Constellations of privilege: the racialised and classed formations of Britons living in rural France

Michaela Benson, Goldsmiths

Abstract

This chapter revisits my research conducted with Britons resident in rural France to propose a conceptual innovation in how we conceive of privilege among lifestyle migrant populations. As I argue, the *relative privilege* that facilitates the lifestyle migration of the British to Europe, shaping and influencing settlement, extends beyond the socio-economic characteristics of these populations and should be considered instead as inherently and inextricably classed and racialised formation. The ethnography presented therefore shifts the focus of my earlier analyses that highlighted how migration to and settlement in rural France was part of a wider process of middle-class reproduction (Benson 2011, 2013), to make visible the social production of white Britishness. In this way, it draws attention to the multi-layered historical and material conditions that promote lifestyle migration, proposing *constellations of privilege* as a revision to the conceptual framework that drives lifestyle migration research.

Introduction

Within the context of a volume on British migration, considerations of how privilege is constituted have particular relevance and salience. Such considerations bring into focus the shared histories upon which British emigrations are grounded, providing a conceptual framework that has value beyond the understandings of those Britons resident in Europe. In bringing the lens on colonialism and the social production of whiteness that is common in accounts of British migration to former outposts of the British empire (see for example Leonard 2010; Coles and Walsh 2010; Knowles and Harper 2009), the reconsideration of privilege presented in this chapter allows for consideration of the (dis)continuities between these migrations further afield (see for example Fechter and Walsh 2010) and those closer to home in Europe. The June 2016 British referendum on their membership of the European Union makes this a particularly timely endeavour given that Britain's future outside Europe has undoubted consequences for those Britons who live and work in Europe. Further, as I argue the so-called 'Brexit' is an opportune moment to consider again the traces of colonialism in Britain's and Britons' relationships with Europe.

This chapter starts by re-visiting rural France, setting up the ethnography. It then introduces the lifestyle migration framework, highlighting the key conceptual and theoretical framing of this and the significance of thinking relationally about affluence and privilege within the project of 'undoing' privilege. From the discussion of British migration as a form of middle-class reproduction, it turns to the consideration of how whiteness at its intersections with Britishness is reproduced. In this way, it highlights the inherently postcolonial legacies at play in the structuring of privilege that facilitates migration, framing the imaginings of people and place within the destination. As I highlight, in examining the reproduction of the British middle classes on French soil it is also important to acknowledge and deconstruct this as a process that socially produces whiteness, and through which legacies of empire systemically persist.

Introducing the British residents of the Lot

From the limestone cliffs in the east of the department, through to the rolling farmland and vineyards to the west, the Lot offers picturesque and awe-inspiring scenery, a feature of the environment that became pivotal to the migration narratives of my interlocutors. Located in the southwest of France, the Lot is rural and inland; at the time of the research it was also one of the most sparsely inhabited and deprived departments in France, a consequence of the wider pattern of rural depopulation wrought through substantial changes in the economic base of the French national economy. In contrast to the valorisation of this space by British and other Northern European incomers, within France areas such as the Lot are viewed as marginal, (stagnant) backwaters that run counter to the French national project of progress. Perhaps then it is unsurprising that in these rural areas where agriculture is in decline, that the majority of incomers are not the non-European migrant worker populations—who earlier might have featured prominently in the statistics, fulfilling crucial roles as agricultural labourers—but are mostly Europeans (INSEE 2005; see also Buller and Hoggart 1994), taking advantage of the opportunities for buying up vacant properties. Dodd (2007) stresses the way in which these European incomers are partially 'offsetting' rural depopulation, and while we should not take such claims on face value, they nonetheless usefully preface my thinking here about the way in which Britain understands its relationship with Europe.

The ethnographic project on which this chapter builds focused on understanding the everyday lives of the British residents of the Lot and took place over twelve months between

2003 and 2005. The project included the collation of life and migration histories, and semi-structured interviews with forty-nine Britons living full-time in the Lot—the length of their residence varying from those with fifteen years of tenure, through to more recent incomers arriving in the last six months—as well as extensive participant observation of their and others' daily lives that took me into private homes, everyday activities and practices.

I accessed my research population through snowball sampling—as is common in ethnographic research—one person passing me onto the next. When I felt that the sample was becoming too homogeneous, I worked on ways of extending this to capture the extent of the diversity within this population. This resulted in the recruitment of interlocutors beyond those who might be considered as retirement migrants, to include those with small children as well as younger migrants who had set up small businesses in the Lot. Notably, those who took part in the research were exclusively white British, and predominantly English. Further, through their employment prior to migration all of my interlocutors would be positioned within the British middle class; however, as I discuss in detail below, their positions within this varied as a consequence of their different routes into and through the middle classes.

Migration to rural France was commonly explained through recourse to 'quality of life'; the primacy that they attributed to a better way of life framed not around work and employment but rather around lifestyle are the grounds on which I conceptualise British migration to rural France as a form of lifestyle migration (Benson and O'Reilly 2009, 2016; Hoey 2005; Benson and Osbaldiston 2016).

(Relative) Privilege and the search for a better way of life

> Lifestyle migration is a novel extension of a phenomenon with a history, made possible as a result of global developments of the past 50 or 60 years. It relates specifically to the relative economic privilege of individuals in the developed world, the reflexivity evident in post-/late modernity, the construction of particular places as offering alternative lifestyles, and a more general ease (or freedom) of movement. (Benson and O'Reilly, 2009: 620)

When Karen O'Reilly and I first developed our conceptual and theoretical work on lifestyle migration it was intended as an intervention that sought to explain the migration of the *relatively* affluent in search of a better way of life (Benson and O'Reilly 2009), those whose migrations fall outside the predominant framing of migration at its intersections with labour and migration governance (Benson and O'Reilly 2016). It also sought to underpin lifestyle migration, a phrase that was gaining currency within research on privileged migration and counterurbanisation (see for example Knowles and Harper 2009; Hoey 2005) with the sociological thinking that might inform its future development as a concept.

In particular, we made a clear statement about how lifestyle, intended in its various sociological conceptualisations (e.g. as tied to consumption, as the grounds for identity-making), might be a useful framework for making sense of the migration of these *relatively affluent* and *relatively privileged* migrants (see also Benson 2015a; Benson and Osbaldiston 2016). While citizenship of some of the world's most powerful nation-states (see also Croucher 2012) is a constitutive feature of such privilege—or indeed, as in the case of Britons resident in rural France, European Citizenship—our concern with the relational quality of both affluence and privilege, shifted the focus from absolute statements about the privileged or elite status of these migrants—or rather the depiction of those with unfettered agency (see for example D'Andrea 2008; cf. Korpela 2014)—to recognise these migrations as sites for the negotiation of privilege.

In this way, our conceptualisation of lifestyle migration can be understood as part of a wider project of what Pease (2010) describes as 'undoing privilege', making this visible in all its complexity. In crossing borders, such migrants enter into new hierarchies and find themselves variously positioned within and in relation to local social structures; yet, global asymmetries predispose their privilege to be re-validated and perhaps even enhanced in these settings (Amit 2007). Despite the way that it has been deployed and critiqued by some researchers (see for example Huete et al. 2013; Hayes 2014), this framing,

> … is not intended to identify, demarcate and define a particular group of migrants, but rather to provide an analytical framework for understanding some forms of migration and how these feature within identity-making, and moral considerations over how to live (Benson and O'Reilly 2016: 21)

While lifestyle migration offers a frame for how we might conceive of these flows, and volunteers some concepts that might be useful, it is necessary to think about how these play out in different settings. As I have discussed through the lens of my research on North Americans in Panama, privilege and affluence—as relative statements—need to be relocated within the contexts within which they arise; they are socially produced in complex ways that require further unpacking and are telling of wider structural and systemic conditions (Benson 2013b). Importantly, privilege does not assume a location on one axis of social division; it does not only describe, for example, class, gender or ethnicity, but allows for a consideration of how different social positions might intersect. It is against this background that I focus in this chapter not only on the need for an understanding of privilege that identifies it as a constellation—intended here as a way of illuminating the often-invisible assemblage of characteristics through which it is constituted—but also explore how it might be put to work in thinking again about my ethnographic research with the British in rural France.

British migration to rural France: a classed phenomenon?

In this section I present a class analysis of British migration to rural France, demonstrating how this is a migration trend that is at once structured by and structuring of class formation. As I demonstrate (see also Benson 2011, 2013a), a class analysis of Britons living in the Lot reveals processes of social reproduction wrought through practices of status discrimination and social distinction.

A (very) brief introduction to cultural class analysis

Cultural class analysis offers a realist approach to understanding class, that pitches social class as the central axis around which social divisions are oriented (Savage 1995). Seeking to introduce an understanding of class that recognised the possibility of a relationship between structure and agency, and inspired by Bourdieu's (1984) work on the rise of a new class formation in France—the petty bourgeoisie—cultural class analysis sought to demonstrate that understanding class required attentiveness both to its structural production and cultural articulation (Savage 1992, 1995). In this framing, assets and resources play a significant role in class formation, the focus on the accumulation of these and their conversion into capitals. This analytical framing depicts the British middle class as internally differentiated and better conceptualised in the plural: the middle classes.

In recent years, this model of class analysis has become increasingly prominent in British sociology (see for example Savage 2015); recent research following this approach evaluates contemporary class formation—and by extension, class structure—in Britain through the measurement and documentation of cultural and leisure practices, mapped against financial and occupational data, social networks and connections (see for example Bennett et al. 2009; Savage et al. 2013).

The British in Rural France through the model of cultural class analysis

My intention here is to briefly sketch out a cultural class analysis of the British in rural France, identifying class formation as dynamic, taking place in and through migration and daily life. In this way, I highlight a predisposition—a taste—for migration to rural France as well as considering how the possession and accumulation of assets and resources, read through social mobility, facilitates this migration trend.

Social mobility was most marked among the population of retirees living in the Lot at the time of the research. Perhaps unsurprisingly given the gender divisions in employment for this generation, social mobility was more marked in the case of the men taking part in the research. Vic, who had grown up in a working-class family from the east end of London, had ended his working life as the manager of a small IT company. Others such as Ron had started up their own businesses, selling these upon retirement. It was notable that these socially-mobile men held in common a route that took them from school to the workplace, climbing up through the ranks to more senior positions over the course of a forty-year career. Their positions within the occupational structure indicated not only their social position as middle class—simultaneously employers and employees—it highlighted additionally their accumulation of high levels of organisational assets.

Another common trajectory was among those who had been employed in the public sector—the teachers and civil servants who had taken the opportunities for voluntary severance, often articulated as early retirement (Benson 2010a), offered to them in the 1990s against the backdrop of wider cuts to the public sector. This surprisingly common narrative is indicative of bureaucratic assets and resources that Savage et al. (1992) identify as the grounds on which some middle-class groupings coalesce. It is worth highlighting here that

such assets and resources often existed in tandem with property assets accumulated in the UK, and then deployed—wholesale—to support the *outright* purchase of homes in the Lot.

However, it was also clear that among my interlocutors there were also those who had established middle-class origins. This portion of the population comprised men and women of all ages; they held university degrees; preceding their migrations to rural France they had had careers in a range of occupations in the public and private sector that had, for some, taken them abroad to live as expatriated workers. Many of them maintained properties back in the UK as well as owning properties in the Lot. Alannah, who had taken early retirement from the civil service, had migrated to France with her husband Daniel, an architect. They both had university degrees, had lived and worked abroad—he in Fiji, she in Finland and Australia. She spoke fluent French before migration. They had bought the house with the proceeds from one of their properties in London, but had held on to another, renting it out for an income. This was a social and spatial trajectory not limited to the population of retirees, but also common among those who had moved to France earlier in their lives. For example, aged in their early 40s, Jon and Kay had given up their jobs in social research and marketing to move to rural France where they had set up a *gîte* complex and ran a small homemade gift card company; both had been to university, Jon had lived in the *Savoie* previously and spoke French fluently.

Although there is insufficient space here to explore this in detail, it is clear that the social trajectories of these migrants also translated into the lives that they anticipated leading in the Lot; it was certainly the case that those who came from middle-class backgrounds were more likely to have aspirations to become integrated into the local community—the cultural capital endowed to them through their education manifest in their ability to learn and speak French not insignificant within this. Those from socially mobile backgrounds appeared to hold different aspirations for living in rural France; less likely to speak French, they more often sought out the company of their compatriots, moving to rural France—with their homes and gardens—presented as the crowning pinnacle of their social mobility.

This differentiation provides further nuance to arguments about the values that the middle classes place on rural living, highlighting that beyond the headlines—beautiful scenery, slow pace of life, close-knit community—migration and aspirations for life in rural France are further influenced by individual biographies and the predispositions that these inculcate.

What these broadly stated differences identify is that the British residents of the Lot are not a homogenous population; there is significant diversity despite the characterisation of this population as middle class and the shared belief that rural France offers a better way of life. Indeed, vaguely stated claims equating rural France with improved quality of life are the grounds on which intra-class distinctions play out, the relational dynamics—and concomitant processes of status discrimination—of the British middle classes remade in rural France precisely through claims to the (right) knowledge of how to live in this new environment (Benson 2011, 2013a). In other words, the context of (British) life in rural France is ripe for processes of class formation, social groupings coalescing around different assets, resources and values.

A distinctly British middle-class migration?

As I have examined in detail elsewhere (Benson 2011, 2013a) for my interlocutors, migration was just one step in the project of getting to a better way of life (see also Benson and O'Reilly 2009). This search for a better way of life was more than an individualised project of self-realisation; it was thoroughly enmeshed in processes of social distinction.

This is where my analysis departs from that of the cultural class analysts; identifying not the cultural practices through which social positions are defined, but also the *relational* formation of class. In this way, my argument here channels the critiques levelled at cultural class analysis by feminists such as Bradley (2014), Skeggs (2004, 2015) and Imogen Tyler (2015). As they highlight, this focus on the grounds by which class positions might be identified—e.g. consumption practices, incomes, education—neglects class relations; they advocate instead defining class as a process of classification best understood as a struggle for value. Shifting focus in this way reveals the stakes of this project, and particularly the location of this struggle for value within a distinctly British sphere.

For some of my interlocutors, this was articulated through the recourse to authenticity (Benson 2013a). Living 'like the locals', restoring and furnishing properties with an eye to how they would have looked were some of the ways in which claims to authenticity were made. However, it was even more common for my interlocutors to evaluate the lives of their compatriots—often friends—as not being the right or 'proper' way to live in the Lot. In daily conversation, variations on this theme included why did people continue to try and grow English lawns? Why did people not learn to speak French? Why did they import their food

and drinks from Britain? Shifting their gaze beyond the Lot, they reflected on the purported lives of fellow Britons living in the Dordogne and Spain. In contrast, they would only very occasionally speak of other Northern Europeans migrant populations.

In extending the project of cultural class analysis to understand class formation at its intersections with European integration, Favell (2008), through his discussion of the young and highly educated intra-European migrants and Andreotti et al. (2014), through their examination of the highly skilled transnationals, argue for a burgeoning European middle class. In both cases, these populations are understood as highly mobile and cosmopolitan, precursors to full European integration and the emergence of a European social structure stratified by class. What the preceding discussion of Britons living in the Lot demonstrates is that the discourse and actions of my interlocutors makes visible the persistence of a national field of class formation, albeit a distinctly British middle-class reproduced on French soil; they are not part of the burgeoning European middle-class Favell (2008) and Andreotti et al. (2014) identify, despite being beneficiaries—at least for the time being—of freedom of movement and the right to reside in another European country.

Problematising the invisibility of the white British in Europe

In this final section, I consider further the structural and systemic conditions that result in the reproduction of this distinctly British middle class in rural France and reflect on the constitution of Britishness as a particular form of whiteness in this setting.

From class to racialisation in intra-European migrations

Another way into thinking about British migrations to European destinations has been through the lens of intra-European migrations. Driven by policy concerns and the distinction in contemporary European migration governance between those migrants from outside the European Union and those within, this field of research has focussed on understanding migrations within Europe through the lens of the project of European integration and European citizenship (Favell 2008). Underpinning these ambitions was the free movement of labour and goods within the borders of Europe, free movement and the right to reside and work in another European Union state held in common by all European Union citizens. Indeed, among my interlocutors in the Lot this 'right' was often held up as the reason why they could live in rural France. However, focussing on the political project

of Europe — and in assuming its value among migrant populations — in this way runs the risk of overlooking the wider contexts and histories within which such migrations are taking place.

As several scholars have highlighted, such 'Britishness' emerges in tandem with considerable ambivalence about what it means to be European (see for example O'Reilly 2007; Benson 2011). Their European citizenship — and reliance thereupon — awkwardly positions them within a supra-national structure; simply put, so long as certain rights remain contingent on nation and place, these mobile European citizens find themselves in an intermediary position as citizens of other European states resident in another where they do not have the full rights of that state's citizens (Ackers and Dwyer 2004; O'Reilly 2007). For example, O'Reilly's *The British on the Costa del Sol* identifies the way in which this population are a marginal community in Spain, neither colonisers nor integrated into the majority population, 'they remain essentially British; they are symbols of lost Empire, of national pride, of ambivalence towards the Other … these Britons abroad both remind Britain of its past and intimate its future' (2000: 166).

I state this ambivalence here partly to draw attention to the project of classification that lies at the heart of European integration; namely, how this redraws the distinction between citizens and the 'migrant other' around European Union borders (Anderson 2013). This can be seen at play in the politics of naming, where it is common for Europeans living outside their state of origin not to be labelled as migrants. Nevertheless, there are processes of racialisation at work within this project of European integration whereby some intra-European migrations are more prone to being racialised than others. This reveals the unequal stakes of member states and their constituent citizens within the project of Europeanisation. When focus shifts to considering migrations within Europe of those from more recently acceded states, race becomes a more obvious theme through which to understand experiences of settlement. Indeed, as scholars working with Polish, Romanian and Hungarian populations living in Western Europe have been keen to highlight, these communities have experienced considerable racism (Fox, Morosanu & Szilassy 2015), an experience exacerbated in the immediate aftermath of Britain's referendum on their membership of the European Union.

If we understand European integration as a project that embeds both class and racial formation, how might we think differently about the production of British (migrant) communities in Europe? Neither the European middle-class populations that signal the success of European integration, nor the racialised European minorities originating in the accession states, it is timely to bring out into the open the interplay of class and racial formation in the production of these British communities. As I discuss below, changing the conversation in this way renders visible the *constellations of privilege* that socially produce British migration within Europe, and in particular as these are articulated in and through lifestyle migration.

Whiteness, postcoloniality and British migrations to Europe

My focus here lies in bringing to the fore the social production of whiteness at play in the settlement of my interlocutors in rural France. The analysis presented here takes inspiration from scholars working on the intersections of whiteness, privilege and migration (Fechter 2007; Knowles 2005; Lehman 2014; Leonard 2010; Lundstrom 2014) alongside the recognition of the postcolonial inscriptions on the British countryside (Knowles 2008; K. Tyler 2003, 2012; Nayak 2010).

An initial entrée into this discussion is the assumptions that I have been presented with repeatedly in the many years I have been working with this migrant population. At academic conferences and in everyday conversation I am regularly asked—nay, told—that the reason that many British people move abroad can be explained very simply as 'white flight', leaving Britain because of a dissatisfaction with multiculturalism. On the one hand, this is a useful discourse to think with, it brings to the fore postcolonial nostalgia and the social production of whiteness that might serve well as the crux of my argument here. On the other hand, this rationalisation was rarely explicitly stated by my interlocutors; in fact, I can recall only one couple explaining their migration in these unapologetically xenophobic terms. More to the point, it was extremely common for my interlocutors to push back against characterisations such as this, mobilising within their narratives strong and derogatory statements about their compatriots—ordinarily located outside the Lot, in Spain, in the Dordogne—who did not try to integrate.

As I have argued elsewhere (Benson 2011), such rhetorical devices are more telling of the ways in which these Britons want to be seen than they are accurate depictions of other

British populations abroad. The actions and practices of many of interlocutors were a stark contrast to these caricatured populations; they revealed themselves as benign francophiles, with a genuine interest in the local history, the environment, and curiosity about the lives of their (French) neighbours. While on one level it is tempting to read this in terms that pit my interlocutors as diametrically opposed to the xenophobic Other, I argue that the narratives of these francophiles are wrought through the social production of white Britishness albeit in unremarked ways. Bringing this to the surface of the analysis below, I intend to draw attention precisely to the silence and invisibility of white privilege—persistent and insidious—to raise questions about how we might witness the social production of whiteness among these populations both in the way they speak of the landscape and the people within it.

Reading whiteness in the landscape

Within *post hoc* explanations, the landscape of the Lot—its sweeping vistas, dramatic limestone cliffs—was frequently identified as a significant motivation for moving to this part of rural France (see Benson 2010b, 2011). Here I want to turn attention back on to these representations to consider these as sites for the social production of white Britishness.

While initially presented as a beautiful view, my interlocutors directing my gaze to the tableaux framed by their windows, it became clear that these landscapes held deeper symbolic and moral significance that made clear associations between this landscape and the people who lived there. As Simon, a man in his forties who regularly commuted back to London for work explained to me over our *plat du jour* one lunchtime in my local café bar, '[S]outhern French culture, it's like stepping back into an England that you do remember as a child; it's very much like 50s/60s England, our social and cultural norms ... France represents something we've lost'. Such nostalgia was a common refrain and extended into discussion of the more relaxed pace of life and was often paired with the romantic depiction of a close knit local community with a simpler way of living. At first glance, rural France appears as the paradigmatic rural idyll for these British incomers (Buller and Hoggart 1994; Barou and Prado 1995; Benson 2011). However, as other scholars have identified (see for example Agyeman and Spooner 1997; Neal 2002; Cloke 2006), such depictions of the British countryside are notable for their whiteness. Katherine Tyler (2003, 2012) persuasively argues that these are postcolonial landscapes, constituted through class and racial formations. The neglect of these colonial legacies 'at home' (ibid 2012) persists into the

production of what Nayak has evocatively labelled as 'the silent cartography of whiteness' (2010: 2375), whiteness invisible and unremarked, insidiously and silently reproduced. In what proceeds I develop further an understanding of how class and racial formation might interplay and what this might reveal about the production of colonial legacies in British migration to Europe.

Integration and the conceit of belonging

As most of my interlocutors explained, the promise of local community was part of their inspiration for moving to rural France; they yearned for opportunities to participate in local life and were disappointed when this was difficult to realise, when those opportunities were not as forthcoming as they had hoped. Importantly, this ambition is more than just rhetoric; it is something that many of my interlocutors actively work towards, pushing back against stereotypes of the British abroad that present them as not integrating and forming expatriate enclaves. As they proudly recalled the latest invitation to local events—the local hunt dinner, the party in the town hall—or more private functions at the homes of the French neighbours, how they were learning about local history through walking in the local area with the locals, they celebrated their achievements in this area. In many ways, this valuation of the local echoes Savage et al.'s (2005) discussion of what happen to middle-class identities under globalisation; as they stress, belonging is claimed precisely through the choice to live in a particular location and the narration of this choice through biographies that demonstrate the 'fit' to this new place of residence. Indeed, read through this frame, the desire for and pursuit of the local is an almost textbook case of what Savage et al. (2005) label 'elective belonging'.

Returning to Simon's rationalisation of what rural France offers goes some way towards understanding how such claims to 'elective belonging' are wrought not only through class formation but also racial formation. Another lens onto this might be found precisely in thinking again about what claims to integration might reveal about the articulation of privilege. With this in mind, I turn to another example, this time focussed on a particular location, a small village up on the limestone plateau, a remote location that had witnessed a rapid depopulation as more and more local services were removed.

Once the local primary school had been shut young families could no longer continue to live in the area and as the remaining resident population became more elderly, there were fears that their traditions and their mere existence might be forgotten. Britons who lived in the

area described the village as 'dying out'; in this village of only just over ninety residents, the British population constituted ten per cent of the population. A shared joke between these Britons and their French neighbours was that the incoming British residents had significantly reduced the average age of the population, even though most of the British incomers were aged in their fifties and sixties. Keen to contribute to the area, to learn about local histories and ways of life, the Britons in this village participated in a shared project of village and community life and claimed the right to define themselves as locals.

Such claims to local belonging by the Britons in this village, just as in the case of their compatriots living in other parts of the Lot, sit alongside critiques of the failure of Others to integrate. The framing of the discussion of their compatriots was often framed around the visibility of these populations, those in the Dordogne and Spain featuring prominently; they regularly drew on a range of stereotypes common deployed to speak about expatriate populations—loudly shouting in English to make oneself understood, only socialising with other Britons (or English-speaking populations), not appreciating the locale and making 'little England' on foreign soil. The contrast between their willingness to take part in local life and these mythologised populations was marked.

Speaking of their compatriots in the Dordogne, one of the departments that bordered the Lot, my interlocutors made clear the stratification of the British middle classes as it mapped onto rural France. They regularly adopted recognisable stereotypes to describe this population describing the department through the moniker 'Dordogneshire', stressing that the cricket clubs, the Conservative club as signs that this population were more interested in the creation of a 'Little England' than in living in rural France. The motifs they used to describe their compatriots living on the Spanish coastline similarly focussed on their lack of integration and enclave living. However, where the former were depicted as colonial-style expatriates, the latter were presented as tourists destructive to the natural environment and Spanish way of life (Benson 2011). As I argue here, these contrasts in the ways that they depicted these Other British populations are telling of the way that they see and position themselves. Their descriptions of the British living in Spain, eerily resemble the wider stigmatisation of the working class that Lawler (2005) argues is central to middle-class identity formation; their descriptions of their neighbours in the Dordogne see them defining themselves in opposition to a social group who they see as occupying a higher social position

to them. What this identifies is the way in which, in speaking of these other British populations abroad, these migrants engaged in processes of class positioning.

While in the first instance this is projected onto Britons we can also read these as claims about what makes 'a good migrant'. The connotation here is that 'a good migrant' integrates, is invisible to the wider population—or rather, is indistinguishable. Importantly, the responsibility for becoming 'a good migrant' lies with the migrant. Substitute any ethnic minority population for their (white) British compatriots into these discussions and the discussion of integration becomes a far more problematic assertion.

This is a useful heuristic for thinking about the work that these representations of others are doing. Lawler's (2005) work on the way that the middle classes depict the working class, and what this does for them might be useful here in terms of considering how these representations of other Brits abroad feature within a project of middle-class reproduction. We should be asking questions, as scholars of British migration, about which populations are represented in these stigmatised and stereotyped terms.

Although it is beyond the scope of this chapter, simply put, my call here is to consider how representing certain British populations that live abroad as vulgar, uncouth, as racist, or as failing to integrate constructs these as persons lacking in morals and value (Skeggs 2004; Skeggs and Loveday 2011; Lawler 2005; I. Tyler 2013). Such moral judgements by my interlocutors can therefore be understood as claims to their position as persons of value. Claims to local belonging may be further telling, however, of the co-constitution of class and racial formation. In what follows, I present a brief account of the way that local people feature in my interlocutors' accounts of their integration into the local community.

Brushing over the diversity of this population, what was particularly celebrated in their benevolent presentation of their neighbours were uncomplicated and simple ways of living, as closer to nature, and close kin and community relations. These were the lives that these Britons hoped—naively and romantically—to emulate. As they settled into their lives in the Lot, they strove to make their lives in this image; they consulted their neighbours about what and when to plant their vegetables, they developed their knowledge and understanding of the local flora and fauna, some even joined in with local activities and events. Further, the commonly-held conceit that they were living 'like the locals' told of a lack of self-awareness

both in the vanity of assuming similarity and about the fact that they had taken the choice to live the way they did while many of their French neighbours did not have this luxury. Several of the migrants praised the quality of life for the longevity of a local farming population who worked into their old age. Reading this differently, for many of the local French who had lived in the Lot their whole lives, there was no other option but to continue working. Their children and grandchildren no longer lived locally, their farms needed to make money for them to afford to live. And as the ethnographers of rural French life have so clearly described, this life was hard (see for example Bourdieu 1962; Rogers 1991), not the 'lifestyle' gardening that many of the British chose to undertake.

Such idealisation of the native French population is part of the way through which Britishness is produced among this migrant population. We might interpret this in line with Aldridge's (1995) discussion of Peter Mayle's best-selling autobiography, *A Year in Provence* (1989), stressing that such representations of the local French—described by Mayle using the pejorative term *paysans* (literal translation: peasant)—are more revealing of how the British in rural France see themselves and want to be seen by others. Developing this further, what becomes clear is that identifying the local populations as the Other is both a project of classification and racialisation. Reading these alongside claims to integration reveals the ways in which class and racial formation co-constitute, and highlights the persistence of colonial legacies in the making of middle-class subjects (Skeggs 2004).

Conclusion

This chapter builds on my previous writings to provide timely and developed insights into the composition of privilege among British lifestyle migrants resident in rural France. As I have argued, the migration and settlement of Britons in rural France is best understood as a process that embeds both class and racialised formations. Where previous research highlighted the role of this migration in the social reproduction of the British middle classes on French soil, recognising that the social production of whiteness is inextricably caught up in this process opens a window onto the systemic and structural conditions that promote British migration to Europe.

Simply put, reading these migrations through the lens of privilege as multi-faceted construction reveals how colonial traces haunt Britons' conceptions of other European

landscapes and peoples. Pushing back against negative representations of the British abroad, my interlocutors reveal their sympathies and desires; yet it is precisely in this process that they also make visible their value for integration and what it means to be a 'good migrant'. Deconstructing this position reveals a more complex structure of privilege than class analysis alone might reveal.

Lauding the beauty of the depopulated French countryside on their doorsteps and mobilising nostalgia for 'the England of 50 years ago', they provide rationalisations for their migration and settlement in rural France. In this way, they appropriate rural France on their own terms, through the wholesale transfer of the white amnesia and colonial legacy inscribed on the British countryside.

Where class analysis has the potential to explain more about how the British abroad remain part of a transnational community of Britons, this is necessarily a project that becomes self-referential to the point of excluding the wider structural and systemic conditions that make British migration possible, framing the lives, actions and practices of these populations. The unremarked whiteness of British populations in Europe—unremarked precisely in consequence of the ideals of European integration and seeming lack of racialisation of this population vis-à-vis other European populations—paired with a focus on class formation, effectively silences analyses that might reveal how colonial legacies persist in the way that Britain and Britons view Europe.

The time is long overdue for a more systematic postcolonial analysis of British lifestyle migration to Europe. At its core, such an analysis should take seriously the emplacement of colonial legacies by British subjects onto European landscapes and peoples. This approach opens the space for a conversation about the (dis)continuities in British migrations the world over (Fechter and Walsh 2010). As I argue, thinking with the idea of privilege as a constellation shifts the focus from absolute understandings, and moves towards the recognition that privilege is constituted through a range of characteristics.

In the case of the British in Europe, this is a constellation that has included up until now European Citizenship, but which also connects with class and racial formations that have longer histories and residues. Questioning the constitution of this privilege going forward allows for the interrogation of the extent to which British migration to Europe rests on the

project of European integration and how privilege will be reshaped in the aftermath of Brexit. While up until now European citizenship has acted as a veritable dog star, the death of this star brought on by Britain's exit from the European Union might allow for the other stars to shine more brightly, for our analytic gaze to be refocussed on the complexity of the relative privilege that drives British migration to Europe.

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