

## A liberalism gone wrong? Muscular liberalism and the quest for monocultural difference

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On 5 February 2011, the British Prime Minister, David Cameron, addressed the Munich Security Conference on the theme of ‘radicalisation and Islamic extremism’. In his view this was the ‘root cause of the problem’ of ‘home-grown terrorism’ that allegedly thrived in an environment of passive tolerance, a liberalism gone wrong. The solution asserted Cameron was for British society (and by extension Western societies in general) to promote actively those values that allegedly defined it. What was needed was ‘a much more active, muscular liberalism’. This was a curious suggestion given that such an idea harks back to a much earlier time when Britannia still ruled the waves. It might well be dismissed as a throwaway line, if it was not for the fact that it was presented as a solution to a specific problem allegedly rooted in the specific context of managing diasporas and their attendant identities. But what is this idea of ‘muscular liberalism’? What does the resurrection of this mostly forgotten use of the idea of ‘muscularity’ signify in the current era? What might the Prime Minister’s appeal to this sort of language mean in terms of illuminating the temper of our times? This paper aims to explore those questions. It is argued that the invocation of ‘muscular liberalism’ is more than a revealing discursive shift exposing the insecurities generated by the presence and political influence of diasporic cultures, as others have rightly noted. Beyond these insecurities lie even deeper fears, specifically that liberalism may be succeeding in empowering those who have previously been considered unimportant or unworthy of inclusion within the idea of British identity. Muscular liberalism, it is argued, is all about ensuring that the very values taken to be archetypically liberal are simultaneously applauded and neutralised.

**Keywords:** diaspora; identity; monoculturalism; muscular Christianity; muscular liberalism

### Introduction

On 5 February 2011, the British Prime Minister, David Cameron, addressed the Munich Security Conference. According to the official website of the British Prime Minister, this was ‘a speech setting out his view on radicalisation and Islamic extremism’ (Cameron, 2011). Ostensibly the Prime Minister was concerned with the problem of ‘home grown terrorism’ and he identified two areas as the ‘root cause of the problem’. These were ‘radicalisation’ and ‘Islamic extremism’, both of which he alleged thrived in an environment of passive tolerance protected by a liberalism

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gone wrong. This passive environment was nurtured by Britain's experiment with multiculturalism, and it was now time to recognise that it had failed. What was needed was a 'muscular liberalism' that actively promoted liberal values, a form of liberalism that was unapologetic about its values and philosophical position.

At first glance the invocation to 'muscular liberalism' appears to be a curious suggestion given that such an idea harks back to a much earlier time when Britannia still ruled the waves. In that imperial context the idea of 'muscular liberalism' was a well-worn trope within English thought (Collini, 1991). It carried within it a particular idea of English manhood and character that would resolutely meet the opposition of critics while rising to the challenges of carrying the 'white man's burden'. Cameron did not mint the idea of 'muscular liberalism'. His use of it was more than a curious discursive anachronism being trotted out to make a rhetorical point. It was a deliberate move to re-position his government's approach to multiculturalism within an emerging discourse of progressive conservatism in which liberalism is being reclaimed. To suggest that liberalism is being reclaimed as distinct from being hijacked by conservative thought is no aberration.

However, my focus in this paper is not a critique of Cameron's speech and its attempt to redefine the politics of multiculturalism. Others have done that very effectively (Basham & Vaughan-Williams, 2012; Kelly & Crowcroft, 2011; Klug, 2011). Rather, my concern will be to answer the following questions: what might the resurrection of this mostly forgotten use of the idea of 'muscularity' signify in the current era? What might the Prime Minister's appeal to this sort of language, in effect the language of colonialism, mean in terms of illuminating the temper of our times? I situate these questions within the broader framing context of questioning whether contemporary liberalism has gone wrong. My answer, in short, is that liberalism has not gone wrong. To the contrary, the appeal to muscular liberalism reveals where liberalism has always been.

My argument is that liberalism does not suffer from any muscular weakness. It has always been a muscle-bound entity capable of kicking sand into the faces of other philosophical perspectives. Hence Cameron's use of it, despite appearing to be a rhetorical throwaway line, was a serious contribution to reframing a specific problem allegedly rooted in the specific context of apparent inabilities of diasporas to meld into something called British identity. This singular identity, defined by the marker of something called Britishness, is in effect a 'transcendental national monoculturalism' which grounds its appeal on 'the enlightenment idea that society should be organized on the basis of rational and mutual understanding' and which in turn 'depends on representing and working through liberal practices' (Povinelli, 2002, pp. 6 & 29).

Cameron's invocation of the idea of 'muscular liberalism' exposes the insecurities generated by the presence and political influence of diasporic cultures. These insecurities are animated by even deeper fears related to the unanswerable question that Mishra has rightly identified as haunting those who, like Cameron, claim political and cultural precedence, namely, 'what if these *hijab*-wearing women are really enjoying their diasporic lives amidst us, and constructing the nation "Other-wise"?' (Mishra, 2005, p. 5). The question is 'unanswerable', at least within muscular liberal terms, because to answer it would force the recognition that what is presented and defended as a 'national identity', to which everyone can 'belong', is in fact an illusion. The price of inclusion requires merging their identities with what is already there; to accept, not transform, what is deemed to be the identity of the nation.

For members of diasporas, familiar ways of anchoring meaningful identity can no longer be easily accessed, and in many cases have to be invented or reimagined. Familiar anchor points lose their solidity, melting but not entirely dissolving, mostly fusing with or being grafted on to those assumed to be pre-existing in the new spaces of relocation. Multicultural policies attempt to manage those fusions while simultaneously aiming to recognise difference. However, at the same time these policies ground ‘a new transcendental national monoculturalism’ (Povinelli, 2002, p. 29), whereby multicultural identities are expected to morph into a transcendental monocultural identity. This is distinct from the monocultural identities of singular cultural identities alleged to inform extremism and which must be rooted out before they infect the rest of the body politic. Muscular liberalism then is the boundary rider ensuring that the proper practices and values prevail by ‘extend[ing] racializing practices and disciplines beyond the colour line’ to inscribe a new divide of ‘multiculturalism’ and ‘monoculturalism’ (Melamed, 2006, p. 16). This dividing line can never be fixed permanently as it rests on dynamics of fusion and absorption, of inclusion and exclusion.

### The resurgence of muscular liberalism

Cameron’s invocation of muscular liberalism appeared to many contemporary commentators, particularly within the blogosphere and intellectual magazines, as a quirky rhetorical return to language long since abandoned (e.g. see Berman, 2011; Katwala, 2011; Kelly, 2011; Modood, 2011; Rougeau, 2011; Stanley, 2011a, 2011b; Sullivan, 2012; Wind-Cowie, 2011). One journalist, Toby Young, writing in the *Daily Telegraph* on the day of Cameron’s speech, not only endorsed Cameron’s political points but confided to his readers that ‘I’ve been advocating “muscular liberalism” – using precisely that phrase – since the Ayatollah Khomeini issued a fatwa against Salman Rushdie in 1989’ (Young, 2011). If nothing else Young’s boast gives some indication that the term had some contemporary currency before Cameron used it.

There is also a Muscular Liberalism website which lists as its editor, Max Wind-Cowie, a member of the conservative think-tank *Demos*. On this website there are numerous commentaries and discussions of the term, as well as a wide range of political and social issues framed by a political perspective described in various places as ‘progressive conservatism’. It is not clear how long this website had been in operation before Cameron’s speech. However, what is clear is that it indicates that ‘muscular liberalism’ was not a chance utterance by the Prime Minister. On the Welcome page of the website, ‘muscular liberalism’ is explained in the following way:

A Muscular Liberal is someone who believes in liberal values and believes that those values must be defended and promoted. Here in the West we benefit from living in liberal cultures which tolerate our differences, accept non-conformity and encourage inquiry and debate. But too often, that liberalism also makes us soft. We think that because we tolerate difference we have to tolerate those who violently disagree with our way of life. We imagine that because we accept non-conformity we have to accept cultures which refuse to conform to our basic standards of decency. Muscular Liberals know that our free and fair civilisation is fragile and that it requires active defence. We also know that the best way to defend our values is to spread them.

Muscular Liberals believe in engaging with the world and in arguing passionately for Western, liberal values. We are opposed to the cultural relativism of the old Left – the idea that we must accept barbaric, oppressive behaviour out of cultural sensitivity. We

are equally opposed to the cynical ‘realism’ of the old Right – which seeks to describe geopolitics as a constant, amoral battle for supremacy. For us, foreign policy is about aggressively promoting the shared values of the Western world . . . Muscular Liberalism is not new – it traces its heritage through Bush and Blair to Theodore Roosevelt and Lord Palmerston – but it has never been more necessary than in our increasingly fractured and dangerous modern world. (<http://www.muscularliberal.com/about>)

This gives a reasonable indication of contemporary understandings of what muscular liberalism is currently thought to represent. Wind-Cowie gives a mixed political lineage but it is entirely consistent as we shall see.

The term had some currency in the 1990s in the context of discussions of South African politics. For example, Blatchford (1997, p. 98) noted ‘the emergence of a dogmatic liberalism which has been called “new liberalism”, “muscular liberalism”’, all of which he regarded as variations of neo-liberalism; or before him, Visser (1993, p. 489), who described the emergence of a resurgent liberalism in the aftermath of South Africa’s 1986 state of emergency as ‘an aggressive, almost muscular liberalism’. More recently, in 2002, Rieff described the authors of the Kosovo Report of 2000 (which recommended humanitarian intervention) as ‘very much operating in the spirit of a new, muscular liberalism’ (Rieff, 2002, p. 115). Later in the decade Motha (2009, pp. 28–29) explored ‘the muscular liberal turn in left politics’ and the emergence of what he termed a ‘muscular liberal left as a political formation’ that ‘projects itself as embodying the values of the West’. He also regarded the terms ‘liberal left’ and ‘muscular liberal’ as interchangeable (Motha, 2009, p. 231).

Similarly, in the US, the term is most commonly used in connection with the ideological roots of neo-conservative thought, many of whose advocates favour using force to achieve humanitarian ends or to ensure ‘a more robust defence of liberal values abroad’ (Holland, 2011, p. 87, fn. 12; see also Barkawi, 2004; Bloodworth, 2006; Lowbeer-Lewis, 2009; Scott-Smith & Baumgartel, 2011). Many of these neoconservative politicians were once radical Democrats (Barkawi, 2004, p. 134), but even those within US political circles who claim to be progressive have argued that ‘[p]rogressives must champion liberal democracy in deed, not just in rhetoric’ and hence ‘Democrats must reclaim, not abandon, their own tradition of muscular liberalism as exemplified by Presidents Truman, Kennedy and Clinton’ (Marshall & Rosner, 2006, p. 9). And in an Australian discussion of the Danish cartoons controversy, Soutphommasane (2006, p. 33) pointed to the very strident tone used by many of the free speech advocates and concluded that ‘the vision underpinning much of the concern was that of a muscular liberalism, impervious to any notion of accommodating considerations about offence’.

The idea and appeal of muscular liberalism crosses political divides and blurs ideological differences. Its core feature is a concern with strength and resoluteness. The word ‘muscular’ is not simply an adjective lending metaphorical gravitas to the noun ‘liberalism’. It is to be taken as a literal descriptor of the nature of the liberalism in question. Those who identify themselves as muscular liberals project themselves and their ideas as strong, resolute and decisive, and are to be defined in contradistinction to what they do not want to be mistaken for, namely soft or weak. As the Chairman of the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, Clifford May, noted in 2005, ‘[f]ighting a War of Ideas is not for sissies’ (cited in Smith, 2007, p. xix). May makes explicit the masculinism that is at the core of muscular liberalism. We can see this most

clearly if we look briefly at the idea of ‘muscular Christianity’, a distinctly different line of descent from what either Wind-Cowie or Marshall and Rosner suggest. But it is a line of descent of key importance for understanding the political salience of muscular liberalism for Cameron’s Munich speech.

### Muscular Christianity

The role of muscular Christianity in the nineteenth century efflorescence of the British Empire has yet to be fully appreciated. Space precludes pursuing that claim here but it is worth noting that if we are ‘concerned about the ethos that drove colonialism itself (as opposed to comparing civilizations that arose from it)’ then an important contributor to that ethos was muscular Christianity (MacAloon, 2006, p. 697). The idea of ‘muscular Christianity’ is generally associated most closely with the literary works of Charles Kingsley and Thomas Hughes who, with Frederick Maurice, could be understood as the leading lights in the mid-century movement of Christian Socialism. Neither Kingsley nor Hughes was particularly comfortable with the label ‘muscular Christianity’. Kingsley allegedly ‘detested it’ (Winn, 1960, p. 66), but resigned himself to it so that he could ‘preach the divineness of the whole manhood’ (Kingsley, cited in Rosen, 1994, p. 28); and Hughes tried to distance himself from it by toning down its emphasis on physical combat, yet nonetheless ‘championed it’ when visiting the USA (Winn, 1960, p. 67), where the idea of a muscular approach to religious ideas found a receptive audience.

By ‘whole manhood’, Kingsley meant a unity of spirit and flesh. He understood the essence of manliness to be an ‘[“a]nimal passion,” a hot rage’, ‘the primal stuff of virtue [that] stamps male nature and seeks expression through sex, fighting and morality. Manliness can only be achieved by allowing this primal force to flow’ (Rosen, 1994, p. 30). The point was to join this understanding of manliness to a Christian sense of duty and Christian values. As Kingsley put it

what we want to make us true men, over and above that which we bring into the world with us, is some sort of God-given instinct, motive and new principle of life in us, which shall make us not only see the right, and the true, and the noble, but love it, and give up our will and hearts to it. (Kingsley cited in Rosen, 1994, p. 37)

Hughes too regarded fighting and a propensity for violence as part of human nature, a necessary part of manliness (Hughes, 1857). For a muscular Christian, wrote Hughes:

a man’s body is given him to be trained and brought into subjection and then used for the protection of the weak, the advancement of all righteous causes, and the subduing of the earth which God has given to the children of men. (Hughes, 1861, n.p.)

Similarly, for Kingsley, a Christian need not shirk from military duty since, as he advised in his sermon *Address to Brave Sailors and Soldiers* (1855), ‘[y]ou must think of the Lord Jesus Christ, not merely as a sufferer, but as a warrior . . . who executes justice and judgement in the earth’. For both Hughes and Kingsley, Christian manliness ‘was synonymous with strength, both physical and moral’ (Hall, 1994, p. 9), though they both tried to distance muscular Christianity from being equated with indiscriminate violence or violence for its own sake, from the activities of ‘muscle-men’ as Hughes termed them (Hughes, 1861, n.p.).

Muscular Christianity combined spiritual guidance with the laws of nature. Both Kingsley and Hughes wrote about derring-do heroes who embodied the qualities of character and values they believed to be necessary for managing the vicissitudes of empire. These provided an ideal of manhood that was juxtaposed with the enervated and effete manhood of their day. For much of the last half of the nineteenth century, there was what might be described as a crisis in masculinity, becoming very pronounced in the 1890s (Showalter, 1990). This crisis emerged for many reasons, but chief among them were the inter-related phenomena of the growing political and social freedom of women and the changing nature of work within the industrialising society. For Kingsley, this second issue underlay much of his thinking about manhood in the mid-nineteenth century. Muscular Christianity championed a kind of 'moral exercise' imbued with a 'masculine ethos that celebrated physical and moral health in order to cultivate virtues such as stoicism, fortitude and endurance' (White, 2005, p. 491, fn. 5). This view of character intersected in mutually reinforcing ways with similar views, perhaps less stridently religious, on the nature and formation of character then gaining currency in the debates within nineteenth century liberalism. John Stuart Mill, for example, perhaps that century's most well-known liberal, was described by Collini as exhibiting a 'muscular liberalism' (Collini, 1991, p. 113). Both ideological trajectories, muscular Christianity and liberalism, converged on a view of character that emphasised strength, vigour, resoluteness and moral certainty; though there were clear differences of emphasis. Where some liberals were careful to subordinate nature, in particular the human body, to the discipline of the will, Kingsley placed a much more positive emphasis on the body.

In Kingsley's view it was an undeniable fact of nature that men and women were animals like any other. However, the mere fact of animality, of being a male or female animal, did not preclude becoming men and women in society. Kingsley reasoned that since God had created human animals in all their multi-faceted forms and attributes, then it made no sense to conclude that God intended that some of these attributes should be condemned (and hence to be denied) and others praised (and hence to be fostered). In the Preface to *The Saint's Tragedy* (1848a), he raised the question, 'is nature a holy type or a foul prison of our spirits?', and in *Yeast* (1848b) he put it squarely onto God that if he, Kingsley, had 'certain appetites' then these were given to him by God hence 'why are they to be crushed any more than any other part of me?' Put somewhat differently, he questioned how an act or behaviour, especially those connected to sex and fighting, could be condemned when they were given by God? It was not God but 'theological orthodoxy [that] most oppressed manly inner forces' (Rosen, 1994, p. 33), and thereby led men to be less manly, less masculine. To block this inner flow was to render a man effeminate.

Kingsley and Hughes did not seem to equate being effeminate with being feminine, though they differed over how feminine traits featured in the muscular scheme of things. Kingsley in particular saw that, when required, men too could be sensitive and nurturing, displaying some traits that were more commonly regarded as feminine. For Kingsley a feminine dimension was a proper part of his conception of manhood, indeed it was essential if a muscular Christian were to be a whole man. Nonetheless, he regarded the roles and natures of women and men as different but complementary. Their views of men and women's natures were not just of their time, both men were very much committed to promoting that view (Fasick, 1994, p. 92). However, neither Kingsley nor Hughes was opposed to women's rights as such, especially the



suffrage. Kingsley wrote a number of pieces on women's rights including a review of John Stuart Mill's feminist work, *The Subjection of Women* (Kingsley, 1869).

The issue of effeminacy was not just about blocking a man's inner flow, it was also related to industrialisation and the changing class relations, in particular the rise of a middle class of non-manual workers and managers. Kingsley made no bones about how this was at odds with a muscular Christianity:

money-making is an effeminate pursuit, therefore all sedentary and spooney sins, like covetousness, slander, bigotry, and self-conceit, are to be cockered and plastered over, while the more masculine vices, and the no-vices also, are mercilessly hunted down by your cold-blooded, soft-handed religionists (Kingsley, 1848b, n.p.).

The rise of industrialised sources of wealth and power, increasingly divorced from nature, and aided and abetted by a complaisant, feminising religious outlook, was threatening previously accepted social relations. Kingsley and others looked to muscular Christianity to ameliorate workers' anger, to conserve what they regarded as traditional prerogatives of the privileged class while at the same time effecting repairs to the social fabric. In some respects their views looked back to a receding pre-industrial era where physical labour connected men and women with each other and constituted their society, an imagined organic whole where people could recognise themselves.

In Kingsley's writings in particular the concept of manhood that he proposed 'require[d] a recuperation of primitive energy now vanished from England' (Wee, 1994, p. 68). The raw material for this reinvigoration was to be found away from English soil, in other lands where native or primitive races were still 'connected to the ground' and could provide the means to recuperate, or perhaps more accurately to forge, an English national identity. Thus in a complex and opaque passage from *Yeast* (1848b, cited in Rosen, 1994, p. 31), Kingsley presents a view of an ideal society by using the volcano as 'an image of a saving sacred primitivism':

No, you shall rather come to Asia, the oldest and yet the youngest continent, to our volcanic mountain ranges, where her bosom still heaves with the creative energy of youth, around the primeval cradle of her most ancient race of men. Then . . . I will lead you to a land where you shall see the highest spiritual cultivation in contact with the fiercest energies of matter; where men have learnt to tame and use alike the volcano and the human heart, where the body and the spirit, the beautiful and the useful, the human and the divine, are no longer separate, and men have embodied themselves on earth an image of the 'city not made with hands, eternal in the heaven'.

The volcano serves as a metaphor for the inner essence of manhood, 'the root of all virtue', that is untameable and to some extent not entirely predictable (Rosen, 1994, p. 30). Rosen does not undertake any analysis of this passage since he cites it to illustrate a different point, namely '[t]hat in Kingsley's myth of masculinity, manhood consists of the specifically gendered elements of this sacred primal fire' (Rosen, 1994, p. 31).

However, for present purposes we can note a couple of points being articulated by Kingsley. Asia, the continent, is old geologically speaking, though young in colonial terms. It is feminised and nurturing, connected to nature, in particular to the source of the 'sacred primal fire' that for Kingsley is 'the creative energy of youth'. This energy makes possible the union of 'body and spirit' that in turn makes possible the

creation of the City of God on Earth. Seen in the context of a nation, or at least a number of different political entities gathered under English suzerainty, characterised more by fractures than unity, Kingsley's solution is simple. England needs to look beyond its shores to the colonies and lands not yet colonised, to engage with the inhabitants, imagined by Kingsley to be primitives not yet too distant from their own primeval sources of vigour.

This brief reading of this passage glosses a number of contradictory and potentially unstable meanings in Kingsley's text. However, it is clear that Kingsley's vision looks to the colonial project to reinvigorate English manhood. At the same time, throughout his (and Hughes's) writings, the ideal of a muscular Christian manhood is also presented as the archetype of the character that is the required maker of empire. There is an ambivalence here as Kingsley sees this manhood taking shape in the metropole but needing the colonial Other to provide the vigour. This suggests some degree of reciprocity, albeit of a lopsided nature, between the coloniser and colonised, something like Hegel's master/slave dialectic where each must recognise the other. The identities do not remain fixed, but rather come to inform and reshape each other, '[s]yncretism always occurs' (Wee, 1994, p. 70). Kingsley does not simply treat the colonised culture as 'merely [the] Other to superior English national-imperialism' (Wee, 1994, p. 70). Rather Kingsley's vision of manhood requires not just the appropriation of the culture of the Other in a metaphorical sense 'as a category to disrupt modernist conceptions of nation and empire' as is suggested by Wee (1994, p. 71). Kingsley was advocating the literal appropriation of the culture of the Other as a source of renewal for the reinvigoration of English manhood.

In this way Kingsley's writings can be understood as laying the groundwork for the redescription of imperialism as both a quest for a mythical 'fountain of youth' on the one hand, and on the other as a 'civilising mission' in which to discharge the 'white man's burden'. The European expansion into the lands occupied by others could be justified by the rationale of saving them from their lack of civilisation. At the same time colonisation was necessary in order to re-charge the inner essence of English manhood with 'the creative energy of youth' to be found in the new worlds. Either way, this meant bringing the identities of the colonised into question, to be modified in greater or lesser degrees, as the case may be. In the case of settler societies, this modification amounts to an erasure of identities.

### **The settler society paradigm**

It is relatively uncontroversial to acknowledge that settler colonialism 'was foundational to modernity' (Wolfe, 2006, p. 394). The voyages of discovery, the establishment of colonial societies, and the institution of slavery provided the substance for much of what has become taken for granted within modern political thought, especially liberalism (Losurdo, 2011; Mills, 1997). Three significant liberal political philosophers, Locke, Kant and Hegel, illustrate the point. For Locke, 'in the beginning all the world was America' (Locke, 1698, I, p. 49) and its 'discovery' and colonisation provided him with the raw material for his liberal justification for the institutions of government and (private) property rights. For Kant, there were distinct racial differences that placed the European in advance of other races (Kant, 1764), his ambivalent views on colonialism notwithstanding (Kant, 1797). For Hegel (1807, 269), the master/slave analysis (and the role of human labour) in his widely influential *Phenomenology of the*



*Mind* owed much to the successful slave revolution in Haiti in 1791 (Buck-Morss, 2000). Further, his view of the history of philosophy was distinctly Eurocentric (Hegel, 1805–1806).

Of some relevance for these liberal philosophical trajectories, indeed presupposed by them, was the Valladolid Debate of 1550–1551, in which Spanish theologians debated the humanity of the colonised peoples of the Americas. While this debate could be read as concerning the moral basis of the colonial enterprise and the universality of (European) definitions of human nature, and hence a part of the progress of modern liberalism, it also pointed to a major aspect of settler politics. The poles of the debate rested on how to recognise the humanity of the colonised, of whether they could be considered part of a European understanding of human nature (Marcondes, 2009, p. 49). But that was not the real point, since the consequences of that recognition, of whether they could be considered human in the European sense, was that either they could be saved by accepting the authority of the Christian god or they were human but uncivilised and that this very barbarian status was proof of their uncivilisability and grounds for enslavement. Either way they were still to be subject to the authority of the coloniser. The right to colonise was never in doubt. The colonised faced a no-win choice: assimilate or be enslaved. Even if they avoided enslavement, their choice of assimilation was still a Faustian bargain: ‘have our settler world, but lose your Indigenous soul’ (Wolfe, 2006, p. 387).

By definition, colonisation is ‘a matter of seizing, delimiting, and asserting control over a physical geographical area – of writing on the ground a new set of social and special relations’ which also required the taxonomies of classification of peoples, indigenous and settler alike (Mbembe, 2003, pp. 24–26), and which led to the creation of new knowledges to be turned by the colonial authorities into various technologies of colonial rule (Said, 1978). The colonies provided the testing grounds for technologies of political rule, especially policing methods. Eventually, these technologies were implemented in the metropole. In 1902 liberal writer Hobson expressed a fear that ‘the arts and crafts of tyranny, acquired and exercised in our unfree Empire, should be turned against our liberties at home’ (Hobson, 1902, p. 160). By the 1970s this fear had well and truly been realized, as Ackroyd, Margolis, Rosenhead, and Shallice (1977) demonstrated for Northern Ireland, and continues into the present era with the techniques developed and tested in more recent imperial adventures being deployed in the streets of major western cities. Underpinning the use of such technologies of control is the valorisation of liberal legal frameworks. In this respect it can be agreed with Morgensen that ‘the colonial era never ended because settler colonialism remains the naturalised activity projecting Western law and its exception along global scales today’ (Morgensen, 2011, p. 54). But there is no need to invoke the ‘state of exception’ thesis that Morgensen uses to support his claim that liberal governmentality produces ‘a lawless sovereignty as part of its own operation of power’ (Morgensen, 2011; 54 citing Butler, 2004, p. 96). The valorisation of liberal political philosophy while simultaneously using it to justify authoritarian governmental practices has long been recognised (Hindess, 2001, p. 374; Losurdo, 2011).

The point of Morgensen’s argument that I want to deploy here is that ‘liberal governance under Western law is presaged and instituted by the biopolitics of settler colonialism’ within which indigenous populations are encouraged to assimilate (Morgensen, 2011, p. 68). However, the consequence of assimilation is the Faustian bargain noted earlier where, if they are not eliminated in a literal sense, their souls

and identities are effaced ‘whether they defy or conform to a promised consanguinity with the settlers who replace’ them (Morgensen, 2011, p. 68). As Wolfe points out, this process is more than ‘the summary liquidation of the Indigenous people’ because the very logic of this process ‘marks a return whereby the native repressed continues to structure settler-colonial society’ (Wolfe, 2006, p. 390). That is to say that the settler society in its post-colonial present cannot escape the memory of and basis for its foundation. Hence the logic of settler colonialism continues to inscribe its presence within contemporary multicultural practices, especially in relation to diasporas.

### On diaporas

For present purposes I take the idea of ‘diaspora’ to encompass ‘any group living in displacement’ (Clifford, 1994, p. 310). This displacement may be a result of military conquest, trade, or forced or voluntary migrations. There may have been a homeland from which this displacement occurred (and to which members of the diaspora desire to return), or the homeland may be an imaginary, having an existence only in the narratives created by members of a diaspora so sustain their identity (Axel, 2002; Mishra, 2005). In many instances, this displacement will be associated with traumatic experiences of one sort or another. However, this need not be a universal experience since voluntary migration may not necessarily involve trauma as such (though uprooting oneself to seek a better life will incur some degree of emotional pain).

With this in mind the three categories of diaspora noted by Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (1998, pp. 68–70) provide a useful place to start. They identify three distinct categories: diasporas of settlement, slavery, and labour migration respectively. The idea of settlement diasporas follows from their view that the wave of European colonisation from the late fifteenth century ‘was a radically diasporic movement’, because it involved ‘the temporary or permanent dispersion and settlement of millions of Europeans over the entire world’ (Ashcroft et al., 1998, p. 69). This is a very expansive sense of ‘diaspora’ that casts such a wide net that it renders the very breadth of its mesh incapable of catching any meaningful content. We need to distinguish between those European diasporas involving settlers who settled on a temporary basis for the purposes of ruling and administering the colonial possession (e.g. India, the Malay States etc) and those settlers who dispossessed the indigenous inhabitants and established a permanent presence in the colonial landscape (e.g. Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United States etc). These latter settlers created some variation of a European social formation, initially tethered to the colonising power but eventually cut loose as a new nation more or less sovereign in its own right. It does some injustice to the meaning of diaspora to apply it to such as these. On the other hand, those who settled temporarily may be regarded as having formed a diaspora that had a continuous presence for the period of colonial rule. In many instances local institutions and circuits of power were kept and exploited as part of the exercise of colonial rule (e.g. India, the Malay states), though in others (e.g. Kenya) local institutions were often ignored.

We should also note that there were colonial ventures that were not based on settlement in either of these senses and were simply exercises in plunder and genocide such as in the case of what became known as the Belgian Congo (e.g. see Hochschild, 1998). Of course the Belgians were not alone in plundering and murdering local inhabitants. By far the most horrific form of plunder was the stealing of human beings to be sold

into slavery to work the plantations of colonial settlers and stay-at-home colonial land-holders. Hence the slave trade generated the second type of diaspora – involuntary settlers with no possessions and no freedom, as in the Americas. But it also extended to many regions of Africa where local populations were likewise enslaved for the benefit of a settler economy (as in the case of South Africa) or European investors. For the duration of the existence of the European slave trade at least, the victims of slavery formed diasporas in regions mostly far removed from their place of origin.

The third category of diaspora noted by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin was that created by migratory labour which gained a dynamic all its own following the abolition of slavery at the end of the nineteenth century. Indentured or bonded labour replaced slavery to become the favoured form of plantation labour. In many ways this arrangement could be described as slavery by another name except that the labourers were not actually sold as individuals. They were free to enter into these arrangements, but once in them their freedom of movement was severely circumscribed. Moreover, their contracts could be on-sold which then obliged them to follow suit. The nature of these indentured contracts invariably favoured the purchasers of the labour. Nonetheless, as a result of the mass movements of people generated by indentured labour and similar arrangements diasporic communities emerged around the world wherever cheap labour was needed. There was particularly strong demand for indentured labour in some of the settler societies such as the USA, Canada, South Africa, South East Asia and some of the Pacific islands, and to a lesser extent Australia.

One notable feature of this particular type of diaspora is that they tended to become ongoing features of the society into which they were imported. Some members of these diasporas did return to their lands of origin but the vast majority remained to become, for the most part, citizens of the host country. While some who stayed could not return because they could not afford it, many did return only to find that what they returned to was not what they remembered and hence attempts to re-settle often proved to be difficult, if not impossible. For those who stayed in the new societies, especially the settler societies, the problem of their integration into the mainstream became what is now framed as the problem of multiculturalism.

Great Britain, the society of concern for Cameron, has seen the growth of a particular form of diaspora not covered by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin's categories. This type of diaspora was generated largely by the gradual break-up of its empire through two distinct but related developments. One was the formation of a Commonwealth of Nations, initially in a nascent form in 1931 to include the former dominions, and then in 1949 following the London Declaration to include those of Britain's former colonies then beginning to emerge as independent nations. Decolonisation of the European empires was the second major development in the creation of various diasporas in the former metropole. Granted, the need for cheap labour may also have been a factor but the process of decolonisation and the creation of the Commonwealth made Britain a magnet for its former colonial subjects. And it is this diasporic phenomenon that forms the spectre that haunts Cameron and others in contemporary Britain, as it does those in the settler societies (Povinelli, 2002, p. 28), as they grapple with defending the colonial heritage of their national identities.

In much the same way as indigenous people have been expected to position themselves in relation to the settlers, members of these types of diasporas are encouraged to assimilate, to exchange or fuse their own identities, with that of the so-called national identity of the host. They too are offered a Faustian bargain in which the price of

acceptance is their souls, where they are invited to eschew their alleged monocultural identities in favour of the transcendental monoculturalism of liberal multiculturalism. Those who cannot or will not accept the terms of assimilation then become stigmatised as potential threats, and within Cameron's worldview, as potential 'root causes' of social ills from dissent to terrorism. They must therefore be subject-ified according to the logic muscular liberalism.

## Conclusion

Bringing these four strands together – muscular liberalism, muscular Christianity, the settler society paradigm, and the remarks on diasporas – an answer can be given both to the framing question for this paper (i.e. 'A liberalism gone wrong?'), and the two broader, but inter-related, questions concerning what the invocation of muscular liberalism might signify in the current era, and what Cameron's appeal in particular might tell us about the temper of our times. One possible answer to both these questions is that Cameron's appeal to a muscular liberalism invites us to interpret his speech sympathetically. He positioned liberalism as a set of ideas and values weakened by allegedly alien ideas and values slouching ever-more confidently into the metropole. It matters little for his argument that the ideas and values of liberalism that he identifies are no more than feel-good generalisations. They are presented as self-evidently beyond question as the exclusive prerogative of Western liberalism. This might be a cause of concern for those interested in the political philosophy of such ideas, but not for those for whom Cameron's bell was tolling. While his speech operated in a number of registers, the sounding of muscular liberalism provided a means of blending them more or less harmoniously for his intended audiences.

His speech can also be understood as a lament for the homelessness of political liberalism. The ideas and values that liberalism is supposed to represent and champion have been displaced from their rightful hegemonic position and, in effect, rendered homeless. It is liberalism that is suffering, and by extension the political identities it favours. Liberalism and British identity are the victims of the ideological ascendancy of monocultural values within a multicultural environment. Taken at face value, Cameron's lament would have us accept that liberal intellectuals now inhabit what we might call an intellectual diaspora. But we cannot take his message at face value. Muscular liberalism is not some intellectual anachronism from times now best forgotten.

It is very much alive within the thinking of 'progressive conservatism' on both sides of the Atlantic. It is the mantra of 'progressive conservatism'. However, its genealogical roots and its ideological core are both grounded in a masculinist and racist past. Cameron's appeal to muscular liberalism thus signals the return of the repressed, the dynamic of racism that has always been part of liberalism (Hindess, 2001; Losurdo, 2011; Mills, 1997). This is the unspoken dynamic at the heart of Cameron's invocation of muscular liberalism. Muscular liberalism masks this dynamic by representing it as liberalism's failure of nerve in resolving or reconciling cultural differences within a liberal framework. Yet there is no failure of nerve. Liberal rulers have always been able to square the circle of racist oppression. This is not new. The application of muscular liberalism to managing diasporas and other enclaves of difference needs to be understood as an analogue of the Faustian bargain underwriting the colonial elimination of subjugated cultures. Like the colonised, members of metropolitan diasporas become inhabitants of 'a third zone

between subjecthood and objecthood' (Mbembe, 2003, 26). This is the zone in the borderlands of transcendental monoculturalism where muscular liberalism is being summoned into service.

Transcendental monoculturalism requires that those deemed alien take up the Faustian bargain. It also requires that liberals recognise that the failure to reconcile differences within a liberal framework is a pseudo-issue. My analysis of the genealogy of muscular liberalism has demonstrated that such reconciliation was not part of the deal in the nineteenth century for the muscular Christians in either of their socialist or liberal manifestations. Of particular concern for the muscular Christians was the need to stem the tide of what they saw as an increasing fragmentation of the national social body and rising levels of class conflict. They saw a role for a reinvigorated Christianity in combatting this fragmentation whilst simultaneously marking out a form of Christian identity that countered the popular perception of men of religion as weak and effeminate. In a similar vein, today's muscular liberals see themselves as reinvigorating liberalism and marking out for it a new, twenty-first century identity. But the identity is not new. It has always been a part of the colonial project in all its phases from colonisation, decolonisation and post-colonisation and their concomitant diasporas. In all of this liberalism has been complicit (as indeed have most other political philosophies of and for the modern and postmodern eras). Consequently, liberalism has not gone wrong. To the contrary, the appeal to muscular liberalism reveals where liberalism has always been.

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