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## **'They Called Them Communists Then ... What D'You Call 'Em Now? ... Insurgents?'. Narratives of British Military Expatriates in the Context of the New Imperialism**

Ben Rogaly and Becky Taylor

*This paper addresses the question of the extent to which the colonial past provides material for contemporary actors' understanding of difference. The research from which this paper is drawn involved interview and ethnographic work in a largely white working-class estate in an English provincial city. For this paper we focus on ten life-history interviews with older participants who had spent some time abroad in the British military. Our analysis adopts a postcolonial framework because research participants' current constructions of an amorphous 'Other' (labelled variously as black people, immigrants, foreigners, asylum-seekers or Muslims) reveal strong continuities with discourses deployed by the same individuals to narrate their past experiences of living and working as either military expatriates or spouses during British colonial rule. Theoretically, the paper engages with the work of Frantz Fanon and Edward Said. In keeping with a postcolonial approach, we work against essentialised notions of identity based on 'race' or class. Although we establish continuity between white working-class military emigration in the past and contemporary racialised discourses, we argue that these are not class-specific, being as much the creations of the middle-class media and political elite.*

*Keywords: British Emigration; Postcolonialism; New Imperialism; Immigration; 'Race'*

### **Introduction**

Academic historians writing on Britain in the second half of the twentieth century have shown public discourse on immigration to be highly racialised, with the term 'immigrant' being used as a euphemism for black and Asian people and their descendants (Hampshire 2005; Joppke 1999; Paul 1997). Until recently, when large numbers of East Europeans migrated for work in Britain following the 2004

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enlargement of the European Union, focus on white immigrants had been confined to academic studies. Strikingly, until the publication of a major think-tank report (Sriskandarajah and Drew 2006), white British people moving abroad were largely ignored in the British media (except on TV lifestyle programmes).<sup>1</sup> Reflecting the racialisation evident in discussions of immigration, white British emigrants often referred to themselves not as migrants, but used an entirely separate term: expatriates.

This paper draws on a set of wide-ranging life history interviews carried out in 2005 and 2006. These interviews included ten with white British people in their 60s and 70s, who had lived as military expatriates/temporary emigrants in the last years of colonial rule in one or more of the following countries: Aden (Yemen), Burma (Myanmar), Cyprus, India, Malaya (Malaysia), Malta and Singapore. We explore connections between the contemporary narratives of past expatriate lives and the same people's views on current immigration to the United Kingdom. The timing of the interviews was significant, because they took place in the months following the bombings of 7 July 2005 in London, and during a period of British involvement in new imperialist wars led by the United States. The analysis we present throws up apparent disjunctures, paradoxes and contradictions, which we argue can be understood, in part at least, through readings of key postcolonial texts, in particular Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1986 [1952]), and Edward Said's *Orientalism* (2003 [1978]).

The connections between the discourses deployed in the narratives of military expatriate lives at the end of the British empire and those used to discuss 'race' and immigration in contemporary Britain fit with Ann Stoler's notion of continuities in imperial 'genres of rule' across as well as within nation-states:

[I]mperial formations are not now and rarely have been clearly bordered and bounded polities. We can think of them better as scaled genres of rule that produce and count on different degrees of sovereignty and gradations of rights. They thrive on turbid taxonomies that produce shadow populations and ever-improved coercive measures to protect the common good against those deemed threats to it. Finally, imperial formations give rise both to new zones of exclusion and new sites of—and social groups with—privileged exemption (Stoler 2006: 128).

Stoler thus invokes a timeless imperial governmentality (see also Legg 2007) reminiscent of relations between the British state and UK residents the state identified as Muslims in the context of the US 'War on Terror'. This is the context in which we attempt to respond to Garner's call to 'examine how the colonial past

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provides material for contemporary actors' understandings of difference' (2006: 269). However, it is crucial to note at the same time that 'zones of inclusion and exclusion' in contemporary Britain run along axes marked by class as well as of 'race', nationality and faith.

The life histories which we are drawing on in the paper were recorded as part of a larger historical study of three housing estates in the English provincial city of Norwich, which have together become known as a 'deprived white community' (Rogaly and Taylor 2009). The research was set up to question such labels and categorisations emerging out of the local state, middle-class and popular discourses, and to explore how people responded to them through their own identity practices. As pointed out by several authors, white working-class people have themselves been written of in racialised terms in the British context (see, for example, Byrne 2006; Charlesworth 2000; Collins 2004; Hanley 2007; Skeggs 2004).

To guard against falling into this trap ourselves, it is worth emphasising two points at the outset. First, the interviews that we quote from here should not (in fact cannot) be taken as representative of any particular group. Rather they are *illustrative* of discursive connections between past and present, between discourses that evolved in white emigration under British colonialism and those deployed on immigration to Britain in the era of a new imperialism. Secondly, the written record demonstrates that media and political elites have produced and perpetuated a racialised perspective on contemporary immigration to Britain (see Paul 1997). The most notorious individual expression of anti-immigrant views in Britain in the second half of the twentieth century came from Conservative politician Enoch Powell, who developed this perspective through his own lived experience as a member of the colonial armed forces in India (Foot 1969).

## **Methodology and Research Participants**

We use a relational approach to conceptualising identity. Rather than being directly translatable into homogeneous sets of interests, identifications based on class, gender, generation, place, 'race' and ethnicity interact, and the ways in which they are narrated are contingent on time and space (Rogaly and Taylor 2007; Somers 1994). For us, a relational approach demands attention to our own relations with research participants. A male-female research team, both of us are white and occupationally middle-class, though just as with our research participants and the rest of the population, our identities are complicated by different heritages, social (im)mobility over time, and by varying life choices and social positionings.

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Sayer argues that, even for egalitarians, cross-class interactions are problematic, easier to engage in 'down' rather than 'up', with condescension 'a *structural* feature of the relation' (2005: 175, author's emphasis). However, he also refers to the positive valuations across class of '[q]ualities such as integrity, warmth and friendliness [which]... may sometimes allow people in different class positions to have good relations'. While mindful of the risk of reproducing inequalities, we have sought such relations in the present study, and, like Sennett and Cobb (1972), we found that 'people were reserved with us at first, but when they found our interest was genuine, became personally quite warm'. Revisiting the same people several times and recording hours of tape also involved talking about our own lives. Again like Sennett and Cobb, we experienced moments when research participants responded to us as human beings rather than classifying us as 'people doing university-based research'. At one point, meaning it as a compliment, one interviewee remarked that we were both 'ordinary, like other people I meet in the street', and 'not stuffed shirts'. At other times the dynamics changed back again and we became 'representative[s] of a class of people who could do what they wanted' (Sennett and Cobb 1972: 24, 37).<sup>2</sup>

Ten research participants, eight men and two women, discussed their personal experience of life as a military expatriate.<sup>3</sup> The term expatriate itself was hardly used and none of these participants described themselves as migrants. Interviews covered a diverse range of experiences including National Service, volunteering as a regular or being a serviceman's wife. Between them, participants spanned all the main 'services': the army, the airforce, the navy and the marines. The periods spent abroad varied from eighteen months to fifteen years. What the participants had in common was that they were white British residents of the area, who had lived for at least a year between the 1940s and the 1960s in what were at the time British colonies, either as a member of the British military, or as a 'serviceman's wife'.<sup>4</sup>

The narratives of expatriate life were contained within wide-ranging interviews, which covered the history of participants' lives in the area, issues of class, community, gender and generation. The period following the Second World War has been described as the age of austerity in the UK (see most recently Kynaston 2007). In Norwich, boot and shoe factories and Colman's mustard provided jobs for working-class residents of the Norwich area and its estates, and the education system taught people to tailor their aspirations accordingly. In any case school provision had been rationed during the war. Living was basic, especially during the very cold winter of 1947 when the shoe factories had to close for days at a time.

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Although many participants emphasised that all families living on the estate immediately after the war had equally low incomes, experiences varied, with a continuing aspiration to 'respectability' by some based on disparaging views of families who were not able to manage so well (see Taylor and Rogaly 2007). Similarly, the male military expatriates interviewed for this paper varied widely in their motivations. For some of those who went abroad with the military, National Service was an obligation to be dispensed with as quickly as possible. For others, joining up, or staying on after a compulsory period of National Service, offered the possibility of education and social mobility, as well as greater acceptability than they felt they would receive from peers at home for showing the desire to pursue such goals.

And again, the two women interviewed had different reasons for their involvement in the military. Sandra Dyson, one of the two servicemen's wives, joined the airforce herself, fired up to 'get away from home' by experience of family life with her parents and brother when they had been reunited after war-time evacuation. Flo Smith, the other serviceman's wife we interviewed, had been a shoe factory worker but, at 18, had found herself pregnant and ended up marrying her boyfriend, who was in the Air Force:

Wherever he went, where we could, we followed him as a family, you know, myself and the three children... I was always travelling backwards and forwards... I spent 15 years travelling and coming home to my Mum for three months, going off somewhere else again.

The next section of the paper shows how colonial and orientalist discourses of 'the Other' emerged in the telling of military expatriates' life stories. We then go on to explore how these were reproduced in complex, sometimes contradictory ways, in participants' narratives regarding immigration, 'race' and faith in contemporary Britain. Strikingly, there is a silence on colonialism itself throughout.

### **Who Are You Calling a 'Native'? Colonial Constructions of the 'Other'**

Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* was first published in 1952 at the heart of the period being referred to by research participants. It is critical for the purposes of the present paper to note the location of the book's analysis of racialised identities in *colonial* experiences of those times.<sup>5</sup> It is equally important to appreciate his opposition to the idea that racism is practised by a particular class. For Fanon, it is 'European civilization and its best representatives [who] are responsible for

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colonial racism', rather than such racism being the work of 'petty officials, small traders, and colonials who have toiled much without great success' (Fanon 1986: 90). Indeed, if we are to believe Edward Said, there may have been something in common between Orientalism and how rich white male elites viewed poor white people. 'The Oriental was linked...to elements in Western society (delinquents, the insane, women, the poor) having in common an identity best described as lamentably alien' (Said 2003: 207; see also Bonnett 2000).

Yet colonialism and the military employment possibilities it entailed (whether chosen or not) provided opportunities, even for its low-paid footsoldiers, that were otherwise unavailable. As Said put it, 'The missionary, the trader, or the soldier was in... the Orient because he *could be there* ...with very little resistance on the Orient's part' (2003: 7, emphasis in original). It is clear that in the times leading up to their joining the military and departing for postings in British colonies, the research participants remembered class positions at the bottom of British society, which gave them very few options.

Resistance was, of course, fierce in many colonies: decolonisation and independence were the result. These struggles did not feature explicitly in the stories of the former military expatriates we interviewed. Indeed, the interviews that the expatriates gave us suggested often quite positive experiences of serving abroad in the military, including regular meals, new kinds of food, opportunities to save, and camaraderie. Even those who told us they had hated it, also spoke of ways that they made the best they could of the situation.

All our research participants were white and had grown up in a European culture, 'the major component' of which, according to Edward Said, was 'the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures' (Said 2003: 7). Said argued (2003: 7) that it was 'precisely [this that] made the culture hegemonic both in and outside Europe'. It had its roots in a nineteenth-century concept of the 'subject race' used in a binary way in opposition to the white man and 'the West'. '[F]or the Britisher who circulated amongst Indians, Africans or Arabs, there was also the certain knowledge that he belonged to, and could draw upon the empirical and spiritual reserves of, a long tradition of executive responsibility towards the colored races' (2003: 226).

Said argued that the way such Orientalism transferred into the collective psyche occurred through texts. '[M]y analyses employ close textual readings whose goal is to reveal the dialectic between individual text or writer and the complex collective formation to which this work is a contribution' (2003: 24). For Fanon, the binary categories at play are black or 'Negro' and white, rather than the 'Orient' and 'the West'. Like Said, Fanon refers to a superiority/inferiority construction. In 'black consciousness...the white man is not only The Other but

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also the master, whether real or imaginary' (1986: 138, note 24). However, his analysis of the development of a collective unconscious is more convincing than Said's as it does not rely on transferral chiefly through texts. Fanon sees '[a] drama [being] enacted every day in colonised countries' and points to the importance of socialisation, in particular how the authority structures of the nation are produced in the family. In his view, a white child from a normal family becomes a normal adult while this does not happen to black people. Each society, he argues, requires some kind of 'collective catharsis. In every society, in every collectivity, exists, must exist—a channel, an outlet through which the forces accumulated in the form of aggression can be released' (1986: 146, emphasis added). Such catharsis was manifest, for example, in Tarzan and Mickey Mouse comics, which were 'put together by white men for little white men' (1986: 146), using racialised stereotypes.

The telling of colonial memories consequently involved the deployment of discourses which constructed group boundaries (sets of characteristics), based on nationality, ethnicity and 'race'. Said shows how such essentialised notions arose 'from a specifically human detail to the general transhuman one. For example, an observation about a tenth-century Arab poet would multiply itself into a policy towards (and about) the Oriental mentality in Egypt, Iraq, or Arabia. Similarly a verse from the Koran would be considered the best evidence of an ineradicable Muslim sensuality.' (2003: 96). In *The Wretched of the Earth* (1967 [1961]), Fanon explores the production and effect of the colonial use of the category of 'native' as a generic term for colonised people:

[I]t is the settler who has brought the native into existence and who perpetuates his existence... [The native] is, let us admit, the enemy of values ... all values are irrevocably poisoned and diseased as soon as they are allowed in contact with the colonized race... At times this dehumanizes the native ... turns him into an animal...the terms the settler uses when he mentions the native are zoological ... the stink of the native quarter ... breeding swarms (1967: 28, 32–3).

Such dehumanising and devaluing categorisation constrained colonised people's room for action and in Fanon's analysis left a violent struggle for self-determination as the only way forward:

The immobility to which the native is condemned can only be called in question if the native decides to put an end to the history of colonization...



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The native is being hemmed in; apartheid is simply one form of the division into compartments of the colonial world (1967: 40).

Even when exceptions to colonial or orientalist stereotypes are stated ('he's black but he's OK'), using 'the general category in advance offers the specific instance a limited terrain in which to operate' (Said 2003: 102). For the ex-military expatriates we interviewed, both general categories, such as 'oriental' and 'native', and attempts at detailed distinctions between the people they encountered (between, for example, 'Tamils' and 'Malays' in Malaya, or between 'Hindus' and 'Sikhs' in India), were naturalised into the discourses deployed to talk about their memories of life in the colonies.

Joe Hastings, who joined the airforce in Aden in 1951 as part of his National Service, was paid an extra one shilling and sixpence per day for being able to speak some Arabic. This was put to use in the management of workers in the camp stores. In discussing his attendance at what he referred to as a 'native wedding', in fact the wedding of the daughter of an Indian colleague in the stores, Joe drew on colonial categories and stereotypes, such as 'native' and 'wily oriental'

But it was just a case of, well, we had to deal with native labour. We had a lot of native labour on the camp, you see. And when I say a lot, I mean hundreds I'm talking about, not just a few. And so all the while you were telling them in Arabic, whether [it was] ... 'Hurry up with a cup of tea', what have you ... I had to be in there and organise the filling up of the lorries, which were all native labour, to see that they didn't pinch stuff.

Do you know anything about a native wedding, in at all, in as much as that, all the dignitaries sit there, all the people with money if you like? They're all sitting there. And you then get a tilly lamp, and the bride and groom sit in an open taxi and they go out all the way round the village and you have to go behind singing and chanting... And then when you go back, the bride disappears. Now, to this day I don't know where she went, but she disappears. But the groom sits there on the stage and everyone go up, we, as guests of honour we were, we were allowed to sit on the stage with him. And all the people kept coming up and shaking hands with him... And in the process of that, they had this little keyboard, this wily oriental is playing something on this keyboard. And I always remember with the state of inebriation everyone was in at the time, this bloke said, 'Hastings, get up there and give this a Twelve Street Rag'. And to this day I don't know how I

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done it. But I got up on the platform, and they were still [wailing], but then, and that was terrific.

Bill Fussell spent three years in the army from 1944 to 1947, mostly in India and Burma. Bill was unusual among the research participants in that he explicitly told us of knowledge about the 'Orient' he had gained as a child. In one interview he had recalled the disbanding of his regiment and his subsequent move from Rangoon:

From there [I] went to Rangoon up till, where did your half neck women live? Kalaw. Up in the Shan states somewhere.

While checking through the transcript of the interview, he came across this point and added:

When I was young, my mother took me to Jarrolds [a department store in Norwich city centre] and they had those women there. I saw them there, then I went to their home and saw them there.

However, Bill's use of racialised stereotypes extended from the particular, as in this case, to the general. Indeed, he used the general category of the colonised person who was resisting, to draw parallels between the communists he was involved in searching for in Burma and the 'insurgents' of present-day Iraq:

So I was in the situation like they are in Iraq now, trying to find 'em, well they called 'em communists then didn't they, that's all they were worrying about: the communists. They've got what d'you call 'em now, insurgents... Fancy name they keep coming up with.

As Said pointed out in the new preface to the 2003 edition of *Orientalism*, this connection was not far-fetched:

The illegal and unsanctioned imperial invasion and occupation of Iraq by Britain and the United States proceeds with a prospect of physical ravagement, political unrest and more invasions that is truly awful to contemplate... Without a well organised sense that these people over there were not like 'us' and didn't appreciate 'our' values—the very core of traditional orientalist dogma ... there would have been no war (2003: xv).

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Though not about colonised people, but rather enemy prisoners from another colonial power, Bill Fussell's discourse about managing Japanese prisoners of war in Burma suggests a splitting of a unified category of 'Other' into two types, good ones and bad ones, which also has strong resonances with the approach of the occupying powers in Iraq and Afghanistan to the population of those countries in recent years.<sup>6</sup> This reflects the kind of imperial governmentality recently elaborated on by Stoler (2006). In Bill Fussell's words:

[Y]ou see there you've two types, the good 'uns ... and the fanatics, the ones you've got to watch 'cos they'd 'ave yer ... you'd turn your back they'd 'ave yer. They'd find a way somehow don't worry. Well they were not allowed any comforts whatsoever ... the Japanese have got that, well the ones we met, I can't say it they're alike, 'cos I didn't see 'em all, but the ones I come across have always got that grin about them. It's like they're taking the mickey out of you. It's their natural habit, facial expression. It's not their fault.

This quote suggests a need to keep alert, of being at risk. Such a fear of the 'Other' during their time in the colonies was conveyed in narratives of several military expatriates. For example, two expatriates referred to 'Oriental' men wearing cloth around their waist rather than trousers, and found it a sign of resistance or even potential danger. In present-day Britain, in a similar vein, leading politicians have appealed to Muslim women to avoid veiling, referring to the fears of the rest of the population regarding the potential of the veil to conceal the true intentions of its wearer or even to hide weapons, John Draper remembered passing through the Suez canal,

...and some of them, the locals, they, up with the skirt [indicating baring their backsides], the men, you know, 'Oooh'. I supposed they hated the army.

For Bill Fussell it was 'no joke',

... 'cos they wear these saris, don't they? You lift them up and see what they got strapped to their legs and their bodies. Scare the daylight out of you so you can't be friendly with 'em, not till you've found out who's who and they don't wear labels, do they?

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In a wide-ranging review of 'expatriate communities', Erik Cohen found that military migrants have in common that they are 'planted' rather than 'natural', sometimes living in a 'geographically separate company town...or military camp' (1977: 25).<sup>7</sup> Former military expatriates we spoke to remembered it being seen as dangerous to go beyond the limits of authorised areas. Some remembered the fear going out of bounds generated either for themselves or their associates. Sandra Dyson put it like this:

...it wasn't until I was leaving there and we were going. We went on the local bus ... and I said 'Oh I want to go down there', I said 'There're some lovely shops down there'. Course my ex-husband had seven kinds of blue fit. He says 'You've never been down there?'. I said 'Yeah'. He says, 'Oh, for Christ's sake'. I'd only been wandering around an international out of bounds area. I didn't even know what the signs on the wall meant ... they could have been a road sign ... you were forbidden to go into them areas because ... they'd cut your throat.

The language in which these dangers were expressed suggests that they were linked to racialised ideas about the colonised 'Other'. In different ways, they implicitly bring in colonialism by naming resistance to it.

Although, like Sandra and Bill, Flo remembered that going to an out-of-bounds area was forbidden because of its 'notoriety'—'They'd cut your throat'—she also felt that because 'They were very strict ... if you acted sensibly and behaved, you were fine'.

The first thing we were told when we got to a different country: 'You are an ambassador for your country, and while you're here you will abide by their rules and regulations and their laws'. And we had to. And if you got into trouble in any way, your husband was up in front of the CO, you know what I mean, and he was dressed down on your behalf, you know what I mean? You just dare not... Everybody kept their noses clean, and treated the country we were in, and the people, with respect. We daren't do anything different. We wouldn't have dreamed of insulting them, or, you know what I mean? We would have just been courteous.

This forthright expression of the good behaviour of Britons abroad by Flo was also an ironic denial of colonial rule, which, as Fanon emphasises in *Wretched of the Earth*, was established in violence and maintained by threat of violence. In the next section we explore the continuities, as well as paradoxes, that become

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evident when the ways in which some former expatriates discussed living abroad under colonial rule are set alongside the discourses used by the same people to give their views on the settlement and integration of immigrants in contemporary Britain.

### **'They're Taking Over...'**

As we have seen, the people we interviewed, who had been marginalised and living in relative poverty in postwar Britain, narrated their memories of life abroad in the colonies using a discourse that reproduced the idea of colonised people (and Japanese prisoners of war) as an amorphous 'Other', rooted in a sense of European superiority. This is not as contradictory as it might seem. As Brah has noted, 'Once a discourse is established, it begins to have a life of its own, and be selectively utilised by all manner of groups including those whom it excludes' (2007: 137). Said's study of the development of categories of the 'Orient' and 'the West' diligently exposes the long history of the relationship between the production of such knowledges and discourses on the one hand, and the legitimisation of invasion and the perpetuation of colonial rule on the other. Further, as Legg has put it, '[t]he end of formal occupation has not signalled the withdrawal of colonial categories, procedures and technologies of rule' (2007: 265). For Said, 'Islamic Orientalism' in particular has remained virulent into the twenty-first century. 'Muslim' and 'Arab' are deployed as unified categories, opposed to the category of 'the West'.

Indeed our interviews suggest that such categorisations, at once both specific and precise, and vague and general, pervade *contemporary* discourses of immigration, integration, 'race' and faith in twenty-first-century Britain. This can amount to a manifestation of imperial governmentality in process both across and within national boundaries, in the form of 'turbid taxonomies' referred to by Stoler (2006).

The continuity in the use of bounded categories (both specific and general) to describe immigrants, black people, Muslims, asylum-seekers and foreigners, and a fear of those 'others', particularly Muslims, was notable. It was also significant that the categories themselves, such as those of 'race' and faith, collapsed into each other. There is a clear juxtaposition between the silence on and taken-for-grantedness of colonial occupations under the British empire in the past, occupations that research participants themselves were involved in, and views on immigrants to Britain (immigrants of colour that is) and on settled members of visible minorities in the era of the new imperialism.

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Sandra Dyson, who had lived in colonial Cyprus and Singapore, narrated her own heritage as plural. While interviewing Sandra we had noticed that she had what looked like a Star of David on her necklace under a crucifix. We asked her about this. Sandra replied that:

[M]y family are a family of 'mongrels' .... my great-great-great-grandfather was Norwegian, my father's side of the family, donkey's years ago, German Jew, my mother's side, as I say, are Norwegian, and Irish as well as English. My grandfather came from Limerick.

On being asked why, though her Jewish ancestor was relatively far back in the descent line, she chose to wear a Star of David, Sandra replied:

'Cos I like it. And I like the Jews, I've got a lot of time for them... I don't like the ways the Jews have been treated right through history. And it's only because they, they earn money and they spend it wisely and they improve their living conditions that people don't like them. And they do stick together.

Moreover, she spoke in positive terms about the effect on her and her children of having lived abroad:

Travel does quite a bit for you actually 'cos you have to meet all different kinds of races, religions and different sorts of people. I mean Singapore's a wonderful place, especially the Malay people. They're wonderful.

However, while her expatriate life had been spent largely in compounds separated from colonised people, Sandra placed the onus on immigrants to the UK to do the integrating.

Getting more foreigners ... it doesn't bother me ... as long as they integrate ... some do, some don't ... they won't talk to you half the time.

In contrast to her approval of what she saw as Jews' tendency to stick together, Sandra raised questions in particular about the willingness of Muslims to integrate.

Nothing against them. As long as they don't go to extremes like some of them have. But if they're going to live in this country, I'm sorry, they

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should live under our rules, not theirs. If they want to be Muslims and behave the way they did in their own country then go back to it.

...I mean, where have they built a mosque—right in the middle of Regent's Park! Could you go into their country and build a Protestant Church in the middle of one of their parks? No. They wouldn't allow it. So what's the matter with this government? It's a Protestant country. It's a Christian country. And if they wish to live here, then they must abide by the rules and regulations. But they don't. They can keep their own religion, but they don't have to ram it down everybody's throats. And unfortunately in that respect, they're like the Jehovahs. It has to be shown, it has to be pushed out, they must wear this particular dress when they go to school. Why? Why did they come here then? If they don't want to live by the way we live here in a Christian country, they shouldn't come here in the first place. Sorry. That's my attitude.

Nowadays Flo Smith, who spent long periods in the same colonial locations as Sandra, travels regularly to Birmingham to visit one of her daughters. Like Sandra, she felt differently about Jews and Muslims. She also strongly objects to the location of mosques:

We've always had Jews here. And we've had, over the years, a build-up of a lot of Chinese. But they've never bothered you, they've gone in with you. Can you understand what I mean? But these Muslims, I just can't explain how I feel... You're on the train to go to Birmingham, you're going to, there's two blasted great, within yards of each other, two mosques with these big green domes, and to me they don't blend in. They don't blend in with our churches, they stand out like sore thumbs. And I think, 'Why do they bring everything of theirs with them?' and it seems like a takeover bid. I just don't like it Becky, I'm sorry. But I've got no prejudice against them, but I just don't like the way they're taking over.

The fear of and antagonism towards Muslims and their apparent agenda of 'taking over' in contemporary England was shared by Tom Crowther, who, using the animal imagery noted by Fanon, elided the category 'Muslim' with that of 'Arab' and made an explicit link to the emigration of (implicitly white) Britons:

I see this eventually as the Muslims taking over England. I really do because they breed like rats and rabbits and ... they've already established

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themselves in mosques here, there and everywhere and ... eventually I mean a great number of Britons are going to emigrate away from this island and consequently it will be an Arab state. I really do feel that most strongly.

Elision of categories of 'Other' was also evident in slippage between faith and 'race'. Tom, who had served in the Navy in the late 1940s and early 1950s and was a keen regimental historian, had very different views on the rights to settle in Britain of former soldiers from the new Commonwealth (particularly South Asia, Africa and the Caribbean) on the one hand and those from the old Commonwealth (Australia, Canada and New Zealand) on the other. Regarding the latter, he said:

Well now, you know, a lot of these people that you now mention have left this island to better themselves ... and they want to come back and take up root again and die here. That's how I see it, so with two world wars and several other scraps in between in which they've helped out, I do feel that they do have some right to come back here and take root again.

By contrast, regarding Indian nationals who had served in the armed forces of the British Empire during World War Two, Tom argued:

These Indian people ... have virtually no right to be here at all because what they are doing is they are bringing over their uncles or aunts, children and they're just swelling the ranks of unemployment and they are taking over essential houses which we should have a right to and apparently haven't ... after all, in their country, the majority of the Indian people sleep on the pavement in tin shacks or something like that.

Flo Smith, herself the daughter of an American immigrant, narrated her own potential problems with integration explicitly by reflecting on the possibility of migrating from Norwich to be near her daughter in Wales. Although she said she felt comfortable in that part of Wales 'because there's so many English live down in that part now', and 'in all the years I've been going there' there had been 'only' one incident of anti-English behaviour (being ignored in a shop) that had upset her, she thought again and added:

But I think once you shut your door, you'd be very isolated. You'd have to join in the Women's Institute, you know what I mean? You'd have to join all that sort of thing, to get yourself integrated, can you understand what I mean? But the best way ... to get in is to have a dog.



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Thus, in thinking about her own possible migration to Wales, Flo articulated the advantages there would be in being in an area with a good number of fellow-English people. However, like other research participants, she does not apply this very human criterion to Muslims, nor indeed in her case to people of colour or to immigrants, all of which categories she runs together in the following passage:

*Flo*: I don't know nothing about the Muslim religion. I ain't that bothered. But why should we have to conform everything for them, for their human rights? Why should we turn our lives round to fit them in all the time?

*BT*: But, do you feel that you have? I mean, has it affected you, having lots of Muslims in this country?

*Flo*: No, it hasn't affected me as much as, [I] don't have anything to do with them, but, when you go to the bigger cities like Birmingham, like to my [other] daughter's... I just feel as if a white person's a bloody minority. 'Cos there's so many of them there and they're even getting now, where they've got their own schools... And I think they are affecting our lives.

*BT*: In what way?

*Flo*: Well, the way they're taking over. You know what I mean? Did you hear all this squat about human rights, and one thing and another, years ago? No, you didn't. That was the law, common courtesy, and that was it, wa'n'it? Now, if Mrs Coloured Woman thinks she is being harassed or racially got at, she sues.

*BT*: [referring to the controversy over depictions of the prophet Mohammed in a Danish cartoon] What do you think about the thing they've had, the free speech thing that they've had about those cartoons?

*Flo*: Well, we had magazines, didn't we ... satirical magazines that took the mickey out of people and that, and you took it all in good grace. But they're not prepared to do that, they're trying to inflict their views and beliefs, and what they want on us. And I think that is wrong. I wouldn't want no coloured fellow knocking on my door, and ..., some of my friends are black. But I wouldn't want no coloured person knocking on my door and

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telling me what I got to do, when they haven't been here for two minutes, and I was born and bred here. No thanks. It's my country.

In these descriptions of contemporary British society, the silences about British foreign policy, and in particular about the historical forms of colonialism associated with the British empire, are all the louder when it is remembered that the same people as those quoted here served in or were married to members of the colonial military. None of the military expatriates we interviewed thought of themselves as temporary migrants during their own periods abroad. In contemporary Britain public talk of migrants is still almost always talk of immigrants rather than emigrants. Hence there is no recognition of the basic paradox that, when abroad in the colonial past, research participants kept to their own bases, and recognised the safety in numbers, yet they condemn immigrants to Britain for doing the same today. Moreover, the slippage between categories signals the presence of an orientalism manifest in the amorphous, generalised category of the racialised Other. The fear of being taken over is a tension brought on by a perceived challenge to what Fanon showed in colonial times to be a taken-for-granted notion of white European superiority. It is that same sensibility, we would argue, that, in spite of unprecedentedly large protests in the lead-up to war, explains the widespread acceptance in the UK of the country's participation in the US invasion of Iraq once it was underway. As Simon Jenkins commented:

British foreign policy still lurches into imperial default mode by default...the English-speaking world still cannot kick the habit of imposing its own values on the rest (*Guardian*, 25 October 2006).

## **Conclusion**

This paper has mainly focused on categorisations deployed by British military expatriates from three estates in Norwich concerning colonised people in their descriptions of time spent abroad during the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. We have drawn attention to the contradiction between memories of being part of the coloniser's armed forces that emphasise fear of the unknown, living in closed compounds and the difficulties of integration, with the insistence that immigrants and 'Muslims' in contemporary Britain give up seeking what some research participants saw as their desire for separate lives.

Because colonialism itself, and recent British involvement in US imperialism in Iraq and Afghanistan, are not the subject of critical commentary by the people whose stories are quoted from here, the roles of colonialism in bringing about

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aspects of military expatriate life that were enjoyed, and, its central characteristic, in the case of British colonialism at least, of rule by gloved fist, are not mentioned either. There is irony, even denial, inherent in a discourse that can object to the building of mosques in Britain on the grounds that the British would never have built churches in the middle of a park during colonial rule.

Fanon and Said taken together clearly demonstrate the connections between the system of knowledge and discourse that is Orientalism on the one hand, and colonialism and imperialism on the other. Importantly for this paper, Fanon attends to exploitation along lines of class as well as 'race', and the interaction between the two. For the military expatriates faced structures of economic and political inequality in their lives in the UK, where they were largely on the receiving end of capitalist technologies of rule. Moreover, the colonial, and in some cases Islamophobic, discourses deployed by working-class expatriates in past and present echoed the writings of influential members of the media and political elite (see, for example, Cohen 2007; Gove 2006). Kathleen Paul's examination of British policy-making on immigration between 1945 and 1965 bears this out. While 'the official picture ... shows a liberal elite forced by an illiberal public to change the formal nationality policy... [it was] the policy-making elite's growing frustration with increasing colonial migration' (meaning immigration from the New Commonwealth) that led *them* to introduce a campaign 'to inculcate among resident UK public the dangers' of such immigration, including through 'the transformation of immigrants into "coloureds"', and the problematization of "coloured immigration" (1997: xi–xiii).

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## Notes

- [1] An academic literature on British and other European expatriates/emigrants has, however, begun to emerge (see, for example, Bott 2004; Fechter 2005; King *et al.* 2000; O'Reilly 2000; Walsh 2006).
- [2] For a more detailed discussion of our research practice, see Rogaly and Taylor (2009: 28–33).
- [3] Participants' real names have not been used in this paper.
- [4] One participant moved to Norwich and to the estate after returning from military expatriate life.
- [5] Even though, as other authors have pointed out, French and British colonialism were in many ways different (see, for example, Young 2001).
- [6] Manifest in degrading treatment for those classified as 'terrorists' or 'insurgents' during incarceration in Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay.
- [7] Thanks to Anne-Meike Fechter for bringing Cohen's work to our attention.

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