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Shilpa's Filthy Hands

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ABSTRACT

The celebrity Big Brother race row centers, in part, on the preparation, handling and consumption of food. While the ritual of formal and informal dining is a key trope of the series, in this instance it is used to construct notions of difference and Otherness. Eating/not eating Indian becomes a symbol of purity and danger: of Shilpa's filthy natural self that somehow lurked beneath her glamorous exterior. If one eats Indian one is consuming the Other, with the potential to be taken over or spoiled by it. Shilpa, then, comes to stand for a complex and contradictory mix of Eastern/Oriental gender stereotypes. However, at the same time, the racialised grammar of representation used to mark her out as Other draws attention to the white bodies attempting to deny her wholeness. In choosing to eat/not eat Indian one opens up a dynamic space for an interrogation of whiteness to emerge. In fact, Jade, Jo, and Danielle become inferior signifiers of national identity in an age of global consumption. By contrast, Shilpa becomes 'surplus value', a supericonic sign that resists the name calling, fetishisation, marginalisation demanded by those on the show. The Big Brother race row may well be a text that directly speaks to the new post-colonial communication flows in place in the contemporary age.

KEYWORDS

Food - Otherness - Dirt - Contagion - Whiteness -
Celebrity

INTRODUCTION

In this article I will argue that the 2007 *Celebrity 1 Big Brotherrace* row centred, in part, on the preparation, handling, and consumption of food. While formal and informal dining is a key symbolic ritual in the series - a place of communal gathering,

gossip, and competition 'end games' - in this instance it was employed to establish racial difference and to construct the racial Other as unclean. White and British-born Jade, Jo and Danielle deciding to eat/not eat Indian became a symbol of bordered, racialised self identity, and a site of potential corporeal pollution if one tasted, touched, consumed the food prepared by foreign Shilpa's 'filthy hands'. If one ate Indian one was consuming the Other, taking it in, letting it become the fuel, the very dark matter of one's white, female self. Shilpa was being imagined, then, as possessing an essentialised dirtiness, or perverse inner 'spicy' vitality, that lurked beneath her glamorous exterior. In the series Shilpa came to stand for a complex and contradictory mix of Eastern/Oriental gender stereotypes: primitive and debased, unclean and carnal (tactile), and exotic and sexual. She became a liminal Stranger in the Big Brother Home.

However, at the same time, this Othering of Shilpa 2 actually drew attention to the 'trashy', docile, white bodies that name-called and bullied. Jade, Jo and Danielle's uneducated and spiteful abuse of Shilpa opened up a discursive space for an interrogation of British-ness, and of white racism. As fallen B-list celebrities with limited 'artistic' talent and, at for least for two of them, existing as mere eye-candy objects of Western sexual attraction, they became pale ('dull-dish') sexual and racial signifiers, particularly in comparison to Shilpa's Bollywood star signification. Shilpa's auratic quality and her educated and sensitive demeanour enabled her to transcend the stereotypes put on her by her racist co-contestants. In so-doing she registered as a 'surplus value' figure, a super-iconic sign that could not be penetrated by the name-calling.

In this sense the *Celebrity Big Brother* race row may 3 well be a text that makes a 'home' for the Other in the new transglobal community of multi-racial British-ness, where Chicken Tikka Masala is a national dish, and Bollywood blockbusters regularly make the box-office top ten (Redmond 2009). Nonetheless, I will also argue in this article that the comparative version of whiteness (white British-ness) that emerges in the series is a class-inflected one. Jade, Jo and Danielle stand in for the lower orders of white identity formation and ill-educated opinion formation (Hegde 2007). As such, Shilpa's upper-class, Raj-like iconicity is constructed on the borders of class and post-colonial national identification. As I will go on to conclude, her transcendence may very well reinforce hierarchies of class and race in a new world order of consumption hegemony.

The preparation and consumption of food is an 4
incredibly powerful form of symbolic exchange and
meaning-generation. As Mary Douglas (1966,
1972) argues, food choice and cultivation is
structurally indicative of social rules, dominant
norms and values, existing taboos around desire
and need, and identificatory boundaries concerned
with gender and race. When and what one eats
involves inclusionary and exclusionary decisions,
and the employment of imbedded classificatory
systems that designate certain food groups and
dining rituals as normal or civil, and as constituting
good self/group cultivating practice. Douglas
suggests that one key aspect of food consumption
is the avoidance of pollution, of not ingesting or
digesting something that will spoil, sully or make
unwell the self that is taking it in. Powerful food
taboos consequently emerge in which the
transgressive food act is placed on the margins of
cultural acceptability. For example, Showlater
notes that in the Victorian period many girls
refused to eat red meat because they associated it
with heavy menstruation, sexual activity, and
because they believed that a carnivorous appetite
ultimately lead to nymphomania and insanity
(Showalter 1985, p. 129). According to Fischler
(1988), food consumption involves the often
conscious act of incorporation, or 'the action in
which we send a food across the frontier between
the world and the self, between outside and inside
our body'. Food consumption is not just the act of
ingestion, then, but the symbolic construction of
self identity. As Jean-Paul Sartre suggests:

To eat is to appropriate by
destruction; it is at the same time to
be filled up with a certain being...
When we eat we do not limit
ourselves to knowing certain qualities
of this being through taste; by tasting
them we appropriate them. Taste is
assimilation... The synthetic intuition of
food is in itself an assimilative
destruction. It reveals to me the being
which I am going to make my flesh.
Henceforth, what I accept or what I
reject with disgust is the very being of
that existent (Sartre 1966, p. 23).

In Western society, food classification and taste 5
distinction is very often gendered. For example,
milk, eggs, seeded vegetables, sweet tasting
products, chicken and fish are considered to be
feminine, and femininity inducing. Red meat, of
course, is masculine, and supposedly contributes
to the fashioning of the prototypical hard body.
Similarly, the eating/not eating regime that many
Western women put themselves through to ensure
they have slender bodies is a part of what Chernin

(1983) terms the 'tyranny of slenderness' produced by a patriarchal, heterosexist culture that demands a certain type of female body size. Low calorie, low carbohydrate diets become a form of gender inscription in which the thin body speaks of not just culinary abstinence but embodied compliance for the male gaze.

One can usefully extend the inner/outer dichotomy 6 of ingestion and digestion to racialised 'us' and 'them' binaries in which difference is constructed out of what the Other eats, how they eat, and how they prepare and handle food (Lupton 1996, p. 25-26). In this respect, one can profitably apply Levi Strauss' (1966) culinary triangle to the construction and maintenance of racial difference, particularly in terms of the Eastern/Oriental Other. For Strauss, culture in general involves fundamental structural oppositions which get represented in food myths through two polarities: nature/culture, and elaborated/unelaborated. When and how one cooks determines its transition from the raw (natural) into the cooked (culture), and its place in a hierarchy of civility. Food that isn't cooked, or which is only partially cooked, as is the case with roasting, is closer to nature and is as a consequence more primitive in its culinary preparation (although Strauss suggests that this isn't always an indicator of lower order sensibility). In relation to dominant racist myths that exist in relation to South Asians eating their food with fingers, undercooking food, and adding spices and condiments to excite the palette, one can see how Western food preparation and handling can be diametrically opposed to the 'raw' and 'primitive' rituals of the Other. In terms of the implements for eating - sharp, penetrating cutlery in the West; fingers, spoons and chop-sticks in the East - one can see from a Western-centric perspective the construction of a civilised/primitive dichotomy in which the Other's lower order appreciation of food is based on mauling, chewing, biting and fingering. Connected to this 'savage' food aesthetic is what is represented to be the over-determination of sensation, texture and taste, with the exotic foods, flavours and culinary practices of the East. Eastern cuisine resides in the belly and bowels, in the primordial part of human nature. Obviously, to consume this food, to partake in both the raw handling and ingestion of Eastern food types is to not only invite the stranger in but to be transformed *in flesh*.

Sara Ahmed (2000) has written persuasively on 7 how the proximity of the stranger simultaneously produces and confirms difference, and causes anxiety. When the stranger gets close (when they move into our neighbourhoods, schools, workplaces, when we consume *their* food) we are able to recognise (and expel) our difference to

them:

Others become strangers (the ones who are distant), and Other cultures become 'strange cultures' (the ones who are distant), only through coming too close to home, that is, through the proximity of the encounter or 'facing itself' (Ahmed 2000, p. 12)

Jones suggests that the establishment of ethnic 8 difference also occurs through food-based slurs which, 'not only denigrate others but also dehumanize the Other... as in such ethnophaulisms for Germans, French, English, and Indochinese as Krauts, frogs, limeys, and fish heads' (Jones 2007, p. 129-177). Economic power and status is inscribed through food choice, cooking method and dining ritual (Bourdieu 1977, 1984). Meal combinations, the cut of the meat and the size of the spread can indicate social class as well as economic success. For example, Jones has suggested that the fat or plump body size for Black American women has been read as an indicator that they had overcome poverty and racism. By contrast, the image of the starving African, unable to propagate the land, unable to cultivate their own food, unable to feed their own mouths, suggests a first world/third world binary in which the West's success is measured by its ability to feed its populace. Ethnic identification through culinary practice can have empowered effects, however. For example, Beoku-Betts (1995) suggests that diaspora groups use traditional cooking methods and 'handed down' recipes to keep memories and traditions alive. The immigrant keeps a connection alive with their homeland through the practice of preparing, and the act of tasting, traditional cuisine.

Nonetheless, in the global age of the trade and 9 traffic in world goods, trinkets, electronics, fashion, tourist destinations, foodstuffs and recipes, the taking in, or the 'tasting' of the stranger is much more of a common occurrence. Susan Willis (1990) suggests that there has been a generalised aestheticization of race within consumer culture. No longer represented as a matter of natural or biological difference, racial difference is instead turned into a style that one can consume like any other commodity of choice. Pietrese (1995) terms this transformation the 'creolization of global culture'. In fact, consumption hybridization, the folds and flow of regional, ethnic, national identities, may suggest in part that 'home' and 'away', 'us' and 'them' have been brought together in a complex if uneven and contradictory fusion of cultural material. For example, 'British-ness' today includes a whole range of diaspora practices, including food and entertainment signifiers, and

the very spaces and locales of shopping, worship and festival. Britain's national imaginary is composed of *stranger-now-friend*, *other-now-me* symbols and signs, with food/cooking/eating one of the central places of this transformation - although, as I will go on to argue, multi-racial Britain 'pimps' only that which it can easily digest (the safe, home-grown aspects of the stranger) and expels or transcodes that which threatens the nation (the foreign-foreigner). The culture of food, then, is a powerful way in which a society communicates its power geometries, identificatory systems, taste distinctions and national and ethnic divisions and relations. In the contemporary age, television has become one of the key sites for its representation.

TELEVISION FOOD

One could divide the myriad of current food,¹⁰ cooking, tasting and eating programmes into a number of thematic and ideological divisions. There is the food programme that invites us to *cultivate our senses* in relation to the choosing of the finest fresh and natural ingredients. In these programmes - which would include *Rick Stein's Mediterranean Escapes*, BBC TV, 2007 - the viewer sees and hears spices, condiments, vegetables, fruits, breads, and meat being touched, smelt, weighed, and tasted, as if the senses are a direct way to a more cultured appreciation of food. But this natural food, which we are encouraged to buy in open markets, and which we subsequently cook (turn into culture), is particularly important, it is suggested, in an age of processed food, genetic modification, and large-scale industrial production of crops. The raw can only be found outside of culture but then needs to be brought back (cooked) into culture for it to sustain us fully and help make or keep us civil.

The *healthy food* programme is concerned with¹¹ nutritional balance, calorie intake, and cooking and handling measures. Its concern is with shaping the perfect body, or with reducing, reshaping it from an imagined obese state. Such programmes encourage the viewer to eat healthily as a way out of a society that eats too much, and yet it promotes consumption and body surveillance as necessary and productive modes of behaviour. In the healthy food programme meat is lean, chicken skinned and grilled, and the chosen ingredients are low in fats and high in nutritional value. The viewer is asked to shop for lean cuisine and to regulate their intake accordingly. The healthy food programme offers the viewer a sleight of hand in their examination of cooking, then: seemingly anti-consumption and pro the self/free choice, these programmes in fact attempt to instil a more disciplined purchasing regime, and to create a

more disciplined eater, one who will be fit enough to work, and who will subsequently work to consume. Programmes such as *Food Detectives* play out this practice of dietary surveillance, putting shops, restaurants, and eaters under the lens, prophesising on and good and bad food habits.

By contrast, the *celebration and ritual* food¹² programmes, such as Jamie Oliver's *The Naked Chef*, encourage hearty eating, communal and public get-togethers where food is to be enjoyed. Images and aesthetic sequences of prepared food steaming, dripping, crumbling, melting, is meant to activate the senses (the juices) of the viewer. The star chef revels in the eating and tasting of the produce, often re-enacting the public ritual of shared and celebratory dining when the meal has been cooked. In this bawdy, carnival-like, pleasurable celebration of eating, cooking becomes a relief, or an escape from normal, everyday routine. Cooking becomes a sensuous doorway into community exchange.

In the *home food* television programme, cooking is¹³ timed and spatialised in terms of the work/school/domestic sphere. Food preparation and cooking is carried out with speed and accuracy. And yet meal/family time is meant to be distinct from work and school, which is defined by the segmentation, routinisation, and commodification of time. Home food television programmes prepare family meals that are quick and convenient to produce in the domestic kitchen. The nuclear family are the imagined diners and the dining table the venue (although there are those programmes that 'cook' TV dinners, or prepare meals for those 'on the run'). Implicitly, there is a gendered division of labour implied in these programmes with the woman/mother located as the cook, and the home a feminine refuge from the woes of the day.

In the *food and travel* programmes, cooking¹⁴ involves a literal and metaphorical journeying process. In the company of an experienced chef, the viewer travels to far off destinations to see, taste and smell the food and cooking rituals of (an) other culture. On the UK Food channel in 2008 two programmes invite such cuisine travelling:

Kylie Kwong: My China

Join chef and restaurateur Kylie Kwong on a personal and inspirational odyssey as she returns to the land of her ancestors.

Antonio Carluccio's Southern Italian feast

A gastronomic odyssey with the

convivial Italian. On the menu in Puglia are sausages with roasted pepper sauce, and fresh bread with salami and baked cheese.

In *My China*, the diaspora chef returns to her¹⁵ homeland to find the cuisine, and the origins of her Chinese identity, amongst tourist images of her 'homeland'. Food, chef, and cuisine are fetishised and packaged for the viewers watching, and distance and proximity are established through its home/away binary. In *Southern Italian feast*, 'Italian-ness' is apart of the mythological landscape of the programme. We can taste Italy by eating the food prepared for us by the authentically-named Antonio.

While there is often a welcome embrace of cuisine¹⁶ difference in these programmes (the chef revels in the conventions they stumble upon), there is also a degree of 'stranger fetishism' (Ahmed 2000). The different ingredients, cooking methods, food handling and preparation rituals are seized upon to both designate the other as Other, and to consume them in a devouring manner. Nonetheless, the spicy/rich/hot/exotic/hyper-natural qualities of the cuisine are also seen as positively transformative – by ingesting and digesting this food it is suggested one gets the longevity (of say, the Japanese) or the sexual vitality (of say, the Indians) imagined to reside in the Other's cuisine. The 'tourist gaze' here becomes the food gaze, but this gaze is a haptic one, where we touch-taste with our eyes. Practically, it manifests as an embodied, incorporative way in which one internally experience cultures through the eating of their cuisine. The 'strange' is imagined to give the consumer both a more intense life experience, an experience that is hard to match within Western culture, and symbolic power over the Other. As Jackie Stacey suggests:

By consuming global products, the Western subject and the exotic other are thus reaffirmed even as such a dichotomy is apparently transcended by the appeal to a universal global culture (Stacey 2000, p.104)

The *food competition* programme involves a flexible¹⁷ format in which the best amateur or professional cook or chef wins, or in which food is itself the prize on the way to greater glory. Depending on the programme, the cook/chef will be given limited ingredients and limited time with which to prepare a meal (*Ready, Steady, Cook*), or they will be asked to prove themselves over a longer period, with the weekly prospect of elimination if they don't make the grade (*Hell's Kitchen*). These formats herald the success myth, that hard work, talent, and

perseverance will be rewarded (with a prize, an accolade, a *restaurant of your own* at the end of the competition), and they propagate the ethos that competition (for/over food) is a natural motivator and selector.

In terms of those formats in which contestants go through competitive trials and tribulations with food the prize if they succeed, the survival instinct is called upon to motivate them, with the primordial message, compete or go hungry. At the same time, this format taps into the crisis over the artificial and industrial production of food and our relationship to it. One is reminded of food's relative scarcity, and what it means to have to 'hunt' for it in the 'wild'. One is asked to understand food in raw/cooked, fresh/rotten, dead/alive, elaborated/unelaborated polarities, but with a degree of confusion over where the eater should place themselves. Raw/rotten and dead/alive foods are represented as 'trial', and as ethnic or tribal 'delicacy'.

This dichotomy is particularly foregrounded when celebrities are asked to compete for food (as is the case with the Bush Tucker Trial in *I'm A Celebrity Get Me out of Here*, and the 'tasks' in *Celebrity Big Brother*). Notionally wealthy, uber signifiers of conspicuous consumption, the celebrities' race for food turns them from plastic icons into natural (authentic) survivalists. The celebrity appears stripped bare of artifice, and this stripping away of the manufactured ego extends right into the phenomenological self where what they eat determines how *real* they are. Those celebrities who refuse the challenge, who resist taking in the raw and the rotten, or the dead and the live, often fail in the eyes of other contestants, and voting viewers. The 'fake' celebrity shows their true colour when they refuse to take in natural/ordinary/uncooked food. When they refuse to be animal/human in this game of high stakes they get voted off (with the ironic prospect of a fall in celebrity status).

According to Mary Douglas (1972), anxiety around food and consumption, and the body's weight and size, occurs at a time of social change and crisis. Food, cooking, diet and dieting take on an increasing sense of importance when identity is in flux or its borders under threat. In the contemporary world where global capitalism has changed the nature of how one defines or experiences the Nation State, and the cultural material out of which the national imaginary is fashioned, the *Celebrity Big Brother* scandal of 2007 draws attention to the way food preparation, handling, and cooking is a key marker in this crisis of self and nation.

Celebrity Big Brother organises its daily routines²¹ around two recurring, key events; cooking and dining; and the fulfilment of the designated task (which is often connected to 'shopping' and the granting of comfort foods if one is successful). Shopping, cooking and meal time is an important social and narrative event in the *Celebrity Big Brother* home. Housestars use it to socialise, gossip, flirt, reminisce, joke, argue/bitch, engineer a party or drinking session, form allegiances and alliances, and to (naturally) perform their celebrity personas for the cameras/viewers (who also get to vicariously cook and eat with the famous few).

Narratively speaking, the ritual of shopping,²² cooking and eating creates a series of storylines and story arcs, develops 'characters' and character interaction, and presents ethical and moral dilemmas. In fact, the dining ritual creates a context in which the housestars become a (dysfunctional) family unit, with hierarchical roles, divisions, and archetypal role traits (such as peacemaker, sulker, outcast, and attention-seeker), which may be race, class, and gender inscribed (Jade Goody as 'the bitch' would be a case in point).

The daily task also works narratively. Given a²³ difficult quest to complete, that may involve direct competition, and with a prize granted for its successful completion, the housestars are placed within a narrative pattern in which they are asked to 'work' for a living. Those celebrities who refuse to work, or who don't work hard enough (because, by implication, they are too removed from the ordinary world) incur the wrath of the other housestars. Success with the task is akin to a 'happy ending', and key protagonists in the success or failure of the task are labelled as heroes and villains. In a different sense, success in the completion of the task enables them to have their celebrity personas confirmed, and they undergo a re-celebrification.

Nonetheless, In *Celebrity Big Brother* the²⁴ home/work division that normally structures everyday life is decentred. While the task fulfils part of the function of (rewarded) activity, its more open-ended nature (its loose employment of the capitalist clock) means that there is more empty time (even for a 'celebrity') than in the real world. Given that leisure opportunities are limited, and one cannot freely consume, cooking becomes a double-edged activity. On the one hand it productively fills up this time, allowing the celebrity to show their hands as good cooks. On the other, it designates the celebrity a cook, a servant in the *Celebrity Big Brother* home. Of course, when the task itself involves a Master and Servant dichotomy

(as was the case in 2007), the dining ritual itself takes on an added significance.

A celebrity generally arrives at the Big Brother²⁵ home with a dominant persona or iconic signification that the public know or knew well. They arrive with an intertextually mediated history, with one strand often involving a fall from grace or favour – the reason, although generally not stated, for them 'arriving' in the Big Brother home in the first place. The housestars are meant to be an eclectic mix of personalities, chosen in part because their differing personas will make good TV. The conventional format is that they will clash and conflict - warring, damaged celebrities is one of the central reasons that the programme does so well (in fact, in 2007 its ratings were at its highest during the Shilpa affair). *Celebrity Big Brother*, then, involves a conflict-driven, personality-centred narrative in which cooking and dining becomes one of the key arenas for disputes and differences to emerge.

In 2007, of course, the programme's rhetoric of²⁶ damage and rancour was complicated and amplified through the appearance of Shilpa Shetty. Not a celebrity but an Indian film star; privately educated; of upper-class background; and largely unknown to both her fellow housestars and the wider British public (although in the Asian communities she was a household name), her 'difference' is of immediate and notable significance. For Jade, Jo, and Danielle, Shilpa came to represent the Other as threat and contagion. On the one hand, she was, and supposedly 'lauded' in being, the image of Indian feminine perfection, the personification of a Raj Princess, and the embodiment of a new self-confident India. She was a global star next to their 'domesticated' celebrification. On the other, she was disease and virus, an embodied threat to Jade, Jo and Danielle's white-British selves. Of course both the fetishisation and defilement of Shilpa drew attention to Jade, Jo, and Danielle's racism, and to their working-class, uneducated, 'lower-order' femininity. In almost every respect, cooking and dining became the battleground for the soul of British femininity, the national imaginary, and the trade and traffic in global consumption.

In one sense Shilpa *became* foreign food, for the²⁷ most part embodying its raw and rotten state, or else she became the cook or the dog (a different type of lower order animal, and one that gets cooked and eaten according to the racialised mythology of the East). Jade's name-calling repeatedly connected Shilpa to food, service, or colonial slavedom. Shilpa was 'Shilpa Poppadom', 'Shilpa Fuckawallah', 'Shilpa Daroopa', and 'Shilpa Papadum'. Jade's mother, Jackie Budden,

repeatedly referred to Shilpa as 'the Indian' because, according to her, she was unable to pronounce her name. On Days 11 and 12 of the series, Jo and Danielle mocked Shilpa's accent. Danielle referred to Shilpa as a 'dog', commented that she 'can't even speak English properly anyway', and told Jo that she thought Shilpa should 'fuck off home'. In a conversation with Danielle, kick-started because she believed that Shilpa had undercooked the chicken she had been preparing, Jo generalised that all Indians were thin because they were 'sick all the time' as a result of undercooking their food. Danielle generalised, 'they eat with their hands in India' and 'you don't know where those hands have been'. The most ferocious example of Stranger-as-Other other was, of course, the Oxo incident - in which a row emerges between Jade and Shilpa over the use of Oxo cubes in a pasta dish, it being the key ingredient to a meal Shilpa is subsequently preparing.

What is of interest in this nearly eight-minute row²⁸ is the way the verbal assault that Jade unleashes on Shilpa oscillates between revulsion of her body as foreign-fake, as fantasy-foreign heroine, and as foreign-primitive. Near the beginning of the row Jade taunts, 'not only are you fake but you are a liar', a refrain she repeatedly picks up again during the course of the attack. The idea of performance, of Shilpa being something else, was a slur initiated by Jade earlier in the series when she suggested that Shilpa (after bleaching her facial hair) '...wants to be white...she makes me feel sick... she makes my skin crawl'. This idea of passing, of the stranger becoming like me, haunts Jade's Indianphobia, as it has done in much of the Western imagination. Jade 'suspects' that the real Shilpa is dirty, that she is 'matter-out-of-place', and so the interrogation that takes place in the Oxo row is an attempt to reveal the dirty Indian that lies beneath the glamorous mask. Jade is charging, summoning, questioning, and finding guilty the 'real' Shilpa as if she is the embodiment of white law.

Historically, as Vera and Gordon suggest, 'white²⁹ privilege includes the privilege to temporarily change one's colour, to masquerade as non-white' (2003, p. 120). Vera and Gordon use the example of 'racial masquerade' by whites in American film to explore what they see as an impossible fantasy solution both to the 'lack of life' at the core of whiteness and to the racial guilt experienced by whites in relation to the Other. According to Vera and Gordon:

The fantasy played out in most white race-switching movies is an adult male fantasy of reversion to boyhood or

adolescence, when the white self was free to play Indian or black. These white male heroes temporarily descend into an exotic racial underworld and assume the imagined qualities of the racial other... only to return at the end to the security of the white bourgeois world. The white passing for another person of another race is, in effect, indulging in voyeurism, liberal slumming, and cultural tourism (p. 117).

When the Other tries to pass as white, however,³⁰ the journey is very often a tragic one – the racial passing text very often requiring an inquisitor who finds out the ‘truth’ about she or he who is not racially pure. The outcome is violent and destructive. Jade is placing herself within this particular framework of meaning, hoping that in ‘outing’ Shilpa she will be banished (evicted) from the Big Brother home.

And yet, Jade also proclaims that Shilpa is a³¹ *real* Princess, but that she has to be ordinary (like her) while in the house. Jade shouts, ‘You might have been some princess in fucking never never land but I don’t give a shit...you’re not no fucking princess here, you’re a normal housemate like everyone else’. I think this ironic ‘idealisation’ of the other works in complex ways here. First, it recognises the hierarchy that one finds existing in star and celebrity personas. Shilpa is an international movie star, her success based on merit, on being a ‘talented actress’. By contrast, Jade is a minor or domestic celebrity, ‘well-known simply for being well known’. Second, it works on the fear of the Other as national and international success, creating both a New Britain, and an international imaginary, in which India’s Tiger economy, its diaspora children, its religion, culture and arts, lead the way, transforming the ‘home’ space in profound ways. Jade needs Shilpa to be ordinary so that the global/local threat she represents can be diminished or vanquished. Finally, it works to foreground the contradictions of femininity that may well transcend ethnic lines. Shilpa is ideally beautiful and an ideal woman who is mannered and compliant. In many ways, it is every girl’s heterosexual dream to be like Shilpa - perfectly formed, thin, and flowing in movement and gesture – a woman who will marry a Prince and live in a Fairy Castle. Jade is conjuring up a barely conscious cultural reading of the perfect female but this patriarchal fairytale haunts and horrifies her because her own femininity – according to heterosexist culture - has failed. Attacked by the British press for being fat, thick, uncouth and ugly, Jade reviles at this image of beauty that she can never attain. This is a fear

also articulated by Jo: the thinness of Indian women, an embodied state she would like to attain if the patriarchal script writes her thinking, is dealt with through it being diagnosed as an illness brought on by inadequate cooking methods. Thin Indian women are not cultured as such but raw and uncooked.

Jade's revulsion of Shilpa (a projection of her own³² revulsion of self) thus gets quickly articulated as shit, vomit, and skin-crawling. Jade blazes, 'You are so stuck up your own arse you can't see anything... you are so far up your own arse you can smell your own shit... No it don't smell of roses, it smells of shit'. Shilpa thus moves from being an object/subject of passing, to being the real feminine ideal, to the foreign-foreigner whose body and ethical centre resides in the manufacture of excrement. Jade tries to expulse the dog-like Shilpa through arguing that Shilpa shits through her mouth. Of course, for much of the media representation of the row, it is Jade that is talking 'shit'. Vilified and ridiculed in the press for her stupidity, ignorance, and aggressive bullying she quickly became the Other to Shilpa's embodiment of multi-racial ideals. Shilpa supposedly spoke for the contemporary age in which multi-racial assimilation is the key to a Nation's success.

At the core of the primitivism and easternisation of³³ Shilpa, then, is a complex interplay of conflicting forces. While there is savage critique of the Other, there is also dissatisfaction with, and alienation from, the limitations of the white feminine self and a secret (shameful) desire to be like the woman that Shilpa is imagined to be. Britain's own sense of its national identity, and its place in the global world, is symbolically projected onto Jade, Jo and Danielle's crude and offensive musings. As Nandana Bose suggests, 'the nation's collective anxieties about racism, xenophobia, and ethnic prejudice were displaced onto the figure of Goody who became the stranger-enemy' (Bose 2007, p. 464). By contrast, Britain's identification with Shilpa becomes:

The embodiment off its true national values, and its rejection of Goody as its unique self is a complex moment in the cultural politics of globalization, when the former empire must look for its 'real' image in its postcolonial subject.' (Zacharias and Arthurs 2007, p. 451)

This 'real image' though is as much an Othering³⁴ one, helping to sustain the signifiers of difference. Shilpa's transportable and easily digestible Indian-ness was based upon her upper-class, passive femininity.

Jackie Stacey argues that a perceived lack of 'spirituality' in the West is also key to the way 'eastern nature' functions 'as the source of potent fantasies of an Edenic nature' (Stacey 2000, p. 122). Stacey suggests that this is best understood in terms of the growth in the new markets of self-health and in Eastern religions. They offer the Westerner a different vision of the 'meaning of life, death and God' (p. 122) to the one offered up in Christian teaching and scientific rationalism. Stacey argues that easternisation needs to be understood in terms of global culture and the process through which the subject is placed as part of a global order. Self-health philosophies and Eastern religions decree that 'all living things' are 'connected within one "natural-spiritual" system' (p. 124), a system that embraces the whole planet. 'Read in this way, we might suggest that, according to an easternised version of nature, the global is already within' (ibid: 125). In many ways, finally, Shilpa functions as feminised edenic ideal, not smelling or tasting of shit, then, but coming up roses. She connects herself to the global system in which the images, products, and services of Otherness circulate and reverberate in both symbolic and hard cultural form. The national and international furore over the *Celebrity Big Brother* row led to a 'healing' process, ultimately culminating in Shilpa and Jade becoming friends. Shilpa's easternisation then is a panacea for the lack of life in the West, and one that is easily purchased over the counter.

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