



CELEBRITY COLONIALISM

Fame, Power and Representation
in Colonial and Postcolonial Cultures

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POPPADOMS, PRINCESSES, AND PRIVILEGE: (NEO)COLONIAL RACISM IN THE *CELEBRITY BIG BROTHER* HOUSEHOLD

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Writing on the topic of “celebrity colonialism” requires consideration of how colonialism continues to be reconfigured. More specifically, examinations of the “colonial” in “celebrity colonialism” must pay specific attention to the ways in which ongoing acts of empire (and the racial hierarchies they evoke) enact neo-colonialisms that assume a guise of inclusiveness, but which perpetuate colonial hierarchies. Importantly, however, it is necessary to recognise the existence of postcolonial challenges to neo-colonialisms that may occur in the celebrity sphere. The 2007 UK series of *Celebrity Big Brother* provides an opportunity to examine these various functions of celebrity colonialism as they played out between British and Indian housemates. Usha Zacharius and Jane Arthurs neatly summarise the events that occurred as follows:

In January 2007, the UK reality show, *Celebrity Big Brother*, became the center of a political controversy when Jade Goody, a previous winner of *Big Brother*, and two other [British] contestants were accused of racial bullying of Shilpa Shetty, Bollywood film star and winner of the 2007 show. Goody and others coined ethnocentric and racist neologisms to describe Shetty’s cooking, her eating habits, and her nationality which resulted in the show attracting thousands of viewer complaints. The whole issue took on political dimensions in both India and Britain when Keith Vaz, a Labour MP of Indian origin, tabled a motion in the House of Commons criticizing the show’s racism, and Indian commerce minister Kamal Nath and others brought up the issue with visiting British chancellor Gordon Brown. In the controversy that followed, the British press went on the attack against Goody to defend not only Shetty but Britain’s image as a tolerant, multicultural society. (455)

The “ethnocentric and racist neologisms” that Goody and two other contestants (Danielle Lloyd and Jo O’Meara) deployed in their attacks upon Shetty attracted considerable attention. Due to the fact that these

actions were primarily blamed upon the three British women as individual people, there was little attendant focus upon the broader social context of a nation that whilst being constituted by a “multicultural” population, is far from “tolerant.” As the issues surrounding the 2007 UK *Celebrity Big Brother* are complex in regards to the colonialisms that they evoked, multiple interventions into their racial politics are required. Viewing the interactions between the British housemates and Shetty as a prime example of racism-in-action provides us with one way of reading claims to “tolerance” on the part of the British nation for the violence that they mask. Moreover, reading the episode as evoking a particularly *colonial* racism—one in which the British women actively constructed Shetty as “from the colonies,” while reifying stereotypical colonial constructions of the non-British other—is as important as examining the postcolonial resistances performed by Shetty.

This chapter provides a critical discursive analysis of how the British housemates in general, and Goody in particular, engaged in enactments of racism that may be read as informed by a colonialist interpretation of India and Indian-British relations. These primarily centred upon the construction of difference as solely pertaining to Shetty as an Indian woman, but extended to the management of the identities of the British housemates, and Goody specifically. It also outlines how particular constructions of difference within the household appear to result, at least in part, from an inability on the part of the British housemates to understand the functions of racial privilege and its role in perpetuating hierarchies. Having outlined some of the instances in which racism occurred, and how this was managed, the chapter outlines an account of racism within the *Big Brother* household that sees it as being a product of class as well as cultural difference between the housemates.

Colonial Constructions of Racial Difference

There were many instances during *Celebrity Big Brother 2007* in which Goody’s treatment of Shetty reflected the deployment of colonialist notions of “race” and culture. In so doing, Goody’s actions draw attention to the ongoing saliency of empire and the construction of cultural differences between India and the UK as warranting the treatment of Indian citizens in ways that demonstrate the cultural hierarchies (and accompanying stereotypes) that continue to shape relations between the two nations. As the following extract highlights, Goody’s response to being reprimanded by *Big Brother* in the diary room for her use of a racist

neologism involved her going to great lengths to justify her use of cultural categories in clearly discriminatory ways:

Big Brother: Jade, earlier today in a conversation with Danielle, Big Brother heard you refer to Shilpa as ‘Shilpa Fuckawallah,’ ‘Shilpah Diroopah’ and ‘Shilpa Poppadom.’

Goody: Yeah, cos I couldn’t think of her surname, and I was like ‘I don’t know who she is [...] I don’t even know what her surname is—what is it ‘Shilpa Quacamala,’ ‘Shilpa Wahcamala’ and ‘Shilpa Popadom.’ It was just like that, literally just like that, just came out like that.

Big Brother: Jade, why did you refer to her in this way and do you think it is acceptable?

Goody: ‘Shilpa Poppadom’—I’ll explain why I referred to her like that [...] It obviously, it ain’t, her name ain’t ‘Shilpa Harris,’ or ‘Shilpa Tweed’ or ‘Shilpa MacIntosh.’ It isn’t—she’s Indian so she’s obviously got, her name’s Shilpa so she’s obviously gonna have an Indian name. There was no thought or no racial thought or anything meant in any of those comments. It is not in me to be racial about somebody or to somebody because I wouldn’t. It’s just a tongue in cheek ‘Shilpa Poppadom’—it wasn’t, if it has offended any Indians out there I apologise, but everyone knows that I don’t like her [...] But what I said about her was not meant in a racial way or in any other way to offend anybody. So no, it’s not acceptable if it was done in that way, but mine wasn’t done in that way. Mine wasn’t even thought of in that way, at all, and I promise you that. (Day 15: 18/01/07)

Goody’s justification for her use of three culturally offensive terms appears to be the very fact of cultural difference—if Shetty has what Goody defines as an Indian first name, she will, by default, have an Indian (sounding) surname. Thus, Goody views her use of an Indian food type (“poppadom”) to be an appropriate approximation of an Indian surname. One need only think of this logic being used in reverse (e.g. Jade Yorkshire Pudding) to recognise that it is nonsensical and culturally offensive. Furthermore, in using “poppadom” to signify “India,” Goody is indeed making a “racial” comment: she is using racial categories as a way to mark difference. Whilst it must be recognised that Goody appears to use the terms “racial” and “racist” interchangeably throughout her time both within the house and subsequent to her eviction, her denial even of “racial thinking” does not hold when compared to the fact that in “creating” a surname for Shetty based on outsider knowledge of Indian cultures, Goody draws on a term that is racially marked, thus contradicting her supposition that her use of the term “wasn’t even thought of in that [racist/racial] way.”

Goody's use of racialised terminology is also evident in her assumption that Indian culture can be represented by a homogenous descriptor. She assumes that Shetty *must* have an "Indian name," and her attempt at formulating such a name demonstrates a very narrow image of what constitutes the descriptor "Indian." Indian culture is seen by Goody as internally homogenous, and thus open to simplistic interpretations by non-Indian people. Such assumptions of out-group homogeneity have historically been central to the operations of colonisation and its universalist depiction of those located outside the heart of empire as culturally inferior (Hook). Goody's construction of Shetty's name (and her account of doing this) may thus be seen as informed by a cultural context in which Indian people are always already understood as cultural others whose identities and experiences can be stereotypically accounted for—the centrality of the British subject in a colonising worldview is never challenged in this reading of what constitutes the category "Indian."

Goody's construction of India as *the* site of difference (marked outward from the seat of empire) is more explicit in the following extract, in which she informs Shetty of her use of the term "Shilpa Poppadom." Here, too, Goody denies any racist intent, yet in so doing reiterates the colonialist framework that informs her understanding of cultural differences:

Goody: It's obvious we don't get on and we see things from very different eyes. But you are from a very different background completely, and, and I am from a different background completely.

Shetty: But I don't blame your background so why do you blame mine?

Goody: No, no, I'm not blaming your background I'm just saying that we do, you know, we do see things differently ... I just want you to know Shilpa I am not a racist and when I said that ["Shilpa Poppadom"] the other day it wasn't said in any form of racist but when big brother read it back to me I thought "I cannot have her hear that and think that I am racist" because.

Goody: Yes but you've said that and it's going to be out, and Indians have heard it, and trust me, it's not going to go down well [...]. (Day 16, 19/1/07)

Goody introduces "difference" as the potential reason why the two women did not "get on"—that they "see things from very different eyes." It is important to note that Goody does indeed mark her own difference ("I am from a different background completely"), but she adds this as a somewhat hesitant follow-up to her statement that "you are from a *very* different background completely"—the noticeable difference being the use

of the descriptor “very” in her attribution of difference to Shetty. Shetty appears to recognise this differential use of reference to “background” with the question “why do you blame [my background]?”, which Goody denies that she is blaming, yet still reiterates the role of difference in their not getting on.

Goody then moves on from her explicit deployment of “difference” to warrant her behaviour, and instead attempts to clarify her use of a term (“Shilpa Poppadom”) that appears explicitly racist, while claiming that she is indeed “not a racist.” In so doing, Goody appears to equate racism with an explicit desire to hurt—racism, in her books, does not underpin the use of terms that may well be read as offensive, and which are most certainly premised upon an understanding of difference as *racial difference*. In response, Shetty draws attention to the racialised underpinnings of Goody’s argument, when she marks that it is “Indians [who] have heard it.” Despite Goody’s protestations to the contrary, Shetty reads Goody’s use of a term that references her own culture as discriminatory. As such, in this interaction we can see difference being deployed by Goody in ways that implicitly mark Shetty as *the* site of difference—a markedly colonial reading of Indian/British cultural difference. At the same time, Goody is invested in denying any possible accusations of racism, yet she cannot help but reiterate her own location within racialised hierarchies in defence of her own actions due to her view of racism solely as the infliction of intentional hurt. As will be discussed below, Goody’s refusal to examine her actions for the violence they contain is symptomatic of the ways that racism is often understood by dominant group members as largely divorced from social contexts in which racialised power circulates to both privilege and oppress.

Privilege, Power and Racial Categories

As suggested above, Goody’s inability to recognise the violence of her actions against Shetty is (in part) the product of the historical (i.e. colonial) relationship between the UK and India, and the inability of British people to recognise the power relations that inhere to particular forms of naming. This inability to recognise racialised power relations that result from colonial histories was evident in the talk of all British housemates who were accused of involvement in “racial bullying.” Subsequent to their eviction, these housemates attempted to excuse their actions as instances of “two people not getting along” (i.e. themselves and Shetty), rather than locating their actions within a broader cultural context whereby particular groups of people are constantly constructed as “not getting along,” and

where the reasons for such a “failure to get along” are most often attributed to the marginalised group. In other words, as a former British colony, India is constructed as always already marginal to the UK, the implication being that Indian people living in Britain should automatically accept this marginal location or else “cause” social disharmony.

Cultural hierarchies played out in conversations both among the British housemates themselves and between Shetty and the British housemates. All of the British housemates appeared unable to recognise their own location within particular (colonial) racialised hierarchies, and instead only acknowledged accountability for their actions as *individual people*. In the following extract, Shetty discusses her argument with Goody with another British housemate (Cleo Rocco), who struggles to speak about racism as a potential cause of the argument:

Shetty: I’m representing my country. If this is what today’s UK is—it’s scary—it’s quite a shame actually. Rocco: I don’t think it’s to do with where you come from.

Shetty: It *is* to do with that.

Rocco: No, I think yes, culturally, and you, I don’t, I don’t, I really don’t think there is anything racist in it.

Shetty: It is in a way, I’m telling you.

Rocco: I don’t think so. It’s because you come from such a different, a different background.

Shetty: What is it? Am I not human? What about me is so different? What about me? She just aired all her insecurities.

Rocco: I would have to say that Jade is not a racist. And neither are the other girls. [...] They’re really not, but it’s the culture thing, and the way in which they communicate.

Shetty: What is, what is *so* different or difficult to understand?

Rocco: Somewhere there is a fundamental breakdown of a communication. Somewhere. Not breakdown. Somewhere there’s just, I don’t know, a different way of communication. (Day 14: 17/1/07)

Here Shetty states that she considers Goody’s behaviour (as indicative of British behaviour more broadly) to be shameful. Rocco responds to this with a statement in defence of Goody—that the argument wasn’t about “where you come from.” Yet in light of the fact that the most heated parts of the argument referenced here involved Goody making negative references about Shetty and India, it appears that Goody was mindful of the differing cultural contexts within which the two women live—that the problem for Goody was indeed about “where they come from.” Rocco manages Shetty’s repeated assertion that racism shaped Goody’s actions by suggesting that it is “because you [Shetty] come from such a different

background.” In so doing, Rocco locates the problem of cultural difference again with Shetty and thus draws attention to the ways in which the power to decide who is depicted as culturally different most often lies with those who believe themselves arbiters of the national space in which they live. As Ghassan Hage suggests, the ideology of tolerance in late capitalist multicultural societies frequently does not require those who tolerate to give up their position of power—rather, their “choice” to tolerate reiterates their position of power (86-91; see also Riggs 345). By locating the fact of cultural difference outside the UK, the British housemates arrogate to themselves a position of authority to legitimise their actions and deny the fact of racism.

For the remainder of the extract, Shetty is emphatic in her questioning of this logic of locating cultural difference outside the UK, whereby she is positioned as the locus of culture. As she asks, “Am I not human? What about me is so different?” Rocco appears unable to engage with this line of questioning directly, as it would potentially require her to shift focus away from denying another British person’s potential engagement in racist talk, and instead acknowledge the logic of racial difference that informs the conversation. Whilst Rocco acknowledges that it may be “the way they communicate,” she nonetheless prefaces this with reference to “the culture thing,” which, as previously mentioned, positions Shetty as the site of cultural difference. The implication of this statement is that Goody’s (“not racist”) way of communicating arises, in part, from Shetty’s cultural difference—she only argues (or only argues in that particular fashion) with Shetty because Shetty’s cultural difference provokes her to do so. Rocco attempts to manage the implications of this logic in the face of Shetty’s repeated refusal of difference as an adequate explanation by employing the more abstract descriptor “somewhere”: “somewhere there is a fundamental breakdown of a communication.” This usage of “somewhere” allows Rocco to sidestep her earlier focus on Shetty as *the* site of cultural difference, without having to actually acknowledge that the “fundamental breakdown” may lie with Goody, rather than with both Goody and Shetty.

Race and Class in the Big Brother Household

The British housemates deployed constructions of cultural differences as incommensurable in order to either deny racism, or to deny their privileged location as dominant group members within the UK more broadly. In contrast to this, a focus on both race and class within the household suggests an alternative and competing way in which we may understand how the British housemates warranted their behaviours—

through a discourse of cultural sameness that arises (primarily) from Goody's account of class within the house.

Prior to her conflict with Shetty, Goody repeatedly made statements that appeared aimed at asserting the legitimacy of her own celebrity status, particularly compared to that of Shetty. Goody's fame-related comments included "I don't even know who she [Shetty] is," and reference to herself being named "one of the twenty five most influential people." Whilst in the previous extracts Goody (and others) largely constructed cultural difference as the province of Shetty, at the peak of the central argument between herself and Shetty, Goody employed the notion of "sameness" to undermine Shetty's authority to speak both as a celebrity and as someone experiencing racial violence:

Goody: Who are you to tell me to shut up? You might be some fucking princess in neverland but here you're a normal housemate like everybody else, everybody else, and you need to come to terms with that and *don't lie*. Don't lie about things. Why come and say 'the only thing I ordered was oxo cubes'? Why lie? Why lie? [...] Do not tell me to shut up, shut yourself up. Go and fuckin cry and put your glasses on. Go on—go in the diary room for another eight time *Go on*. You're a liar. You're a liar and you're a fake. You're a liar. You're not in neverland here. You're no princess here you're normal.

Shetty: Who said I was a princess?

Goody: You're normal Shilpa, and learn to live with it. You are normal.

Shetty: Jade: I am normal. (Day 14: 17/1/07)

Here Goody appears determined to make it clear to Shetty that despite her greater claim to fame *outside* of the house, she was no different to anyone else *within* the house. Despite Shetty's protestations in regards to being termed a "princess," Goody reiterates her statement that Shetty "is normal," normal meaning: "you're a normal housemate like everybody else." Here, Goody attempts to establish a set of common terms through which she can equate her own fame with that of Shetty. Goody's reference to India as "neverland" implicitly depicts Shetty's fame *in India* as imaginary at best, and fabricated at worst. In other words, that "neverland" (in the context of the film *Peter Pan*) does not exist suggests that Goody is constructing an argument for the normality of Shetty by implying that her fame in India does not exist. This may be contrasted with Goody's own claim to being famous enough to be in the house. That Goody's evocation of the category "normal" may be indicative not only of her anxiety in relation to differentials in fame, but also in class, is taken up by Goody during a subsequent exchange:

Goody: To say to me ‘Jade, you know what? This is your claim to fame’—she thinks she’s above me, and I’m not having anyone think they’re above or below me for a matter of fact [...] To make people feel as if they’re under you I don’t like. When she tried to tell me ‘ooh this is what’s made you. Ooh you need to get yourself some elocution lessons.’ Well. Not everybody is brought up with people that make their bed and fuckin’ butter their toast for ‘em, and she should appreciate that probably half of her fans, half of her fans in her, in her ethnic region are probably, probably don’t come from great backgrounds theirselves. I think she’s a prick, in common words.

Rocco: (laughs) ‘in common words.’

Goody: Well. That’s what I am. I’m beneath her. I find her laughable. (Day 14, 17/1/07)

In this extract, Goody discusses her contempt for what she sees as Shetty asserting the validity of her own fame over that of Goody. In so doing, Goody states what she sees as Shetty’s own act of discrimination—that in claiming herself better than Goody, Shetty is also claiming herself better than those “fans in her, in her ethnic region [who] are probably, probably don’t come from great backgrounds theirselves.” As such, Goody emphasises issues of class, to the extent that she is able to claim identification with those Indian people she believes “don’t come from great backgrounds”: not only does she disparage Shetty for what she sees as a class-based attack on her (i.e. in her recounting of Shetty’s statement that “you need to get yourself some elocution lessons”), but she also appears to take up the cause of the “common” Indian fan.

By emphasising the role of class, Goody suggests that Shetty occupies an unenviable position—one that is elitist and laughable. Simultaneously, Goody elides her own position of privilege relative to the Indian people that she refers to by aligning herself with them. The specificities and intersections of class and race between the UK and India are thus overlooked. This approach is interesting for its refusal to rely upon a colonial distinction between the British self and the Indian other (as per the extracts analysed in previous sections), and instead involves Goody claiming a marginalised identity for herself based upon an affinity with “common” Indian people. Nonetheless, it is important to consider how Goody’s competing constructions of sameness in the last two extracts analysed enact a markedly neo-colonial interpretation of Britishness. In other words, whilst in the previous extract, Goody suggested that Shetty is “normal” by referring to her fame in India as a fantasy in “neverland,” in this extract Goody is reliant upon a very concrete image of India that is not in “neverland,” but which is inhabited by people who do not come from “great backgrounds.” This contrast between India as “neverland” and India

as the home of “real people” may be reconciled if we view Goody’s talk as informed by a colonialist understanding of India as both a repository for British stereotypes and fears, and as a land available for the taking—as open to being narrated in whichever ways deemed appropriate by British people (Hook; Riggs and Augoustinos). That Goody can construct India on whichever terms suit her, even if those terms at times evoke a sense of “sameness” between herself and (some) Indian people, highlights the ongoing role that a neo-colonial imagery plays in the accounts that British people construct of their contemporary relations with India.

In contrast to Goody’s account of class, Shetty, in the following and final extract, offers a reading of class that potentially engenders a shift towards a postcolonial reading of British-Indian relations within the *Big Brother* household and beyond:

Shetty [to Rocco and Watkins]: You know I actually thought about it Cleo, and I know it’s not a racist thing. [...] She, she’s not racist, so I agree, but she definitely tries to challenge me. She tries to challenge my beliefs.

Rocco: You two definitely clash. There’s no way around that.

Shetty: Every time I tried to keep quiet on that whole issue [a discussion about virginity] in the lounge, I tried to evade it and I tried to [...] You know, I’m not a prude—I’ve had relationships, but there’s certain aspects of my life that I don’t want to make public, and that’s my choice.

Watkins: Your prerogative absolutely.

Shetty: But that doesn’t mean I’m boring or a prude. So you have to respect that and accept that if you really want to make a change and if you really want to form a bond in a relationship. You know every time I’ve spoken about it, I’ve said with due respect, that I empathise with the fact that she’s had a hard life—that’s all I can do. But you can’t blame other people if they’ve had good lives. I’ve had my fair share of struggle [...] It’s not like I was born with a golden spoon in my mouth [...]. (Day 14, 17/1/07)

In contrast to Goody’s account of the events, which largely individualises them to the interaction between herself and Shetty, and which thus fails to examine the power differentials of both class and race, Shetty appears mindful here both of her own feelings of racial discrimination, and Goody’s feelings of class disadvantage. Despite Rocco’s focus yet again on the clash being caused by both parties rather than primarily Goody (“you two definitely clash”), Shetty maintains a focus on the social contexts of the interactions between herself and Goody. She acknowledges that Goody has “had a hard life,” but she does not afford this the explanatory power that both Goody and other housemates

had previously done. Importantly, Shetty acknowledges that whilst she wasn't "born with a golden spoon in [her] mouth," she nonetheless has "had a good life." Shetty appears willing to be accountable for the considerable privilege she holds as a person of status and wealth, but this does not mean that she is deserving of abuse on the basis of her cultural identity. Her focus on the development of "respectful relationships" suggests that whilst she is mindful of Goody's own background, she does not accept this as a legitimate reason for their not "getting on," nor for the abuse she was subjected to: she acknowledges the potential reasons why Goody may feel intimidated (i.e. her wealth and fame), yet still calls for a respectful engagement across differences.

As such, and as demonstrated in her discussion with Rocco and Watkins, Shetty invokes a postcolonial space where those positioned as "cultural others" both look back and speak back to British subjects: Shetty asserts her location as a speaking subject, and in so doing challenges the dominance of particular colonialist interpretations of her as an Indian woman. As a result, and whilst Shetty appears able to see the role that colonial categories play in her interactions with the other housemates, she actively questions their explanatory validity, and returns discussions to questions of difference that focus on the contexts of class and fame amongst the housemates. The difference in the two arguments is thus important: Goody individualises difference and uses it to warrant her behaviour or to deny Shetty's fame, whilst Shetty typically attempts to contextualise the differences between herself and Goody.

Looking across the extracts in this section, it can be seen that issues of both class and race appear to play a large role in the events that occurred and the ways they were engaged with. Whilst Goody (and indeed Rocco and others) repeatedly denies the existence of racism, they nonetheless live within a relationship to categories of racial difference, and use these to interpret events. What may be suggested is that matters of cultural privilege are largely elided by Goody and her fellow British housemates through an emphasis on class: Shetty is constructed as a privileged Indian woman, thus undermining her claims to experiencing violence from Goody. Yet, at the same time, her relative position of class privilege is also challenged by Goody, who questions the legitimacy of Shetty's fame, thus rendering her 'the same' as the other housemates. In so doing, Goody draws attention to the contradictory and often competing ways in which racism is deployed in the service of racial hierarchies. At times, categories of difference are used to justify discrimination, whilst at other times difference is denied in order to claim a "level playing field" that in effect both denies discrimination and mitigates insecurities in regards to class

privilege. As such, issues of class complicate the straightforward delineation of positions of privilege and oppression, fame and “normality” in ways that render visible the precarious position of the British housemates as supposedly rightful holders of a culturally privileged position in comparison to Shetty.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined some of the complex ways in which racism played out within the 2007 UK series of *Celebrity Big Brother*. These included first, contradictory constructions of cultural difference, which was depicted as either incommensurable or irrelevant; second, the construction of “non-racist” identities on the part of British people; and third, the elision of cultural privilege by a focus on issues of class. In varying ways, the British housemates, and Goody in particular, legitimised both their privilege and their actions by reference to Shetty as the cause of the conflict, resulting from the fact of *her* cultural difference. By focusing on the conjunctions of race and class, I have demonstrated one way in which to examine not only the existence of racism, nor just the “how” of racism, but also potentially the “why” of certain enactments of racism. Racial bullying was deployed, in part, to prop up the position of some of the British housemates and to warrant the legitimacy of their celebrity status. Examining race simultaneously with class allows for an understanding of racialised class identities that accounts for the investments of all parties in their particular constructions of identity, and which refuses to prioritise the classism experienced by disadvantaged white people, nor the discrimination experienced by wealthy non-white people: it brings these two locations of structural inequality into an analysis that focuses on issues of power between and within them.

Obviously it is important to recognise the violence enacted against Shetty, and more broadly to speak of racism *as violence*. Yet by locating acts of interpersonal violence within broader cultural and historical settings, it may be possible to better understand how it is that cultural difference is constructed, what purposes this serves, and how it signifies the operations of privilege and power. Seeing the *Celebrity Big Brother* household as an example of (neo)colonial racism in action exemplifies not only the ongoing operations of colonialism, but also the specific forms it takes in contemporary settings. To see the actions of the British housemates as functioning to ensure colonial hierarchies is thus to recognise the complex legacies of colonial possession and its role in shaping identities and relationships between the UK, India and beyond.

Importantly, viewing the 2007 UK *Celebrity Big Brother* household (and in particular its British occupants) as playing a role in perpetuating colonial stereotypes and hierarchies offers a potentially unique insight into the mundane (if nonetheless violent) enactments of British nationalism. Whilst events subsequent to the series have seen many of the central characters deny racism through the notion that what occurred in the house was “unreal” (see Rahman for an excellent elaboration of this), a focus solely upon the events within the house provides one way of “seeing” racism at work, albeit in a highly controlled set of circumstances. In other words, whilst it could be argued that the context of the *Big Brother* house produced the conflicts between the individuals, it is quite a different argument to suggest that the context produced racism. As this chapter has demonstrated, the interpersonal violence that occurred towards Shetty within the house (a violence that repeatedly took the form of racism and cultural prejudice) was never simply a disagreement between two parties. Rather, it was a set of disagreements informed by differently valorised cultural and classed subject positions that shaped the interactions. As such, the series may be viewed as both productive and destructive: it was destructive in the sense that it allowed racialised violence to occur, and yet it was productive in the ways it effectively forced majority group British subjects to view the actions of a group of British people who, whilst constructed after the event largely as aberrations or as “celebrities gone wild,” nonetheless reflected at least something about what it means to claim membership to a dominant group through the derogation of another group. “Celebrity colonialism” in this sense is thus inherently a limiting and useful phenomenon: it provides witness to culturally sanctioned modes of being that may otherwise go unremarked, as much as in so doing it often involves appropriation, misrepresentation and violence toward those located as culturally marginalised.

Finally, it is important to emphasise again that “celebrity colonialism” does more than simply render visible the role of dominant group members located at the heart of empire in the perpetuation of colonial regimes of truth. As an understanding of the postcolonial aspects of *Big Brother* demonstrates, it also speaks back to neo-colonialisms. This was evident where Shetty spoke back to British housemates, and when she resisted colonialist interpretations of her identity as an Indian woman by claiming her status as a knowing subject. “Celebrity colonialism,” in the instance of the “Shilpa-Jade” episode, thus epitomises both the ongoing assertions of colonialist interpretations of the world (and their potentially violent enactments), and resistances to these.

Postscript

Since commencing this paper in 2007, I have developed an unusual affinity for Jade through my engagement with her words. This has occurred through my presentation of other analyses of the data at conferences, and through speaking to many people about the ‘incident’. It has also occurred when I have used this data to teach transcription and discourse analysis skills to undergraduate students, and when I have travelled to the UK and spoken with colleagues there about Jade and what she means to people in the UK. It was therefore with not inconsiderable sadness that I learnt of Jade’s cancer and watched through the media the last months of her life in 2009. Whatever can be said about her actions, they were always as productive as they were often damaging, as they rendered visible the machinations of celebrity culture and the capacity of individual celebrities to impact upon those with whom they have never had contact

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