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What is This?

New hierarchies of belonging

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Abstract
The article discusses the effects that the debate about the 'crisis of multiculturalism' is having on the regulation, scrutiny and the surveillance of migrant communities. Through the story of a young migrant it explores the ways that old hierarchies of belonging are taking new forms within the social landscape of contemporary London. This biographical case study is drawn from a larger qualitative study of 30 young adult migrants. Although the article focuses on a single case, its arguments are informed by the larger sample. The article argues that the debate about population mobility needs to transcend the 'migrancy problematic' and identify how the ordering of humanity works in a globalized and neo-liberal context. Combining insights from Stuart Hall's recent writings and Franz Fanon's lesser-known essays, the article argues that new hierarchies of belonging are established that replay aspects of colonial racism but in a form suited to London's postcolonial situation.

Keywords
Franz Fanon, migration, migrant narrative, multiculturalism, racism, social inclusion and exclusion

Introduction

> Britain will never go back to being a culturally homogenous society ever again. It can't. I mean it can have purges, it can throw people into the sea. It can enforce assimilation but it can't go back to being stable and steady on its own mono-cultural foundations. (Hall and Back, 2009: 669–680)

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The passive revolution that Stuart Hall describes as a 'species multicultural drift' has transformed the nature of British society forever (Hall and Back, 2009: 680). Nonetheless, 'crisis talk' proliferates about the extent and quality of cultural diversity within Britain. The discourse of crisis is linked to what commentators on the Left and Right have referred to as the 'death of multiculturalism', linked in large part to the London bombing of 7 July 2005. Britain cannot return to the monoculturalism of the past, and yet there remain deep misgivings about the differences that cannot be assimilated. There is no going back, as Stuart Hall points out, but what is emerging is a situation where minority communities are positioned differently within what we can term a new hierarchy of belonging. Here, the fantasy of white restoration is replaced by a racial reordering, a differential inclusion that is selective and conflict-ridden (see also Hage, 1998, 2003).

Cultures of racism have frequently, if not always, scaled and ranked human diversity, often conferring the status of 'contingent insiders' on some migrants while unloading hate and derision on other migration groups (Back, 1996). In her study of East London community formation entitled *Invisible Empire* (2009, Georgie Wemyss suggests that it is through the granting or withholding of 'tolerance' that hierarchies of belonging were produced historically. Here, the white East Ender is placed at the pinnacle of this ladder of belonging. They have automatic claims to London's East End while the black, Asian and Bengali presence is 'tolerated' as long as it does not challenge the terms of the hierarchy itself. In this sense, we are not arguing that the new situation we seek to understand is a radical break with racisms of the past, but that these processes of ordering are invigorated by new social forces that have been unleashed post-9/11.

On the one hand, the British government can reference its challenges to institutional racism as evidence of its commitment to racial justice, yet promote suspicion and scrutiny of asylum-seekers and new migrants in the name of defending society against 'terrorism' (see Fekete, 2009). Healthcare officials are required to check the immigration status of their potential patients, lecturers required to monitor their students for religious extremism and immigration fraud, and immigration officials invasively investigate the legitimacy of those who come before them. The prominent employment of non-white officials by the UK's Border Agency fits in with maintaining the view that Britain and its immigration framework is not racist. How could it be, if it employs people who are non-white? Our argument is that understanding the politics of this crisis requires both a re-evaluation of how the dynamics of colonial racism are relevant to our time, while remaining attentive to the new forces that divide, rank and order.

The 'death of multiculturalism' does not relate to a situation that can be argued about or disproved empirically or factually. Finney and Simpson (2009) lay bare the statistical myths at the base of allegations of 'sleepwalking to segregation' and 'too many migrants', and may help to persuade some that social solidarity and diversity are compatible. It is no longer 'tolerance' that mediates these patterns of differential inclusion. Rather, we argue that it is fear and insecurity that give the racism of today its affective energy and force, for as Benjamin Barber comments: 'fear's empire colonises the imagination' (2003: 215). The insecurity that results is not only a personal state but also a battle to secure and defend society itself. So the argument goes, the immigrant presence, acts of terrorism and the threat of multiculture require authoritarian monitoring and the policing of forms of diversity that are 'out of control'. Echoing Stuart Hall et al.'s (1978) famous analysis of 20th-century

British racism, the 'crisis' is used to justify subjecting visible minorities to draconian forms of policing and scrutiny, the suspension of their rights, such as detention without trial, and promoting an atmosphere of perpetual emergency and panic. We suggest that this is best characterized as 'crisis policing': a form of tautology in which the idea of crisis is both the cause and mode of legitimacy for invasive policing. An atmosphere of crisis is policing a crisis that in fact it produced in the first place.

This argument will be illustrated through the life story of Charlynne Bryan, a 22-year-old woman from Dominica living in Leyton, East London. Charlynne's experience brings to life how the ordering of humanity operates within a globalized and neo-liberal world. Her story is part of a larger qualitative study of 30 young adult migrants from a variety of backgrounds living in London today.[1] Here, we will focus on just one biographical case study, but the insights drawn are informed from the project's wider findings. Due to limitations of space we will refer only briefly to the views of other participants. In short, while difference cannot be expunged or the clock turned back, what is happening instead is a selective process of rearrangement and ranking, featuring in the most intimate aspects of social life. Before discussing Charlynne's experience in detail, first we would like to situate the present scenario in the context and history of racism and immigration in Britain.

The limits of the 'migrancy problematic'

For Paul Gilroy, 'the figure of the immigrant' (2004: 165) provides a key political and intellectual mechanism through which our thinking is held hostage. Such categories of person become culpable in the creation of hierarchies of mobility through the immigration structure and inequities among people in terms of their rights to belong. The colonial citizen-migrants who came to Britain after the Second World War were transformed from 'citizens' into 'immigrants' on their arrival. From 1962, migration from the Commonwealth was subject to increasing immigration control due to the assumption that 'immigrants' were very difficult to assimilate, or later 'integrate', and required limitation due to the danger of overpopulation and over-consumption of resources (Anthias and Yuval Davies, 1993). White migration from the Old Commonwealth countries of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa was not policed, and both USA and intra-European Union (EU) migration were not seen as problematic. In this sense, 'immigrants' are created and racially scripted forms of personhood that come to life at a particular conjuncture. While we argue that the 'immigrant' is imbued with racialized associations, the long history of Irish migration to Britain and the forms of racism that they have experienced further complicates the picture (Cohen and Bains, 1988; Hickman et al., 2005). Some white migrants are invisible, while others are marked out for distinction and differentiation. Who counts, then, as an 'immigrant' is an affect of racism rather than the quality and history of patterns of people flow.

This continues today, although EU migrants, particularly from the new Member States of Central and Eastern Europe, are increasingly the targets of political hostility from the British National Party (BNP), the Conservative Party and the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), as was seen during the European election campaign of 2009. New migrants, particularly from Bulgaria and Romania, are subject to limitations on employment and welfare brought into force by the Labour Party. This is characterized by critical commentators as a form of xenoracism meted out to mobile populations, even if they are white

(Fekete, 2009). Yet a preference for the inflow of white people also seems to be reflected in the current situation. There are literally hundreds of thousands of economic migrants, entering from pre-Accession 8 (A8) expansion EU states, the Old Commonwealth and the USA coming to Britain each year, who do not provoke attention or public rancour partly because the mask of whiteness and ancestral connection renders them undetectable.

Between 2001 and 2006 Britain experienced one of the most intense phases of migration in its history, with some 3.3m migrants entering the country. In 1951 the 'foreign born' population of Britain was 4.2 percent of the total population, including some 2.1m people. By 2001 that figure had increased to 8.3 percent, numbering some 4.9m people (Rendell and Salt, 2005). This migration includes greater inflows of asylum-seekers and refugees, often coming from places such as Afghanistan and Iraq where Britain has fought recent wars, the enlargement of the EU to include A8 and subsequently A10 countries from Central and Eastern Europe, and students.

Domestic debates over racism and discrimination informed by the legacy of Empire have set the terms of the struggle over full citizenship so that 'blackness' and 'Britishness' are no longer conceived of as mutually exclusive. However, there is a historic break between the current situation and the imperial moment, and the concluding of the migration of former colonial citizens to the UK from Commonwealth countries. A new conjuncture of population mobility is created within the era of globalization and neo-liberalism. The legacy of Empire remains important, but this new intense phase of migration reflects the global economy's need for greater mobility and cheap labour while, paradoxically, immigration is blamed as the reason for insecurities such as job and resource shortages. As Nira Yuval-Davis et al. comment: 'the border is being opened up very selectively while maintaining a strong demarcation and boundaries between the "deserving" and the "undeserving"' (2005: 520). This distinction is becoming increasingly blurred or shifting.

Student migration has become heavily politicized due to the questioning of whether such migrants are really entering the country to study or to work illegally and/or ferment terrorism. This is despite the fact that students often play essential roles in the economy: for example, in the health and social care industry where there are labour shortages. While British universities are increasingly globalized or 'post-historical' (Readings, 1996), seeking new international markets for undergraduate and postgraduate students, those same students are subject to stricter controls.[2] Speaking in September 2010, Damian Green, the Immigration Minister in the Conservative–Liberal Democrat coalition government, justified immigration controls by saying that student visas had risen from 186,000 in 2004 to 307,000 in 2009 (Green, 2010). He claimed that one in five students were still in the UK five years after they had completed their course of study, and that only half of the students study degree courses. Students have become the latest object of fear and panic. New phrases have emerged within anti-immigrant discourse, such as 'bogus students' who are accused of using higher learning illegitimately to gain visas, and 'backstreet colleges' which, it is claimed, are selling immigration, not education. This ignores the large sum of money that migrant students contribute to the education sector.

In 2009 Universities UK found that the gross earnings from the higher education sector amounted to approximately £53bn. The personal contribution that overseas students make through their off-campus spending was estimated at £2.3bn. In addition, overseas non-university students who have legally extended their visas are working in the health and social care industry where, as mentioned previously, there are labour shortages. There is a

paradox at the heart of this debate: in a globalized world, universities become post-historical in the sense that they are no longer preoccupied with the past, but with their global rivals in the pursuit of 'excellence' and 'world-class status'. Additionally, UK universities are increasingly seeking new international markets for the recruitment of undergraduate and postgraduate students. At the very same time that universities are widening their horizons, the mobility of academics and students is subjected to stricter forms of control.

To summarize, we are suggesting that the end of colonial and post-colonial migration marks an important breakpoint in the politics of racism in Britain. The challenge is to understand the lasting legacy of Empire, while at the same time being able to identify racism's shifting modes:

> Faced with strangers seeking entry to Europe's fortress, today's civic and ethnic nationalisms reply negatively in one hostile voice. If we are to situate, interpret, and then answer that uniform rejection, we must be careful about returning to what we can call a 'migrancy problematic'. (Gilroy, 2004: 165)

In what follows, we will suggest that hierarchies of belonging are marked through the ranking of immigration status that positions mobile citizens in a globalized world. The shifts that we are describing permeate the most mundane and everyday practices.

The young migrants in the present study described their experience of living in London as one of estrangement. Clifford, from Ghana, who is awaiting the outcome of his claim for asylum, commented: 'London is a very multicultural place but we are not using it to the full potential. People turn against each other ... people are strange. It's a strange place.' As Thomas, a student from Ghana, put it, people are 'held in their own worlds' with the result that London is seen as 'A funny, cold place'. Clifford echoed this sentiment: 'Back home you are dreaming of London like a fairyland. Then you experience the reality and it's not like that.' In the next section we will focus on the representations of one of the participants in order to explore such sentiments in greater detail.

This study encourages its participants to become observers of their own lives and produce their sense of the social world that they inhabit through making representations, be it through photography, creative writing, collage and scrapbooks. The analytic procedure developed in the collaborative work is not about assuming that they capture a straightforward authentic reality. Rather, we treat these representations as a means to produce or assemble the social world through the work itself. These poems, pictures and images offers a basis to enter into dialogue with the participants over what is contained within them, including their blindnesses or assumptions as well as insights and understandings. The work, then, offers us the possiblity to shuttle between different horizons of understanding in which the participants also become authors.[3] Charlynne's deeply personal account opens up the opportunities and limits of London's multiculture and reveals how her interactions are framed by the shifts described here.

On the inside

'A lot of people haven't heard of Dominica and I don't like having to explain that it's not Dominican Republic, it is indeed Dominica, a totally different place,' says Charlynne.

However, in Britain she has had to learn to put up with misrecognition and misunderstanding. She is often assumed to be Jamaican and interpolated as part of the black community formation which has its origins in the citizen-migrants who came to London in the mid-20th century. Charlynne came to Britain aged 18 as a student: she obtained a first-class degree in psychosocial studies at the University of East London in 2009. Her time in London has been an adventure of self-exploration, an opportunity to spread her wings beyond the small island world of her childhood. She loves the physical landscape of the city, with its history written into its ancient buildings and landmarks. During her time as a student she also sometimes worked in the sectors of London's economy that rely on migrant labour: for a period she was a shelf packer in a central London branch of a luxurious clothing brand, restocking the shop at night ready for the next day's trade. As Sukhdev Sandhu notes, it is migrant labour that does the nocturnal work which makes London's daytime economy possible (Sandhu, 2006).

Charlynne's participation in this project offered a way for her to document this experience. The ethos of the project is to invite participants to write and record their own lives. This is precisely what Charlynne has done: keeping a scrapbook, making journal entries and assembling visual fragments from her everyday life that represent her past and present situation.

Charlynne has written a poem as part of this process. At one meeting she talked us through her scrapbook, explaining the choices she had made and the reasoning behind all the included elements. The photograph of the sun setting over Tower Bridge reminds her of early life in Dominica, when her whole day was ordered by it. She has spanned the globe. For her, the sunset holds the relationship between her past and present together, albeit in a different place with a different rhythm. She speaks with her hands as much as she does with her voice, conveying joy and excitement as well apprehension.

The provisional title for her poem was 'Outsiders' but she changed it because it is a story 'about me on the inside still looking in'. She explained: 'I've got in here [entered the UK] but I'm still the little foreigner. I'm still the outsider, as my poem will tell you. OK?' She reads, her fingers moving slowly from line to line.

The poem describes her encounter with a black British immigration officer. It stages precisely what is meant here by a new hierarchy of belonging: white state power dons a black mask and Charlynne is faced with an invasive look that deceptively mirrors her own likeness. Of course, there is nothing new about this formulation: the culture of racism has never been contained by the colour line. Frantz Fanon argued that a colonizing culture makes the colonized in its own image, drawing them within the colonial order and establishing a hierarchy that divides and orders. In his well-known essay, 'West Indians and African', Fanon writes: 'the enemy of the Negro is often not the white man but a man of his own colour' (1980a: 17). This is not to say that white racism is not at play in these encounters; rather, the colonizing culture produces 'affective complexes' that pit each against the other in a scramble to find a footing in the society whose modes of belonging are imbued with racism. As Gilroy comments, Fanon's 'unsettling words do not sound anachronistic in our post-Cold War time. His insights reveal him, perhaps unexpectedly, to be our contemporary' (2010: 155). Gilroy argues that Fanon's thinking challenges us to understand the ways in which 'race' is not merely a social construction, but a type of 'sociogeny' (Fanon, 1986: 13) that defines patterns of behaviour and modes of being.

Figure 1. Charlynne's scrapbook, 2009

This, Gilroy suggests, 'directs us to the costs, for both victim and perpetrators' of the racial straitjackets that inhibit the social and political environment, 'where any common humanity is "amputated" and authentic interaction between people becomes almost impossible' (2010: 157)
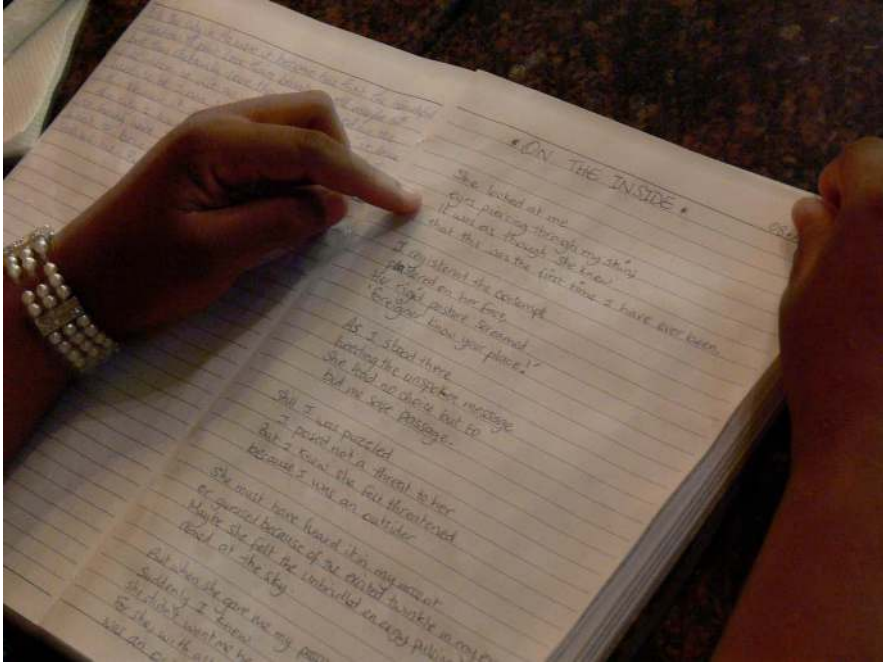
Figure 2. Charlynne reading her poem in a café in Leytonstone, London 2009

The first lines of Charlynne's poem read: 'She looked at me / eyes piercing through my skin.' Charlynne seems to begin to become fixed and named in the gaze as a migrant and first-time visitor:

> It was as though she knew
> that this was the first time I had ever been.

In the subsequent lines she is named and fixed as a foreigner who should know her subservient place:

> I registered the contempt
> plastered on her face,
> Her rigid posture screamed
> 'Foreigner know your place!'

The existence of a subservient 'place' seems to suggest that the person looking at her is trying to place her within some kind of pre-existing hierarchical order.

Signs of animosity from what we later realize to be an immigration official are non-verbal here, with 'contempt plastered on her face' and a 'rigid posture' that screams. Other participants in the study have commented upon such non-verbal signals of animosity from immigration officials. In this case, the official has no option but to let Charlynne pass, because despite being born and brought up in Dominica she is French, and therefore an
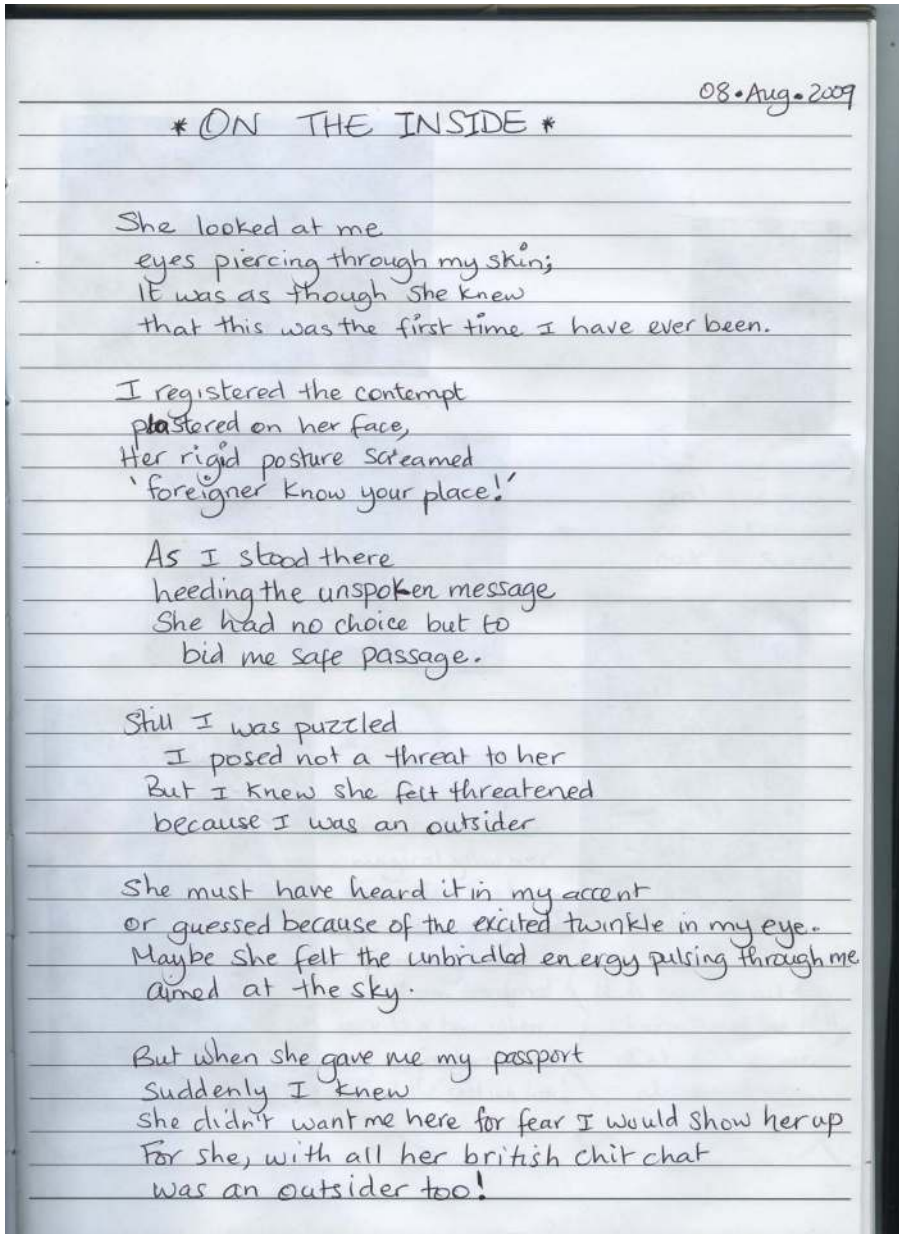
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* ON THE INSIDE *

She looked at me
eyes piercing through my skin;
It was as though she knew
that this was the first time I have ever been.

I registered the contempt
plastered on her face,
Her rigid posture screamed
'foreigner know your place!'

As I stood there
heeding the unspoken message
She had no choice but to
bid me safe passage.

Still I was puzzled
I posed not a threat to her
But I knew she felt threatened
because I was an outsider

She must have heard it in my accent
Or guessed because of the excited twinkle in my eye.
Maybe she felt the unbridled energy pulsing through me
aimed at the sky.

But when she gave me my passport
Suddenly I knew
She didn't want me here for fear I would show her up
For she, with all her british chit chat
was an outsider too!

Figure 3. 'On the Inside' by Charlynne Bryan

EU citizen. Although Dominica is not a French territory, her father comes from a neigh-bouring island with colonial ties to France.

Charlynne says that she did not pose an actual threat to the immigration official, but believes that the animosity with which she was greeted is because, as an outsider, she poses

a threat. New foreigners who bear a striking similarity to old foreigners are consequently ranked lower on a hierarchy of belonging. The price for a form of contingent belonging for migrants or their descendents may be paid in part by being complicit within a hierarchy that places newcomers and others below them. Economically, there may be an incentive for this in terms of jobs within institutions that require racist practice, and being an immigration official is the most obvious example. Charlynne says it is 'the price that you have to pay to get where you want to be'. The system maintains its image of diversity while, as Fanon commented, 'the oppressed *flings himself* upon the imposed culture with the desperation of a drowning man' (1980b: 39; emphasis in original). At the end of Charlynne's poem we learn that the immigration official remains an 'outsider too' despite her 'British chit chat'.

The immigration officer's position contains a tragic anxiety. Charlynne's presence is a reminder of the tenuous nature of her own place on the ladder that holds the promise of full citizenship. The diversity of the system – represented in the figure of the black immigration officer – appears to displace older legacies of racism, and yet the new order remains haunted by a current racism that positions both the immigration officer and the 'immigrant', albeit in different ways. The encounter in Charlynne's poem is animated by these anxious subject positions. Charlynne was asked if that was her intention:

Interviewer: So if I've got this, as I'm reading it, she [the immigration official] knows she's an outsider, in her head she knows she's an outsider and you're in a way reminding her of the fact that she too is an outsider?
Charlynne: Yeah.
Interviewer: So she has to adopt this pose of making you look like an outsider so she kind of elevates herself?
Charlynne: Yeah, yeah. Definitely – and that's what I wanted to bring in the poem.

Here again, there is an echo of Fanon. He argued that colonized groups become integrated into a culture of racism so that they see others through the colonizer's lens. The black 'civil servant is not only the colonial administrator but the constable, the customs officer, the registrar, the soldier, at every level ... an inescapable feeling of superiority develops ... becomes systematic, hardens' (Fanon, 1980a: 19–20).

There is a new twist that is the product of the post-colonial condition. We also have recorded incidents where migrants, faced with a choice in the 'immigration line', have opted to encounter a white immigration official rather than a black one, as they felt that they had a chance of better treatment from a white official. The key to this new racial landscape is that 'racism no longer dares to appear without disguise' (Fanon, 1980b: 36). The white immigration officer is licensed to appear tolerant and understanding to the migrant who comes before them as proof that neither they, nor the system itself, is not racist, while the black immigration officer is expected to be tough and hostile as proof of their real and ultimate allegiance to the state and nation.

Moving checkpoints

In line with Mezzadra and Nielson (2008), we argue that the multiplication of labour that results from migration coincides with a proliferation of borders and borders affects. It is

not simply a matter of passing through passport control because, as Etienne Balibar argues, the checkpoints move metaphorically from 'the edge of the territory, marking the point where it ends' and 'transported into the middle of political space' (Balibar, 2004: 109). We take this also to include the judgements about who belongs and can be included legitimately that are made routinely in the spaces of everyday life. We would push this observation further to suggest that the forms of ethnic and racial ranking driven by a culture of racism reaches into the most intimate social encounters. Charlynne commented on the cultural distinctions that are made as a result:

> When I first came here, people would call me 'bush' because of the way I spoke all the time ... Not because of my accent but because of the way I used my words, because of the way I said things. I've always thought that my English was perfect, and I came here and I realized that sometimes the way you say certain words just is different. Like, for example, my boyfriend always pulls me up on this one: *fear/fair*. The word F-A-I-R or F-A-I-R-Y – *fairy*. I used to say *feary* but he says it's not *feary*. I was like, 'Well, where I'm from we say *feary* all the time and nobody says it isn't *feary*. So why should I come to London and change it now?' Why should it be that when I get here I have to finally start speaking English like all the Englishmen speak English?

Charlynne commented how quickly it is possible to be drawn into the ranking and positioning of others in this way. At the time of interviewing her she was working in the shop of a community organization. She talked about how she began to fall into a similar pattern of viewing others with suspicion:

> Although I'm writing that [poem] as being someone who the contempt is shown to, toward, I have known myself to feel contempt towards people who have come after me, who are outsiders themselves. So I'm writing it from a double perspective.

Charlynne shows here that by putting others down, one elevates oneself, but it is a psychological balancing act. The very act of putting someone down reveals a need for status and/ or respect that otherwise is not satisfied and which may be inwardly damaging. For migrants tension exists constantly because their footing on the ladder of inclusion is neither stable nor clear but contingent and always subject to scrutiny. In the interview Charlynne talks about how these forms of position are manifest:

> When people come into the shop I don't have any thing against people who don't speak English as their first language, but it annoys me when they come in and they cannot speak English and they tell you, 'I cannot speak English' and 'Oh, no speak English.' But they do so many silly things and it does annoy me.

Her double perspective allows us an insight into the insidious damage that these hierarchies of belonging do to social life. Others misrecognize us while we misrecognize others:

> And then I think the last bit [of the poem] just shows that I know, I as well should have more tolerance towards them. because I myself am somebody who just came and people looked at me that way when I first came.

These metaphorical 'checkpoints' permeate the micro-spaces of social life in which shame, displacement and status anxiety damage the quality of social encounters. Looking at others reminds Charlynne of the shame or damages to self-esteem that invasive inspection, naming and placing causes. She then displaces some of this onto customers in her shop:

> But it's still something that me looking here, they remind me of where I was when I first came, and it's something that sometimes you don't want to be reminded of –what you came from. Sometimes you just want to move on and not remember, not remember that once somebody looked at you and thought that you were backwards too.

As Gilroy points out, the racism that orders the tableau of social life 'brings out the very worst in everybody whose lives are distorted by its mirage' (2010: 158).

Despite the animosity that she encountered, Charlynne entered Britain with energy and ambition; with, as she put it, an 'excited twinkle in my eye' and an 'unbridled energy pulsing through me, aimed at the sky'; a desire and vigour to participate, encounter and experience all the unmanageable splendour of London life. Contained in her account is a reckoning with the 'pecking orders of integration' and what we have called the new hierarchies of belonging. Charlynne finds London's ineffable multiculture intoxicating, a city of history and surprise. She struggles against racial scripts and selective inclusions in order to embrace the opportunity of more convivial encounters with difference. Her story reveals the city's paradoxical nature, haunted by the legacy of racism that holds its post-colonial present hostage (Gilroy, 2004) and yet containing breaches that afford moments of escape.[4]

Conclusion

The social weight of racism

Robert Putnam argues that diversity is inversely related to common and meaningful social bonds, or what he calls social capital. Influential in both the USA and the UK, he maintains that:

> Inhabitants of diverse communities tend to withdraw from collective life, to distrust their neighbours, regardless of the colour of their skin, to withdraw from their friends, to expect the worse from community leaders … Diversity, at least in the short run, seems to bring the turtle out in all of us. (Putnam, 2007: 150–151)

He calls this a kind of allergic 'hunkering down' (Putnam, 2007:161). Contrary to this assertion, we argue that 'hunkering down' or 'turning turtle', where it exists, is a result not of diversity; rather, it is produced under the social weight of racism.

There may be no going back to monocultural Britain, but there is a reordering of the terms of inclusion. The phantom of the dangerous 'other' licenses authoritarian modes of control. Accordingly, the 'threat' posed by terrorism and immigration signifies the limit point of multiculturalism and justifies authoritarian modes of control to manage diversity including deportation, tighter immigration controls and the detention of sanctuary-seekers

(Schuster, 2005). However, migrants like Charlynne, and ultimately all of us, are placed within neo-imperial hierarchies of belonging that corrode the quality of our social interactions and the possibility of humanity. Economically, this has benefits for businesses that employ or subcontract work to people earning less than the legal minimum wage because of restrictions on their rights to work. Politically, this carries benefits for global economic interests and political elites who can shift the blame for unemployment and resource shortage onto migrants, while the fear of domestic terrorism justifies the sense of crisis and global military operations that are conducted in its name.

Yet at the same time it is commonplace to hear politicians of different allegiances welcoming diversity and a 'certain amount' of migration of the 'most gifted' or the most useful to Britain (see Lewis, 2005). The idea of an assimilating, heterophilic Britishness that accepts 'multiple identities' as long as they remain loyal to the nation is used now to prove that the UK is not racist. In a climate of crisis and fear Britain's diverse multicultural communities themselves are forwarding anti-immigrant sentiments (Sinha, 2008) or turning against other groups. In November 2009, Rajinder Singh became the BNP's first non-white member. Singh, who emigrated to Britain in 1967, is a vehement critic of Islam. Singh said he was 'honoured' to join a party of avowed racial nationalists: 'I got in touch with the BNP on certain core policies that appeal to me,' he told *The Independent* newspaper: 'I also admire them since they are on their own patch and do not wish to let anyone else oust them from the land of their ancestors' (Quinn and Taylor, 2009). The division of communities in a time of economic and political crisis allows structures of rule and wealth to exist with less opposition, as each is turned against the other. The enemy becomes the 'new immigrant' or the 'religious extremist', rather than the powerful groups who benefit from local injustices or global inequalities. In this sense, the price for the foothold of minority communities established on the ladder of national and European belonging is conformity with increasingly authoritarian immigration measures. So, for example, a post-imperial Britishness – even a multicoloured and cultured one – can claim a tough line on immigration control while simultaneously promoting the harvesting of skilled workers from around the globe where they are needed in the national interest.

In sum, the echo of colonial racism is at play in the ways that global population mobility is being filtered and ordered in Britain. Unlike their predecessors, who ranked migrants through granting or withholding tolerance (Wemyss, 2009), the new hierarchies of belonging are sustained through fear and suspicion. Through Charlynne's account we have attempted to access these processes from the viewpoint of someone who has lived their consequences intimately. Charlynne's reckoning with these divisions contains evidence of a counter-movement or critical tendency. Her 'double perspective' is premised on an equivalent understanding of human worth that challenges the hierarchies that divide as they rank and order. The present study also has found other examples where young adult migrants are forging new associations across very different experiences of movement. This is in keeping with Liz Fekete's observation, that 'new inter-ethnic alliances' are being forged by young people seeking new broad-based forms of association which have the potential to extend to a liberatory politics able to speak against the climate of fear and crisis (Fekete, 2009: 209). This not only points to an alternative way to address the 'multicultural question' (Hall, 2000), but also the promise of making London a hospitable home rather than a 'funny, cold place'.

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Notes

1. The London research forms part of the EUMARGINS Project – a three-year study of the life narratives of young migrants – concerned with recording the consequences of these shifts from the perspective of the migrants. The UK part of the project is being conducted in London as part of an international comparative study involving six partner institutions in Estonia, France, Italy, Norway, Spain and Sweden. A full summary of the project can be found at: www.iss.uio.no/forskning/eumargins/.
2. One of the characteristics of the post-historical university is that the link with the nation-state, made through the fostering of national culture, is transformed in favour of the pursuit of 'world-class excellence'.
3. Much of the analytical reflection in this article is produced by Les Back and Shamser Sinha, but we have shared the authorship of the piece in order to acknowledge Charlynne Bryan's contribution – to whom the rest of this article is dedicated – and the creative intellectual process outlined here.
4. Charlynne has read and commented on earlier drafts of this article. At one session, talking us through her notes made on the typescript, she turned to us and said: 'I was reading this and I said to myself – "How does he know this?"' We assured her that it was because she told us. However, in a sense, what was happening in this process was that Charlynne came to view her own life differently through the ideas that we were using to try and understand what she told us. By equal token, we began to think of our arguments and theoretical ideas differently through engaging with the insights contained in Charlynne's poem and scrapbook.

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