

'Is it bigger than the bread bin?': Parallax, Parapraxis and the Multicultural Representation of British Media Events

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Published version

BLACK, Jack (2018). 'Is it bigger than the bread bin?': Parallax, Parapraxis and the Multicultural Representation of British Media Events. In: Diversity within events, tourism and hospitality, Leeds, UK, 5 Dec 2018. (Unpublished)

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“Is it bigger than the bread bin?": Parallax, Parapraxis and the Multicultural Representation of British Media Events'

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Presented at:

'Diversity within events, tourism and hospitality', International Centre for Research in Events, Tourism and Hospitality, School of Events, Tourism and Hospitality Management, Leeds Beckett University, Leeds, UK, December 2018

Abstract

In this seminar, I critically examine how the use of comedy – drawing specifically from the British sitcom, *The Office* – can help to reframe discussions on, but also, interpretations of, British multiculturalism. Through examining UK media coverage of the 'Team GB' athlete, Mo Farah, it is highlighted that newspaper discourses served to frame Farah as a celebrated symbol of Britain's multicultural inclusivity and cultural diversity.

In contrast to this framing, and with specific critique being given to the notion of 'inclusivity', it is argued that Farah reflected a multicultural subject whose 'otherness' was minimalized or ignored, instead being used to promote some idealized form of harmonious British multiculturalism. Accordingly, by exploring the 'antagonisms' which remain integral to multiculturalism, diversity and cultural difference, this seminar proposes new ways of approaching 'difference', as reflected in cultural formations. For this, two terms are drawn upon: 'parallax' and 'parapraxis'.

Notably, through the practice of comedy, Zizek's 'parallax view' and Elsaesser's 'parapraxis', are used to highlight how the 'working through' of cultural differences as well as their associated tensions, can help draw attention to those moments of cultural miscommunication, where such tensions are revealed as faux pas or performed failures.

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