

# 'They made us nicer people'

## Reflections from the Olympics and Paralympics, 2012

Insted consultancy

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### **A bit of magic**

The paralympic games, said Melanie Reid in *The Times* a few days after they had finished, 'have been a kind, wondrous thing; they have sprinkled a little bit of magic on us and made us nicer people'.

Other journalists and commentators said similar things, referring not only to the paralympics but to the olympics also.

Enthusiasm was expressed in the full range of the national press, and across the whole political spectrum.

This article consists of extracts from about 20 different items published between July and September 2012. The vast majority of the extracts are positive and enthusiastic. A few, however, express dissenting views.

The article is intended to be of interest to everyone concerned about the nature of Britain as a multicultural, multi-ethnic society, and about competing models and notions of disability.

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## **Time to find out who we are’ – the opening ceremony, 27 July**

### **We told the world we could come together**

‘Seven years ago,’ wrote [Jonathan Freedland](#) on the morning of Friday 27 July 2012, ‘we told the world that we could come together to stage a spectacular Olympic Games and that we were a kinder, gentler, more inclusive country, open to the rest of humanity. The world believed it. The question is, can we believe it too?’

In the following days, most commentators on the opening ceremony said they thought the opening ceremony had accurately and attractively portrayed a country that has become ‘kinder, gentler, more inclusive, more open to the rest of humanity’. Articles expressing this view appeared in all the national newspapers and from all the main political parties. Some of them are mentioned and quoted below. But first, there is a statement by Danny Boyle himself, the ceremony’s director.

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### **It will be for everyone**

‘At some point in their histories,’ wrote [Danny Boyle](#) in his programme note about the ceremony, ‘most nations experience a revolution that changes everything about them. The United Kingdom had a revolution that changed the whole of human existence. In 1709 Abraham Darby smelted iron in a blast furnace, using coke. And so began the Industrial Revolution. Out of Abraham’s Shropshire furnace flowed molten metal. Out of his genius flowed the mills, looms, engines, weapons, railways, ships, cities, conflicts and prosperity that built the world we live in. It was a revolution that filled the world with noise, smoke, prosperity, pain and possibility.

‘In November 1990 another Briton sparked another revolution – equally far-reaching – a revolution we’re still living through. Tim Berners-Lee invented the world wide web, and built the world’s first website. He took no money for his invention. This, he said, is for everyone.

‘Just like the Industrial Revolution, the digital revolution is turning the world upside down, taking music, books, shopping, conversation, information to places that they never went before.

‘We welcome you to an Olympic opening ceremony for everyone. A ceremony that celebrates the creativity, eccentricity, daring and openness of the British genius by harnessing the genius, creativity, eccentricity, daring and openness of modern London. You’ll hear the words of our great poets – Shakespeare, Blake and Milton. you’ll hear the glorious noise of our unrivalled pop culture. You’ll see characters from our great children’s literature – Peter Pan and Captain Hook, Mary Poppins, Voldemort, Cruella de Vil. You’ll see ordinary families and extraordinary athletes. Dancing nurses, singing children and amazing special effects.

'But flickering in the smoke and noise and excitement, you can sometimes glimpse a single golden thread of purpose – the idea of Jerusalem – of the better world, the world of real freedom and true equality, a world that can be built through the prosperity of industry, through the caring nation that built the welfare state, through the joyous energy of popular culture, through the dream of universal communication. A belief that we can build Jerusalem.

'And that it will be for everyone.'

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### **What matters to people in Britain today**

'It wasn't a parade of majesty,' commented [Mary Beard](#) in the Daily Telegraph. 'The only monarch who featured was our own dear Queen. But instead of one official version, the stage made room for all sorts of people and many different narratives. It recognised all kinds of things that people care about - from Amy Winehouse to CND marches – and it let them into the story as symbols that can stand for Britain, and have played their own part in shaping our history. It was a really alert reading of what matters to people in Britain today - from JK Rowling to the NHS - and because of that Boyle managed to inspire pride where finger-wagging governments have failed.

'He was able to play with the great symbols of Britain in a way that was both ironic and supportive; that takes a special gift. There are many different sorts and styles of histories. This wasn't a competition with the Jubilee, which brought us pomp and majesty, this was something different: the people's story.'

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### **We need to pass the Danny Boyle test**

'Much in this country', said [Damian Green](#) in an article the *Daily Telegraph* 'needs changing and improving; but we should not become nostalgists promoting a better yesterday. We need to pass the Danny Boyle test, and cheer the numerous virtues of Britain in 2012. If we don't like modern Britain, then it is very unlikely that modern Britain will like us.

'Just as we should not turn away from David Cameron's original correct decision to modernise the Conservative approach, so we should recognise that the historically successful ideal of "One Nation Conservatism" also needs consistent updating. Burke and Disraeli are sources of much wisdom, but they do not have the last word on how to help the North as well as the South, how to encourage the better integration of all minority groups, and how to remove the remaining barriers hindering women.'

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### **A more confident Britain**

'Few could deny,' wrote [Tim Soutphommasane](#), 'that a more confident Britain has emerged this summer. The goodwill and hospitality of Britons provided a picture of what a community of virtuous citizens, at its best, could look like. It helped that Team GB delivered so many medals, including the golden variety.'

But perhaps it was Danny Boyle's opening ceremony, he continued, that 'did the most to define the legacy of the Games. What was especially striking about it ... was its story of Britain as a project – that ongoing project of a New Jerusalem. It was a convincing argument that Britishness wasn't about nostalgic yearning for the stuff of an imperial past, but something that existed in the present and future.'

'Many countries,' he concluded, 'are looking to Britain as an example of a dynamic multicultural society united by a generous patriotism. The Olympic moment provided a glimpse of a modern Britain that can inspire a world still learning to live with diversity.'

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### **A celebration of our freedom**

'My 10-year-old's favourite parts,' wrote Shami Chakrabarti, 'were the Industrial Revolution and Mr Bean closely followed by the comedy genius of the royal Bond sequence which demonstrated that even the pinnacle of the British establishment can laugh at itself. This was a UK narrative capable of acknowledging pop culture, the internet and [Windrush](#) alongside Shakespeare, Elgar and the green and pleasant land.

'Of course you can't please everyone, but I was a little surprised to see the tribute to the NHS and Great Ormond Street hospital criticised as a partisan stunt. A bit like their rights and freedoms, people in this country fiercely debate its delivery and application but generally cherish the principle of universal healthcare itself.

'This didn't feel like a leftwing or rightwing rally. There was far too much variety, self-deprecation and wit – qualities that made the ceremony all the more British. From innovation in industry and technology to diversity in the arts and literature; from suffragettes and hunger marchers to punks and rappers – the pageant was a celebration of our freedom. As with all great theatre, it became progressively easy to suspend disbelief. Boyle's story of Britain was inclusive and truthful, co-ordinated and individual, spectacular and human, and it set a positive challenge for the Olympics, our country and the world.'

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### **Different form of popular politics**

'London 2012's opening ceremony,' said [Anthony Barnett](#), 'had a lot to say about the British and their homeland. Behind the eccentricity and humour lay a radical challenge to neoliberalism and the corporate control that the City of London thrives upon, and the Games have embraced. It showed that a different form of popular politics for Britain is possible, where freedom and equality are celebrated.'

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## **'Look, mate, this is my country' – aspects of diversity**

### **We are a modern, diverse and confident country**

'Moments after Mo Farah's fantastic 10,000m win at the Olympics last night,' said [Hope not Hate](#) in an announcement on Sunday 5 August, 'Mo was asked by a journalist if he'd have preferred to run as a Somali. He replied: "Look mate, this is my country. This is where I grew up, this is where I started life. This is my country and when I put on my Great Britain vest I'm proud. I'm very proud."

'And Mo is right. It is as much his country as it is mine or yours.

'This last week has been amazing. From Danny Boyle's wonderful Opening Ceremony to the medal haul we are now raking in. This is a moment that we as a nation found a peace with itself. There are many problems facing us but we are a modern, diverse and confident country.

'Let's join Mo in saying proudly that "this is my country".'

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## **The moment when history turned a page**

'... When Mo Farah was asked last week after his victory in the 10,000 metres if he'd rather be representing Somalia,' commented [Yasmin Alibhai-Brown](#) in the Daily Mail, 'his simple response spoke volumes. 'Not at all, mate. This is my country.' His joyful embrace of Britishness, replicated by other British Olympians of immigrant stock, has aroused the same rapturous feelings of pride in people who, until now, were wary of nationalistic celebrations and expressions — including me.

'But these two weeks have been a watershed of true significance. There has been a visceral reaction among black and Asian Britons to what we have seen. For some, it has been perhaps the first time they have really felt a part of this country. For others, the promise of tolerance and integration has come true.'

'Seeing the mixed-race and black competitors fighting fiercely for their personal bests and for their country has been the moment when history turned a page.'

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## **If we can do it for a few weeks during 2012**

'What has been so striking about London 2012,' said [Sandra Kerr](#) (director of Race for Opportunity) 'is the sheer pride and support the nation has shown all of its Team GB athletes, regardless of their background, gender or disability. I am certain that this will have challenged many people to honestly ask themselves how they usually view people different to themselves.

'It also proves to me that it is possible for people to accept one another just based on ability. If we can do it for a few weeks during 2012 there is no reason why we can't continue to achieve this amazing 'One Team' spirit in our societies, communities and our workplaces permanently.

'My hope is that the "we're in it together" atmosphere that took over the country is continued by all people, employees and employers alike, into our workplaces and communities – this would be the true legacy of the Olympics and Paralympics.'

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## **An everyday snapshot of modern Britain**

'Over a third of the Team GB medal haul, wrote [Sunder Katwala](#), 'reflects the positive contribution which immigration and integration have made to British society since the last London games. In this these world-beating athletes, selected by fierce meritocratic competition, also offer an everyday snapshot of modern Britain, and a range of different family journeys to being and becoming British over the last three generations. This has helped to make Team GB a powerful symbol of an inclusive and authentic national pride, shared across our multi-ethnic and multi-faith society.' He proceeded with detailed facts and figures:

- Team GB won 65 medals at the Olympic Games, with 29 gold medals, 17 silver and 19 bronze. Forty-three of these medals were won by individual competitors, and 22 by teams of more than one athlete, so there were 114 British medalists in total; 69 of them were men and 43 women.
- Of the 43 medals won by individuals, six were won by Team GB members born abroad (14 per cent), four gold and two silver.

- Of the 37 individual medals won by British-born athletes, at least nine (21 per cent) – four gold, two silver and three bronze – were won by Team GB members with a parent or grandparent born outside Britain.
- So 35 per cent of the individual medals show the contribution of immigration and integration.
- Of the 22 medals won by teams, four involved a Team GB competitor born abroad (23.5 per cent) and, overall, ten of the team medals (59 per cent) involved a positive contribution from immigration and integration to Team GB's success.
- Overall, at least 24 of Britain's 65 medals reflect the positive contribution of immigration and integration to Britain. (Those include medals won by athletes where initial research from published sources was able to confirm a foreign-born parent or grandparent; the full total across Team GB medal winners could well be a little higher).

'After these Olympics,' Katwala commented, 'the debate about whether you can be black and British has been so securely settled that it's now hard to remember why it seemed so difficult. In 1968, the year that my father came from India to Britain as a young doctor, Enoch Powell was warning that a multi-ethnic Britain would have committed national suicide, and was madly building its own funeral pyre. The Olympic torch lit by seven talented young athletes, and the shared pride in it across Britain, told a very different story.'

'The modern history of Britain,' he continued, 'is in large part one of successful integration, though important challenges remain for the future too. Incomers have often been treated with suspicion and anxiety, from Jews and Poles at the start of the century to Afro-Caribbean immigrants and the Ugandan Asians. Today, their contribution is celebrated alongside those who can trace their families back for generations. Our public discussion rightly focuses on places where integration isn't working, but we often take for granted the everyday reality in most places where it is.'

Earlier in the year, [a columnist on the Daily Mail](#) referred to the diverse nature of the Team GB that was taking shape and suggested a team meeting would 'resemble Heathrow Airport's Terminal Three during a baggage handlers' strike'. He used the term 'plastic Brits', as did [certain other journalists](#), to refer to British athletes who had been born outside UK. But, said Katwala in [an article shortly after the games had begun](#), 'the worry that too many "plastic Brits" today mean that Britain won't recognise itself in its own team misses the point rather spectacularly. One in ten of Team GB were born abroad, but so were one in ten of the whole country, along with a rather higher proportion of the Olympic volunteers, reflecting the history and demographics of London today.'

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### **A celebration of the new Britishness**

In the Daily Telegraph [Cole Moreton](#) wrote of 'the learning process we have been through as a nation over these past weeks'. He continued: 'The Olympics reminded us that the British are funny, that we can laugh at ourselves and that there are heroes among us – role models in a nation sick and tired of glamour models and reality shows.'

'The Games also showed us how much we are changing. Plenty was made of Mo Farah becoming a British hero, having arrived here as a refugee from Mogadishu; but perhaps even more significantly, nothing was made at all of Jessica Ennis being the daughter of a man from Jamaica.

'... London 2012 was a celebration of new Britishness. We didn't want the Games to stop. Let's be honest, that's why so many of us bought tickets for the Paralympics: to keep

the good times rolling, to see the venues and take our kids, so they could say they were there.'

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### **Casual piece of racism**

'We had the disgusting spectacle,' commented [Michael Rosen](#), 'of rather unfit Tory ministers and representatives lecturing us on what should take place in schools: it should be competitive, it should be two hours a week etc etc. And even worse, we had that casual piece of racism about 'Indian dancing or whatever' as if schools were prisoners of a crazed multiculturalism instead of fostering a love of competitive sport. It was nasty and it was crude, trying to ride the crest of national sentiment by throwing in a bit of sneering at the 'other'...not 'ours'. Well, Indian dancing is 'ours' as much as Morris dancing, running, jumping, climbing or anything else.'

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### **Our notions of what it is to be human – ideas and models of disability**

#### **The new normal**

[Gerald Goggin](#) commended many aspects of the Paralympics opening ceremony. 'But much,' he emphasised, 'still remains to be done and real issues of exclusion and discrimination are still to be overcome. And our social imagination of disability, and the way much media still reflects this, takes strange forms indeed ... Disability, as the Paralympics can show us, is becoming the new normal. Our ways of talking about disability, especially in the media, however, still lag well behind the social transformations that are well underway and irreversible – and stand to enlarge, for the better, our notions of what it is to be human.'

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#### **The nature of disability**

'Whereas no one expects Eric Pickles, the communities secretary, to run like a Bolt or a Farah,' [Robert Jones](#) pointed out in the Guardian, 'it's commonplace to hear "if he can do it so can you" as a rebuke or encouragement to disabled people. This really misunderstands the nature of disability itself. Particularly when it involves state benefits, and particularly when irresponsible ministers and journalists can't or won't distinguish between fit young athletes – even with bits missing – and the generality of disabled people.'

'I became disabled slowly, progressively, after I broke my back in a car accident. I was never good at sport even before then – probably why I hated it. I was the last to be picked for the football team – didn't see well, had fits, flat feet, got depressed. But I managed – until the crash. Complicated by a family history of osteoarthritis, over decades I became less able. Life became punctuated by increasing pain and stronger drugs to limit it. At no point did I opt for disability as a lifestyle choice – it chose me. I have as much in common with the Paralympian Oscar Pistorius as you, gentle reader, have with Bolt – which for most of you isn't much at all. If people accepted that, there wouldn't be a problem, and I would feel less chippy about the Paralympics – but they don't.'

'... If Paralympians are role models – and I really wish they didn't have to be – let them inspire everybody, able and disabled, rather than be exploited to make disabled people feel inadequate and guiltily dependent on the hard-working taxpayer.'

'The Paralympics, like the Olympics, is a circus – it has its stars, its pretence, its sheer silliness – and on that level, I don't object to it. I don't want to watch it, neither do I

want wall-to-wall coverage so reminiscent of fiddling while Rome burns, but if that's what fills your boots, go ahead. But it isn't a sermon in form-fitting Lycra. It's not, or shouldn't be, a big party for the Friends of Atos – the firm that conducts controversial medical assessments for benefit claims on behalf of the government – to hug us as if we were all the same while surreptitiously snipping away at our sole means of support.

'I'm in my 60s now, and there's a limit to what the coalition can do to me. I worry about the young – those who can no more choose work than choose not to be disabled, but will have their benefits slashed anyway. As a spectacle, the Paralympics might inspire them, but as a symbol of what society thinks disability means, it will hurt them. And sponsored by Atos and welcomed by David Cameron, the Paralympics are in danger of turning into an insult to all of us.'

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### **Will it change public attitudes?**

Some of the points made by Robert Jones (see above) were emphasised also by [Polly Toynbee](#). 'Next week,' she wrote shortly before the start of the Paralympics, 'an extraordinary spectacle unfolds, revealing super-fit, finely muscled Paralympians doing things few able-bodied people could ever achieve. But will it change public attitudes – and if so, for better or worse?

'Polls show public views hardening against disabled people. Once deserving, now they are malingerers. [A Glasgow University study of media reporting](#) shows a sharp increase in the use of "scrounger", "cheat" and "skiver" in relation to disability. TV shockumentaries have relished tales of roofers and marathon runners on sickness benefits. Official figures showing fraud at less than one per cent don't stick in the mind, but one good cheating anecdote lingers for years. Focus groups now often estimate disability fraud at a preposterous 70 per cent. No surprise that more than half of disabled people say they are experiencing new hostility, aggression and violence from strangers. Cases reported to the police have soared, and Disability Rights UK says harassment is rarely reported.

'The Treasury will take back around £2bn when disability living allowance (DLA) is replaced with personal independence payments (PIP) next year. Two-thirds of claimants will lose it, some severe cases will get a bit more, but official estimates say it will be lost by 280,000 in most need. The allowance pays the extra costs of disability, in or out of work, for personal help, taxis or cars. The cuts will be shocking: 90,000 motability cars and scooters will be repossessed. That's an average of 140 per constituency. Are MPs ready for the outcry?

'Disability Rights UK has an excellent new handbook, *Doing Sport Differently*, promoting everyday sport. But the Paralympics may present challenging imagery. Could the sight of vigorous and determined athletes overcoming all odds to compete send an insidious message that anyone in a wheelchair could do that, if only they tried harder? That is the underlying implication behind work capability assessments that currently find more than one-third of incapacity benefit claimants "fit for work".

'Celebrate the Paralympians – but remember what they say they needed from the state to get them there.'

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### **We are all one group, sharing one planet**

'When David Cameron made his comments at the opening ceremony of the Paralympics', wrote [Francexsca Martinez](#) in the Independent, 'I admit I felt a bit sick. His talk about the "inspirational" athletes while the Government carefully erodes the welfare system that helped many of the same athletes to achieve their dreams was pure hypocrisy. Nobody is more pleased than I am at the impact the Paralympics appear to be having. Eyes are being opened, attitudes hopefully shifted and great sport enjoyed. For once,



diversity is fully visible in the media, and this is fantastic as it has the power to help to normalise difference. Disability is normal and the more we can accept it as a natural part of life, the more we can move beyond divisive labels and realise that we are all one group, sharing one planet.

'The Paralympics provide the perfect opportunity for the Government to praise the human qualities of the Paralympians. But it is undeniable that government targeting of disabled people in the cuts, together with much of the right-wing press's customary (but not at the moment, you understand) portrayal of disabled people as benefit cheats and drains on society, are proving a deadly cocktail. Disability hate crime is at record levels, with up to 100,000 estimated incidents per year. People with serious conditions such as cancer or heart disease, or who require morphine every day, are being told that they are "fit to work". Disabled and sick people are being forced to endure lengthy appeals to claw back benefits that go towards essential costs. Suicides and deaths are increasing because crucial help is being withdrawn.

'... This Cabinet is one of the wealthiest in memory, with 80 per cent of its ministers already millionaires or multimillionaires. By contrast, one in three disabled people is already in poverty; more will no doubt follow, with the cuts. That leaders who know little of financial hardship can implement massive cuts that will devastate many, but from the effects of which they are insulated, is morally dubious ...The coalition's silence on the media's scapegoating of disabled people speaks volumes.

'... This Government's ruthless ideology must be challenged. Its interests lie in keeping Britain one of the most unequal societies in the world, in keeping power and wealth in the hands of the few, in portraying those in need as a drain on resources, in protecting the rich from taxation and regulation, and in making the public believe otherwise. Disabled or not, we must join together on our streets, in our communities and at the polling station to fight for a fairer society.'

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## **What matters most is our humanity**

'Of course,' said [Giles Fraser](#) in a broadcast talk as the Paralympics began, 'there will be much to cheer in the success of the paralympians over the next ten days. This is fundamentally a celebration of sport. But nonetheless, we need to resist the move to turn athletic bodies into representations of all those who have disabilities. For by concentrating attention on disabled versions of an Olympic god - like marbled Greek statues with absent limbs and perfect six-packs - we can be avoiding another sort of reality; and perhaps deliberately avoiding it because we find it too uncomfortable to deal with.

'When in 1981 Ian Dury released the song Spasticus Autisticus with the brilliant line: "I wibble when I piddle coz my middle is a riddle" the BBC banned it from air. Some found it offensive, a little too near the knuckle. But his point was to push the boundaries of inclusion. Last night's opening ceremony, including this song, was a historic step forward in the fight to make disabled lives more visible. But there are still a great many people who will never throw a javelin or swim in a race. They must be visible too. For what matters most is our humanity and not our proximity to Olympian perfection.'

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## **'Sentimental series of fantasies' – dissenting views**

### **Patriotism as a feelgood movie**

Boyles' opening ceremony, said [Melanie Phillips](#), was 'a generous-minded but fundamentally sentimental series of fantasies'. She continued: 'The British people desperately want to have pride in their country. With so many of the ties that once bound them to their homeland now snapped, they nevertheless still yearn to belong to, and share, an inspiring national project. Danny Boyle has given them ... a Utopian vision

of Britain. He gave them the brilliance and wit of his spectacle. He also gave them something else: the fantasy of an inclusive, generous, warm-hearted, joyful image of themselves.

'Boyle's genius,' she concluded, 'was to create this fantasy of goodness, this triumph of hope over experience, of heart over head. This was patriotism as a feelgood movie.'

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### **An epoch-making moment was missing**

Of the opening ceremony, [Sunder Katwala](#) said it was 'by the Brits, for the Brits, packed with the in-jokes of our national consciousness ... The need to project a story to the world offered a catalyst for a conversation that we have needed to have here, about how we want to think about who we are, how we live together, and what we share as modern Britons.' He added that Danny Boyle achieved something which politicians have struggled (and have even been told is impossible): he told the story of what Britishness means today.'

Katwala also, however, drew attention to a large gaping hole in the story of Britain that the opening ceremony portrayed:

Boyle's history lesson included the SS Windrush to represent how post-war immigration, and the rise of multi-ethnic Britain, would change our ideas of who counted as British, and on what terms. So the show did capture the last London Olympic year of 1948 as the foundational moment of post-war Britain: the year, too, in which the NHS was created, and the Windrush arrived. But one other epoch-making moment was missing: the independence of India.

... That Empire and decolonisation seemed to be skipped over entirely suggests, perhaps, that they may be considered still too sensitive a topic for the diplomatic sensitivities of an international sporting jamboree, attended by over 200 nations, around a quarter of whom will have, at some point, sought and achieved independence from British rule.

I suspect there could have been civil and inclusive ways to include that story too - to show the symbolic lowering of a Union Jack as a clock struck midnight, and perhaps to link the political change to the infusion of new influences in English literature and language.

There are two distinct stories about Britain's place in the world - and this show chose to prioritise one of them, the forge of the industrial revolution, but perhaps to duck the other, the story of a global island's imperial expansion and Commonwealth contraction, and how that was to change Britain irreversibly ... we miss out a lot of shared history if we see the post-war arrival of Windrush only as the start of a story, rather than a new chapter in a history which stretches much further back.'

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### **Ugh! Ugh! Ugh!**

Sunder Katwala (quoted above) noted there is anxiety, particularly outside London, 'as to whether diverse, multi-ethnic societies can have a shared pride that is authentic'. Such anxiety was vividly expressed in many of the comments about the Olympics that appeared on the website of the [British National Party](#). Here are two of them. Incidentally, both of these were edited slightly by the website's moderator before publication. In their original form they were presumably too offensive even for BNP members:

The Opening Ceremony to the Olympics is the most cringe worthy spectacle I have seen in a long while. The prevalence of black people was sickening. They have contributed nothing to our civilization but drug trading, muggings, car jackings and murder. They are portrayed as happy, friendly dancing people. They are obviously African and not English and I wonder what the rest of the world thought about this nauseating spectacle. The great inventions of our wonderful white people were largely ignored. Frank Whittle with his jet engine, Fleming with his penicillin, Shakespeare, our great Queens and Kings, the list of omissions was endless and to see the ancient dance of the Maypole enacted by black children was so PC to be laughable. The only contribution we have from blacks seems to be large scale reproduction. The black couple kissing may have represented this as they became intimate at the drop of a hat. The morality of the UK was compromised. I think Danny Boyle should stick to making fantasy films in future as this effort was revolting. Ugh!! Ugh!! Ugh!!

Is it not strange in the games how you never see black swimmers or divers (too heavy, or so I'm told) Black rowers (no sense of teamwork) black cyclists ( machinery way to complex) Bearing all this in mind can these sports and probably many others not be classed as racist and therefore elitist as only white people take part. Surely they need to be banned and replaced with hip hop competitions or pastimes more representative and inclusive of black people.

Almost as offensively, but much more succinctly, sentiments such as these appeared to be expressed by [a Conservative MP](#) who said the opening ceremony was 'leftie multicultural crap'. They also seemed to be expressed in [an article on the Daily Mail website](#) that was later removed.

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### **On the way out**

'Aidan Burley,' wrote [Neil Clark](#) a few days after the Olympics opening ceremony, 'the Conservative MP who in tweets on Friday night branded the ceremony "leftie, multicultural crap", needn't be so worried - Boyle's Britain is on the way out. In the place of a country which makes things, which provides a state-run health care system for all its citizens and which respects the rights of people to be different, we have the deadening, standardising force of neo-liberal globalisation – threatening to wipe out everything we recognise and like about our country.

'If we had wanted the history of Britain to be brought up to date in Friday's ceremony, it should really have ended with a group of City bankers and traders coming on, waving wads of money and glaring arrogantly at the cameras. These are the people who call all the shots in the neo-liberal Britain of today: not engineers like Isambard Kingdom Brunel, not dedicated NHS professionals, nor the heroic people in overalls who Boyle depicted in his staged scenes on Friday.'

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