activists. Irish parades in central London were once firmly associated with Irish republicanism: drawing attention to British rule in Northern Ireland. Previously, St Patrick's Day parades in London occurred in areas hosting major Irish communities. The parade in Willesden, north-west London, part of Brent Council's jurisdiction, which contains Britain's largest resident Irish community, attracted a crowd of a few thousand local Irish. Following the IRA's cease-fire in 1997 and the consolidation of the Northern Irish peace process, huge St Patrick's Day festivals occur in Birmingham and Manchester (Cronin and Adair, 2002: 195–9).

For the London-Irish, the route through central London attained what Shields would call a 'social centrality' (Shields, 1992: 103). That is, particular sites take on a symbolic significance around which identities are constituted and performed. Central London derived a 'social centrality' for the London-Irish because it represented the heart of the official and hegemonic centre of Britain, that from which the marginalized Irish had previously been proscribed. The power of staging the parade through central London was not only confined to legitimizing Irish contribution in British cultural life, it also provided a neutral space where anyone, irrespective of identity, could participate. The presence of South-Asian bhangra drummers and Chinese dragons at the parade gave added emphasis to the notion that the parade was truly 'multicultural'.

The celebration of the 'multicultural' was given an official seal when the GLA's Cultural Events Programme budget provided £100,000 to the festival as part of its commitment to advocating multiculturalism, anti-racist policies and instilling a shared sense of London identity. Official patronage was further augmented by Ken Livingstone's public support of the celebration, including leading the parade. Livingstone's ascendancy to GLA Mayor in 2000 was vital for the funding of St Patrick's Day. Livingstone's support for the Irish goes back to the 1980s when he was leader of the GLC. In 2001, Livingstone held a meeting with 90 Irish community organizations to outline a joint strategy to garner support from Irish businesses and community organizations in London for a festival.

The GLA's sponsorship of St Patrick's Day is detailed in policy reports by its Cultural Strategy Group. The document 'London Cultural Capital: Realising the Potential of a World Class City' (GLA, 2004) places a strong emphasis on cultural activity in the city to provide, predictably, a means to 'brand London', to raise revenue by promoting itself as a world cultural city and tourist destination. Viewing culture as a means to provide diverse communities with 'social capital', the document points to how funding the cultural initiatives of London's socially excluded groups helps them to become 'sustainable organisations' and to address 'difficult social issues' rooted in 'inequality' (GLA, 2004: 10–17). The report also encourages cross-community dialogue by laying stress on how culture 'can bring together people with different backgrounds, transcending barriers and celebrating difference.' (GLA, 2004: 18). For this reason, the report states, St Patrick's Day is funded and promoted alongside other London 'multicultural celebrations': Chinese New Year, Mela, Black History Month, Mardi Gras and Liberty (2004: 57). The 'double bind' is seen to be in operation here. Though the report encourages the building of alliances between groups – 'culture as a means of coming together, of sharing a common heritage' – particularism, the unique cultures of the city's minority groups, is ultimately guaranteed because this is a key ingredient that makes London appear cosmopolitan to tourists.

The most potent generator of inclusivity for St Patrick's Day is the celebration itself. St Patrick's Day celebrations are 'carnivalesque'. Celebrations are promoted by commercial and state sponsors as places where consumers go to experience the reverse side of modern-day life, characterized by ennui and repression. The copious consumption of alcohol – seen as an intrinsic part of the rite – to induce out-of-control drunkenness, that above-all one is supposed to engage in hedonistic fun, confirms the idea that celebrations are a space in which to abandon one's self to the Celtic Primitive.

The alcohol-fuelled 'carnivalesque' aspect of St Patrick's Day derives from its Christian roots as a Lenten feast day, a festive break from fasting in which one is allowed to indulge in the forbidden. Recently, as St Patrick's

Day becomes a global and secular celebration – with celebrations in EuroDisney Paris, Tokyo's Omote-Sando and Moscow's Novy Arbat – it has become an important vehicle for commercial interests. The predominance of commercial sponsors of London's St Patrick's Day made notions of inclusivity problematic. For globally recognized Irish brands, such as Guinness®, disseminating the notion that 'everybody could be Irish' on St Patrick's Day is a highly profitable discourse. If everybody could be Irish, as Guinness claimed, seeing as Guinness was the 'official' drink of the Irish, drinking Guinness automatically bestowed Irishness upon the consumer. Leading up to the day in 2002 in the UK, Guinness unleashed adverts asking 'St Who's Day?' claiming that all you needed to do to become Irish was drink Guinness (O'Neill, 2002). Another advertisement invited consumers to 'party like the Irish'. An Irish brewery, Murphy's, a festival sponsor, participated in the London parade with walkers costumed as pints of beer. Drunkenness has provided one of the core stereotypes of Irishness in Britain, its addiction being linked to the frail control that the Irish supposedly have over their bodies (Hickman, 1998).

Theorists often view the carnivalesque in Manichean terms. For some, the carnivalesque represents a radical possibility of a cultural politics of social transformation, allowing actors to engage in status reversals, of constituting and understanding the position of the Other, as well as transgressive practices that 'embod[y] symbolic forms of resistance to the instrumental rationality of modern life' (Hetherington, 1998). For others, the carnivalesque represents a conservative, co-opted spectacle allowing 'the masses' to blow off steam by providing a temporary licence to express powerful impulses normally kept in check by a repressive moral code, or a rite that provides the pleasures of unconstrained, 'impulse buying', consumerism (Shields, 1992).

I witnessed a more dubious example of the culture industries dominating celebrations when I entered a bar in central London during the celebrations. Stuck on the floor of the bar was a Guinness advertisement especially manufactured for St Patrick's Day. Consisting of green footsteps marked by 'L' and 'R', which resembled the footsteps of a staggering drunk, the advertisement stated: 'to help the Irish remember their left from their right foot'. The joke is founded on the old stereotype that the Irish are inherently stupid and irrational. For analysts – Bakhtin (1984) – for whom the carnivalesque was a site of disorder and transgression, the performance of monstrous and grotesque identities, humour – especially mocking authority – challenged the conventions of social order. The mocking 'humour' of adverts witnessed on St Patrick's day potentially confirms difference and inferiority.

CONCLUSION: PARTICULARISM VERSUS UNIVERSALISM

Multicultural public policies simultaneously encourage communitarian and cosmopolitan approaches to the funding of cultural services for 'minority groups' in London. Policies, outlined by the GLA (GLA, 2004) and the Social Exclusion Unit (see Mayo, 2000 8–9), promote particularistic approaches to 'counteract . . . increasing fragmentation of social capital, social dislocation and excessive individualisation' (2000: 37). As the London Mayor states: '[F]ar too many of London's citizens are socially excluded and poorly represented. Culture and creativity have a unique potential to address some of these difficult social issues' (GLA, 2004: 10). Cultural activity can contribute to 'neighbourhood renewal, and make a difference to health, crime, employment and education in deprived communities' (Mayo, 2000: 8). 'Deprived communities' struggling for their share of public funding to deal with issues specific to themselves are required to assert their difference. The GLA celebrates diversity as advancing London's 'creative' and heterogeneous profile. Sponsoring St Patrick's Day, the GLA asserts, 'empowers' the Irish community, the 100,000 who participated in celebrations 'feel part of their city' (GLA, 2004: 18). On the other hand, these policies promote culture to generate cross-community alliances by facilitating 'a better understanding, appreciation and respect for each other. This helps to . . . foster dialogue between communities' (GLA, 2004: 19).

Examining NSMs and their celebration of diversity, Mayo (2000: 4) asks if they challenge the underlying causes of oppression and exploitation, rooted in the relations of production. For this project to be realized, would it require an alliance with the agendas of traditional class politics? Whilst recognizing that 'fighting for your right to be different can mean fighting for your subordination' (Guillaumin, 1995: 17), local strategies can tap into wider strategies for transformation. Naturally, the remedy required to redress injustice is not purely cultural recognition, as opposed to political-economic redistribution. Diversity, Malik (2002) states, is important only if it affords opportunity to 'compare and contrast different values, beliefs and lifestyles, and make judgements upon them . . . because it allows us to engage in political dialogue and debate that can help create more universal values and beliefs, and a collective language of citizenship'. Multicultural initiatives can provide scope for building coalitions across communities to fashion discussion on progressive political strategies. The relationship between the 'particular and the universal', Malik argues, is thus to be seen as 'dialectical':

> existing only in a reciprocal relationship. It allows us to see human differences
> as socially constructed, while at the same time reminding us that humans
> possess a social essence, arising out of their sociability, which is the basis for
> human equality (1996: 266).

Looking at the responses of the London-Irish to multicultural policies, I have explored this dialectic, arguing that whilst reification of identity occurs, an underdeveloped sense of solidarity is concurrently engendered. Rather than depicting an unremittingly bleak picture of state-sponsored multi-culturalism, I suggest it is worthwhile examining the potential for alliances.

Notes

1 The ethnographic examples I provide were collected during extensive fieldwork conducted in 2002 on London-Irish cultural initiatives. I engaged in participant observation, formal and informal interviews, and archival research. I also took part in two terms of education classes at the Hammersmith Irish Centre, where, thanks to the centre's director, Rosalind Scanlon, I was given free and complete access.
2 The PTA was implemented by the British government in 1974. Specifically designed to counter Irish republican activity in Britain, the act allowed people to be detained without charge for up to seven days, and for the British Home Secretary to exclude people, including UK citizens born in Northern Ireland, from entering Britain without recourse to trial or explanation.
3 Other GLC initiatives included supporting 30 London-Irish welfare and cultural services, and the strategic policy unit produced a policy report on the Irish community in 1984 that highlighted widespread discrimination against Irish people. A key recommendation of the report was to make provisions for the preservation of Irish culture in London (Gray, 2000: 71).
4 Celts also apply to the Cornish-English, Spanish Galicians, Manx, Welsh, Scottish and the French Bretons.
5 Garrett (1998) provides a link between 'anti-Irish racism' and the relatively poor health of Irish people. A report from the Federation of Irish Societies (1996) highlighted statistical evidence showing that the health of the Irish in Britain is 'poor in comparison with the indigenous population. It is also consistently worse than the Irish in Ireland. Irish people living in Britain have significantly higher mortality rates for a range of illnesses across all diagnostic categories'.
6 The St Patrick's Day Parade was organized by the GLA, in conjunction with Smurfit Communications and over 100 London Irish community organizations led by the Council of Irish Counties Association. The GLA provided a gross contribution of £135,000 towards the overall cost of £235,000 for the celebrations. Smurfit communications, who gained a tender from the GLA to design the show, raised the remainder from charity donations.

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