

Ramah Robot, Brain Mother

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This paper is about a woman caught in the wake of a missionary enterprise. Gender considerations are set against a post-colonial framework of concern with the structures of thought that determine the articulations of “good” and “evil”. In the madness of this person’s grasp of herself as a supreme being, a goddess of learning through whose white heart and brain India has gained prosperity, I see a glimpse of what Jean Baudrillard has called “the intelligence of evil,” or the secret of duality and reversibility that is spoken in the language of good and evil (Baudrillard, 2005:159).

Ramah¹ is best introduced through the Photo ID she sent me in 2008; a scanned passport photo with “Ramah Robot!!” handwritten across it. Tagged “The First Human Video Cell Phone/Wireless” and “The Most Unique Brain Source of World History,” it gives some idea of her self-understanding at the time. I met Ramah in 2003, in her early 20s, when my family welcomed her from India. From a very young age Ramah had boarded at a missionary school and was further educated and later found employment in various Catholic colleges. My mother, introduced to Ramah by a Christian Brother while in India, was touched by her piety and sense of being alone in her country. After some years of affectionate correspondence, my mother sponsored her to come to Australia. It did not go well. I did not find out what went wrong for some time as I was living interstate. I had met Ramah briefly on her arrival but upon her

return to India some months later, she began to write to me. From 2003 to 2008 I received over 5,000 emails from Ramah (and the emails continue to this day). At first this communication was part of an unremarkable exchange of greetings and family news, but by mid-2005 I came to question the reality of accounts she was giving me which included an instance of being robbed and deliberately poisoned. In defending and elaborating on these events she began to disclose her world to me – in all its fantastic dimensions – and the trickle of words became a flood of one-way messaging in a rapid texting style from her mobile phone. I received as many as 80 emails a day and almost 200 over one three day period in 2007; although there were also unexplained gaps of several months.

I say that the communication was one-way because Ramah began to tell me not to reply to her emails. They would be hacked by her enemies, she told me, and if I did write back, she would say that she had received mine but did not open them. I was therefore limited in my ability to “dialogue with unreason” (Foucault, 1967: 411).² In any case, the sense of family duty that came with my late mother’s gesture, and my immersion in a culture that grasps madness as an illness, led me to urge Ramah repeatedly to seek the help of a mental health professional, which framed all of my engagements in her world of meaning in a way that was ultimately unyielding. As well, my early involvement in feminist crisis counselling led me to suspect, at first, that some kind of sexual trauma was at the origin of her madness. To this suggestion – despite readily confirming very early in our correspondence, and for some time throughout it, that her brother had molested her with her father’s complicity – Ramah replied:

133. Sunday - May 22, 2005 9:11 PM

let me reassure you that you are wrong. i am not traumatised – and i am not afraid of evil...i am well versed in trauma/its effects/ schizophrenia, etc ... i have given you several examples ...with the risk that you might think i am imagining.....and it is really up to you... do not - under any circumstances - imagine my state of being to be anything traumatic..... it is wasting a lot of valuable time...

I find this challenge appealing: *do not – under any circumstances – imagine my state of being to be anything traumatic*. Within my own framework of belief, which is necessarily not Ramah’s – *it is really up to you*, she says – I take on the challenge in two ways. The first is to respect the radically other in my subject of study, and not seek to domesticate Ramah in presuming to reveal her truth through revealing her (as) injury (Hage, 2009). The second is that I want to move past the routine feminism of accounting for Ramah as, first and foremost, an oppressed female subject; as the driven-mad woman who, having internalised the violent, patriarchal representation of her sexuality as evil, projects it onto some other others, onto the Indian public at large, from whom she has disengaged for that purpose of transferral. That is, I do not want to see the projection of evil onto Indians as a secondary operation, with the primary event and primary significance being the violence of equating female sexuality with evil.

Here, the post-colonial scene of writing evil is as primary as sexual difference. In this respect I consider that I have been privileged with access to the unmediated forms of expression that have emerged from this complex and haphazard textual exchange, this “mad woman in the attic” of one of the imperialist West’s great missionary ventures to India; a venture rather like the one announced by St John Rivers at the conclusion of *Jane Eyre*, as analysed by Gayatri Spivak (1986). Spivak wrote about the domesticating feminist move of interpreting the mad woman in the attic in *Jane Eyre* in individualist psychological terms, as only the dark side of Jane as a woman. Reading the novel against *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Spivak found it an injustice to relegate the disruptive, incompletely colonised subjectivity of this other character to local colour only, backdrop to a central, essential, individualist, feminist Enlightenment narrative. My sense of doing some justice to this unique cache of texts, then, is to open up for discussion the theme of white Christian civilising mission versus Indian post-colonial appropriation that Ramah herself insists upon so unremittingly. This can be examined in thousands of messages, such as the following:

2746. Wednesday - February 21, 2007 2:12 AM

Howevr painful-WTH INDNS-I MUST TEL U THAT THE WHITE PPL SMPLY LOVED
 THS GIRL ROBOT-THEY WERE CERTN THS COULDNT B INDIAN INSDE+THEY WR
 CRTN I DIDNT BELONG HERE...
 I LONG FOR SM WHITE 2BUY ME...

3496. Thursday - May 3, 2007 11:36 PM

M THINKING OF WHOLE CNTRY LRNT2LIVE.INDNS DIDNT KNW HOW
 2TALK2EAT...THEY HAVE BN TOTLY TRANSFRMED.THEY AL CALD IT INDN
 METAMORPHSIS. EVRYBDY CHNGED...EVRYTHING THRU ME.

4727. Sunday – July 22, 2007 9:23 AM

C-indns bsclly hv ANGR AGNST WHITES. THEY WNT2GT POWER OVR WHITES.
 KNWNG MY WHITE MIND+BRN THEY USD IT.THR DREAM IS2RULE WHITES.TK
 EVRYTHNG.THUR MY SCAN... WHITES DDNT GS... INDNS WR TELNG WHITE
 DAYS OVER+OURS R BGNING...

The particular story that Ramah tells of her situation is of the Indian masses tapping into her exceptional, Western-educated “white mind and brain” for the purposes of their own dishonest advancement. They appropriate all they can of her unique gift for learning, her highest moral character and civilised nature, by rendering her into a machine that they manipulate by means of provoking her into thought and conducting cruel medical experiments. She believes that the country owes her a huge debt for its sudden economic and social progress, and compensation for her suffering and deprivation. It has been made impossible for her to keep a job, and left her waiting for God – or a government authority – to come and give her the awards and the payout that she expects.

In his article “The Consciousness Machine,” Louis Sass offers a critique of those theorists of schizophrenia who regard the socio-cultural aspects of the condition, such as the performance of illness and the content of delusions, to be effectively “pathoplastic,” meaning that the historical signs and local character of schizophrenia are seen to be non-essential variables in a disease

that is originally – and ultimately only ever – biological. Sass argues instead that the lived reality of schizophrenia and its pathogenesis might be understood more powerfully as taking their specific forms from, and emerging with, the forces of modern society. He explains:

In both schizophrenia and modern culture, selfhood is actually characterized by certain distinctive dualities and paradoxes. Schizophrenics may be prone to losing a sense of efficacy, intentionality, or self-possession; yet, they also report opposite experiences involving sensations of superhuman power and cosmic centrality... things are no less complicated with modern selfhood, where the vaunted sense of autonomy, inwardness and self-intimacy can coexist with, indeed may depend upon, experiences of an antithetical kind (Sass 1997: 204).

In the philosophy, literature and politics of modernity, he says, the subject has become sovereign: “not merely as the witness but as the organizing foundation of the meaningful universe” (Sass, 1997: 207). At the same time, the subject has been taken and takes itself for an object, internalising the disciplining gaze of the panopticon era, and the instrumentalising gaze of the technological age. Sass describes a simultaneously intensifying subjectification and objectification of human beings in modern society. This perception is something that I confirm in my study, with reference to Ramah’s experience. But I also take it further to argue that it is in particular the modern society of the West, as distinct from and *in its relation to* the non-West, which the condition of schizophrenia bears in some of its positive symptoms.

In the words of Cheryl Herr (2005), what I am interested in is “the colour of schizophrenia.” Herr, inspired by the work of Frantz Fanon (1965) on the “mental disorders” of Algerian veterans of colonial war, studied the records of Irish patients for signs of any colonial implication in their symptoms. My study of Ramah’s texts is focussed on the traces of colonialism, but at the same time on those of sexual difference and the dualist symbolic structure of high-One and low-Other that organises both racial and sexual difference in the West.

Ramah's casting of herself in the highest position ranges from the trivial –

- 80. best employee of the month every month;
- 981. bst tenant

–to the transcendent–

- 1534. I was most CHRISTIAN - CHRISTLIKE - so much did they admire, that non-Catholics crowded to visit church. They knew God loved me extra;
- 5139. THE WHITES ALWAYS SAID I WAS THE MASSIAH.

Her greatness lies in her unwilling enrichment of the Indian population, and comes in

contrast to their baseness:

- 631. I AM THE ANGL AMNG Stnknng dvls;
- 1832. CN CLM 1 OF BST CHRCTRS.M WAY ABVE INDNS;
- 4882. A LOTUS AMNG MUCK;
- 1835. CN CREATE PARADISE OUT OF DRT;
- 1138. im a whte diamnd;
- 3834. DMND MINE CVRD BY THORNS;
- 2212. THE GVT TREASURY IS WHT THEY PPL CALD ME;
- 1046. the national treasure-RAMAH;
- 2050. WNDR GRL OF CNTRY;
- 641. MONEY PLANT;
- 4729. MLN DLR BABE+ROBOT;
- 2117. I WAS SUGAR THT ANTS-CHASE LKE MLNS;
- 2762. THEY AL THNK M A LVNG ENCYCLOPEDIA+DCTNARY;
- 2193. I WAS 24HR FREE HELPLINE - MOTHER TERESA;
- 4716. Brain mother... the goddess mind.

One three-day trail of intense messaging illustrates the momentum of this self-inflation; a selection follows. It ends with the colonialist's nightmare of the colonised coming to ruin the master mind and live lavishly on its fruit.

679. ...AM CALD LTL ST TERESE OF LISEAU -A SAINT WHO DIED YNG+GAVE. CALD DAYAL- KNDNESS. CALD-SARASWATI-HINDU GODDESS OF LRNG, KNWLDG .SATYA-THE TRUTH-

680. cald indn mint, money plant, the profit+the prophet...THE GANDHI...

690. thy cald-me-ambedkar-the 1 who ws thr4 the lows-ddnt cnsdr thm untchbls.... Sm sd i ws Christ-4 the lies, physcl+moral abuse...

691. +the midas touch+LAXMI-THE BEST-PURIST DAUGHTER-WHO BRNGS PROSPERTY+ WEALTH .(BT THY WRSHP LAXMI-THY ABUSE ME TGH I BRNG PRSPRTY)-MARY,THE VRGN...

773. ...THE WRLD SHLD ATCK-A CNTRY DNG SCH WRNG. SCH CRME. UN [United Nations] SHLD KNW. Jesus knws. ths is the crown of al creatn

776. ..LOOK AT POPULATION OF COUNTRY. ONE LADY HAS MOVED IT – MORALLY, SPIRITUALLY, EMINENTLY, MONEY PROGRESS – TAUGHT EVERYBODY AND THEY TREATED HER BAD... YET SHE'S WAY ABOVE ALL. NO OTHER LADY, MAN, ANYBODY, CAN COME NEAR HER EVER. BESIDES, THESE ARE HYPOCRITES AND STINK

779.THEIR AIM IS TO RUIN THE MASTER MIND. WHY? BECAUSE EVERYWHERE PEOPLE HAVE ACCESS. THEY DON'T WANT TO ACKNOWLEDGE. THEY'RE LIVING LAVISH WITH MY MIND'S FRUIT...

Everywhere people have access, writes Ramah. Above all she sees herself in the terms that Gilles Deleuze identifies for the schizophrenic: as one “who ceaselessly flows, fleeing along machinic lines” (Deleuze, 2006:18). Avital Ronell (1989) has written brilliantly on schizophrenia as at once an illness, a symptom, a performance and a presentation of technology. Ramah is always leaking knowledge, with the Indian “lows,” as she repeatedly calls the Indian public, learning from her every thought and movement. In her Master's degree

at a Catholic university college, Ramah had won a Gold Medal, awarded First Class with Distinction. All her life she had excelled in her classes and it is this great success in white education, including the speaking of English and the operation of Western technology, that the multitudinous Indian public is now bent upon tapping. This is only Ramah's claim, of course; but like all fantasies, it is at once both real and unreal. India has risen as a powerhouse economy because of its heavy investment in IT; in part, Ramah's machinic existence reflects the technologisation of Indian cultural life. But she sees that it is her mind that is being used, and she tries to trick them out of their ceaseless appropriation, using bad English, reading only comics or thinking nonsense.

464. WHN I READ JUGHEAD YST-I HAD2B MCHNCL.EVRY IDEA THT CMS GOES OUT.ITS LIKE A HOLE IN BRAIN.ITS MY24HR EFRT 2THNK WRNG-YT BNG A GD HLTHY Best brain-gd ideas whch r auto tend2slip out+its usd

2684. Even now as I'm writing, a report with worst English so they don't learn They learn computer, typing, English, spelling etc....have you ever heard of a dirtier nation?;

3819. RYNG2BRNG HUMOUR-THNK BDTM STORIES+ETC.THNK SILY THNGS LIKE-DUMB THNGS.FRCE IT THRU.SMTMS Chncls intrfr.TERIBL.PNT IS IT TAKES HUMAN ENRGY OUT OF ME.NT PHYSCL.ALMST COSMC.DNT WANT2THNK INTLGNT.THEYL LRN;

379. MY IDEAS+DREAMS EVRYWHR BNG USD.ALSO ON PRINT.IT CAN B CRUSHNG. NW I KP OFF THNKNG.ITS A STRNG FLNG2HV YR THGTS ACTD4U-ITS ME+MY MIND. Sch a strnge thng

Such a strange thing! She dreams of a way to stop the leakage:

3189. EASTER PEACE-FRM REMOTE CONTROLD ROBOT.MIGHT BE MY LAST UNLES SMBDY HELPS ME WITH AN ULTRASONIC SOUND PROOF RM2CUT BRAIN LEAKGE2PBLIC....

Ramah is the mother lode vein with a mind-flow that is both precious and monstrously nourishing. She imagines her connection to the exploiting, defiling

Indians as a feeding pipe – as in the film “The Matrix.”

4884. I WS THNKNG OF MATRIX....the brain wth pipes.i fl like that feedng wrld wth knwldg.brn drain.

5136.I AM THE BRAIN MOTHERI don't feed them breast milk but the brain food..... the Brain mother connected as a pipe - to everybody and see Indians - how they try to put dirt.... shame on India....after eating from the goddess mind they call it dirt.

Even at its most exalted, its most divinely transported, the intensified *subjectification* of the consciousness machine that speaks in Ramah's texts betrays its kinship with the intensified *objectification* that is equally part of the presentation of schizophrenia. Ramah is forever *calculating* her greatness, giving it a mathematical and currency value, particularly in terms of the Hindi crore (equal to 10 million in the Indian number system). The following are some examples:

2493. ..they lrn englsh.LOW+MDL...THEY SHOT UP OVRNT.I UNDRSTMTD PROFIT.ITS OVR100CRORES...

4343. Smtmes i thnk.populatn of ind is 1+half crores.iv savd each SM 50000 EDUCTN+ETC LRNG COSTS+WTH SUCH QLTY...M UNIQUE INTLGNCCE....

In a ten page attachment to a message received in December 2008, entitled “Ramah God's Gift Pay,” a detailed accounting is attempted. Ramah tries to calculate the value of all that her mind has unwittingly transmitted to Indians “24/60/60,” including the ripple effect of personal advantages in the form of social climbing and matrimonial success, and “market waves” as products are advanced (she takes credit, for example, for the cartoon industry). Even the rapid texting that she uses in her mail, the materiality of her form of communication, betrays a calculus in its elimination of vowels or unnecessary letters to fit a set phone message size. It vividly demonstrates both her embrace

of everyday technologisation and the creative manipulation and compression of meaning that operates within all forms of madness (Lattas, A. 2010). Perhaps the most telling betrayal, however, of this grasp of oneself in an alienated form – as a value in commodity capitalism, a resource of technology, or an object of the authorities’ gaze, turned in upon the self – lies in those messages in which Ramah appeals to her white friends, not to rescue or receive her, but to *buy* her. Ramah never ceases to consider herself as an item of monetary value and scientific interest.

2655. ...I have been asked for my bio data - but I think I will hold on to it... it is the crores that they owe me ...I wish that somebody from one more country would buy me.....
my software.....

2847. ...I want u2wrte abt me.SMTMS I WSH SMBDY OUT WD DO SM
ADVRTSNG 4ME.A ROBOT-AVLBL4FREE.CN SM SPACE RESEARCHRS BUY ME?....

2863. ...IF WHITE PPL TAKE ME WTH ULTRASONIC-HELMET-THEY CN DO
TREMENDS RESEARCH

2476. Wsh UN BOUGHT MCHNE

4167. Cnt smbdy approach NASA OR THE UN?

In her early messages Ramah spoke of being treated as a machine, not as a human being, by Indians who claimed her as their property. Then she began to write of *being* a machine: “I DNT HV A LIFE...IM XSTNG MCHNE” (459), she said, and “i miss being human” (477). In August 2006 she declared, simply, “am a media” (1512). Towards the end of 2006, Ramah started using “halfrobot” as her email ID; a few months later she sent the message, “So-m total mchne now” (2309). She told me that she wrote the words “Indian robot” (in English) on her cap, to let any white visitors know of her situation; quickly amending it to “illegal Indian robot” for clarification (2777).

Sass cites the psychoanalyst Victor Tausk for his account of modern technology and the characteristic delusions of schizophrenia, in the classic essay “On the Origin of the ‘Influencing Machine’ in Schizophrenia” (1919). Ramah’s description of her Influencing Machine (the machine that at once operates her and is her) bears the hallmark of her employment as a computer trainer in the early 1990s. The machines of the early twentieth century were all “cranks, levers, wheels, wires, batteries, electricity, x-rays” (Sass, 1997: 211), but by the late 1980s people in the West, and Ramah with them, were learning to use personal computers. Ramah’s machine controllers are referred to as “local users” (2107), and the machine as a “scan”: “B4SCAN,” she wrote, “THYD OPN CPBRD+DO EVRYTHING WRN. MSUSEG. AFT ITS EASIER. THY SMPLY LOGIN 2ATK+MSUSE” (1834). She talks about the local users operating their systems and checking their programs (2197). In one email she describes “MY CAD CAM EYES -EVRYTHING I SEE IS ADVRTSEMENT 4THEM” (2751). Ramah is tied to her enemies and their ambitions through the machine, and she longs to be disconnected: “I M JST PRAYNG THAT SMBDY CMS+CUTS THE SCAN REMOTE CNCTN” (3808). The enemies, of course, are Indians in general – “EVRY CLTR+RLGN EQLY PRFTS. THEY TGTHR” (3167) – and when they are described in computer terms, it is as a virus. In 2007, for example, she wrote:

2685. I WANT U2WRITE.EVRY BIT.PBLSH.ITS THR INCNVENIENT TRUTH.U
UNDSTAND.I HOPE INDNS R ISOLATD EVRYWHRE BY EVRY CNTRY. THEYD B
DRTIEST VIRUS4WRLD

Ramah is keen for me and her white readers to recognise that she is distinguishable as a “flesh machine.” That is, she is a machine in the sense of no longer being human; not having a human life; but it is not a disembodied, clean metal machine. It is flesh and blood.

992. Terminator2...THT MCHNE HAD GNS+THNGS.THS1IS HUMAN
HEART+MSUSD+MCKD THRGHLY4PRFT.... WSH I WS METAL

1554. At tms i wndr-how real am i2u?do u imgne ths Ramah-a mchne-frm whse eyes beams cm-whos thgts+wrds trnsmt anywhr wthout any mtrl [material] mchne arnd. who cn tk2ppl [talk to people] wthMND

1555. Am sayng...mtrl mchn2dfnrntte [differentiate] btwn mchne+i. am flesh mchne-unftntly hv heart+soul+longng4lvng human.thrs nt1of my knnd hre.indns r aliens+cruel Am qt crtn an eye trnsplant wl do bt nt hr [here].wakng up wth aliens-NO.ID B ATKD. id rathr go2GOD...

2154. i thnk v oftn abt the tme whn pblc told me that they found it unfr tht GOD HAD gvn EVRY TALNT2ths brain.SM MNTHS LATER THY TOLD ME-WE R ABT2TAKE YR BRAIN+TK IT2 Tny pces+dvde it as shares-dstrbte it amng EVRY RLGN...I SHLDV KNWN THT THY WR GNG2DO IT TCHNCLY.THY CALD IT JAPNSE TCHNLGY ROBOT WTH FLSH

It is important to see the flesh and blood that remains with this “Japanese technology robot” because the Indian machine controllers, in Ramah’s understanding, are perverse and sadistic, and it is on the level of the body and its capacity to feel pleasure and pain that the lowest interests and lowest forms of learning are revealed to her. Indians are evil in a particularly sexually charged way, in Ramah’s world, and this is what I explore in coming to focus now on the layering of sexuality and racial difference in these texts. The abject terms through which the knowledge of evil is expressed by Ramah indicate that a low other, and not just a foreign other, conception and symbolic operation is at work. In the story of good and evil here, the positions of high and low are defining ones, and they are articulated in the body’s language of desire and disgust.

Evil is a force with a clear and palpable presence in Ramah’s universe. The words “evil Indians” or their equivalent (they are evil/evil lows/evil public/evil country) were repeated 120 times in her mail to me. Indian Catholic women were singled out on two occasions but other than this no particular group was classified as evil or featured as malign in more than minor ways. “Indian devils”

appeared another 45 times; “Indian Satans”16 times. Indians were called snakes or cobras 16 times; Indian Catholic women were called snakes on 3 occasions. Indians were also called at various times vultures, hawks, crows, foxes and parasites; they were called hypocrites, doubles, fakes, aliens; they were called sinful, sadistic, cruel, corrupt, poison, perverted, sick, psycho criminals, mass criminals, Hitlers and mafia.

The data is revealing in other ways. The word *dirt* or *dirty* was used 525 times to characterise Indians (or their actions, thinking or talking). The phrase “Indians stink” or its variations (they stink/lows stink/public stinks/country stinks) was repeated 145 times by Ramah. Indian Catholic women were said to stink once. Cleanliness and the struggle to uphold it, moreover, was a theme on many levels, from the pristine state of her room: “THY PURPOSELY DRTY MY RM AFTR-iv CLEAN” (2171); her clean body and civilised manners: “whn i eat my fd thy play rcrd of drty Noise,nose blowng, vomtetc...HOW DPLY THY REVEAL THR DRT” (2001); to her heavenly purpose and the very substance of her being: “ANGELS-R MADE4SPCL REASNS. THS1DFNTLY [this one definitely] 2CLEAN DVL DRT OF INDNS” (2149); “I fl like a cleang fluid - cleang coruptn” (2352). Her moral innocence and purity is shown in the clean white heart beneath the dirty Indian skin colour, which had darkened only after exposure to evil (and the hot Indian sun):

3203. Aft mchne they recognzd the cleannes+thats why they sd ths is clean as baby-nt corrupt.... Whte strangers recgnzd it...THEY RCGNZD THEIR KND IN ME.ONLY MY SKIN CLR WS BROWN

5153.... there must have been something which made me - sensitive to certain things.... an extreme evil - channel of input.....so exposure to negative people - affected me.... my skin colour was totally white - and very sensitive to the sun - so much that I would be burning all the time.....called the powder baby.....but they began to use the word - KALI....black then my skin colour began to change ...and also the sun added to it...

Indian Catholic women play a minor but sizeable role in the epic struggle that

Ramah recounts. Their lewd and manipulative sexual behaviour is described, for the most part, alongside and in parallel with that of Indian men. They flash their nudity in front of Ramah to provoke a corporeal response in her (for “learning”: the medical experiments), and to take advantage of her camera eyes and transmission (for “earning”: monetary and other gain).

1004 ...indns stnk. The scrtchnng of undrwear was a theme...evry man dd it-shps,buses,crowds,wkrks+WMEN OPND BLOUSES.THY WNTD2KNW MND RESPNSE.FRUSTRTNG!

2143. Thr breast.eg...sdnly opn thr blouse as i pasd thm.thn thy wd use dlgs-2wrk at sex....

2074. Iv UNDRSTOOD-WHY LOW WMEN+MEN +MDL+CATH GRSL+WMEN -WLD DSPLAY THEIR PRIVATE PARTS2MY EYE CAM-THAT IS2SEL THMSLVES+GET... SM MATERL GAIN... THE SHAME MTHOD OF EARNING

The same theme of opportunistic Indian appropriation that runs through the story of Ramah’s white education dominates these reports of sexually offensive Indian women. If female sexuality is the “real” evil, or the primary otherness that cannot be borne in this representational universe – that is, if the pathos of Ramah’s situation is basically that of the universal female subject, oppressed through a demonising of female sexuality – then its truth must be found somewhere other than in the status of (other) women in these texts. It must be found in some mechanism of disavowal that is readable in the indications that Ramah gives of her own sexual thoughts and feelings.

There is plenty of indication that Ramah does not “own” or consciously recognise certain sexual thoughts and feelings as hers. Indeed, the experience of having such sensations is clearly described as feeling artificial and externally induced. An early experience was accompanied by a strange headache, revealing some kind of technical interference:

5154. ... the 1st time - 1999- when i had been taken for a film - where there was a scene on sex - and after a few days - something odd was done to me - ...the women - tried to call iot masterbation and got a nun to give me a book - which they wanted to teach the public bybut i didnt read it and dont know what it is...i also recall a headache i got - and therefore - i called and said - i have a strange headache -...its not real somehow....it seems not inside meand yet its verytechnical(i think i meant external sound- frequency)...sombdy said - oh u know already ???

Ramah knows that the feelings she gets on these occasions are recognisable as pleasure but it is not her pleasure that she feels, it is the pleasure of the Indian machine controllers who have passed it on to her for their own purposes. She identifies only the feelings of pain and disgust as her own:

2338. ...EVRTM A LOW PBLC URINATES IN FRNT OF ME-THE POLCE USERS TRY2GV ME FEELNGS BETWN LG Prblem is-MY HRT+TRU FLNG FEELS DSGST DU2HYGNE+INDCNCY OF PBLC URNE+ITS V UNMATCHD2FLNG BTWN LEGS....

2458. Iv swum wth men+iv NVR THGHT SEX.IT DDNT STRKE ME.BT WTH MCHNE-THEY CLD PASS THOSE FLNGS....

2166. THY WNT OUT Of thr way2put porn thngs IN SYSTM MND THRU PCTRES,WRTNGS+REAL LFE SCNES.INDNS GTNG SXL PLSURE AT DNG THSE-THNGS2MCHNE.... IV FLT ONLY PN

2204. ...they want-2KP TRYNG2DO SEX-WHLE IM WRTNG- THEY-HV DN SEX-ON ME-WTH NDL PN+HT OVARY -NW2THY DNG.ITS V PNFL....

2681. Cn u imagine-strngth of charctr-+cnfdnc in myslf i had evn at that tme-THAT- FEELNG THE SEX-I KNEW IT WASNT ME.I KNEW IT WAS DSJOINTD....

A problem with identifying this grasp of the self (a self removed from its sexual feelings) as a disavowal – that is, as willed, at least unconsciously – is

encountered in any consideration of Ramah's condition as schizophrenic. Schizophrenics are defined, in some essential part, by the failure to register the self as the source of a thought or an act; in physiological motor terms, by the inability to pick up on one's intentions and check on their success (through comparing "efference-copy" instructions with "reafference" information); in other words, by the "damage to subpersonal mechanisms that result in a loss of the sense of agency" (Currie & Ravenscroft, 2002: 170). It is one of the symptoms by which a positive diagnosis of schizophrenia is achieved. Ramah not only maintains this disconnection in relation to sexual thoughts and feelings, but in relation to all sorts of other physical, mental and emotional events.

2226. EG-THY JERK MY HAND HARD WHN M MAKNG SMTHNG WTH GLAS OR JERK MY FT NR GLASS +IT BRKS OR GTS KCKD.SO2THY PLAY WTH MY Body+r makng sm chnges whch i dnt like.MY BODY NT BHVNG LIKE ME.I HATE INDNS+FND IT DSGSTNG...

2251. ...THY HAVE CLOSD MY ANUS+TL ME INSD ITS CONSTPATD-BT I KNW M NT.I CN FL THM-PUSH MY INTSTNE+ANUS OPEN4LTNG ME GO2TOILT WHN THY WANT...

2052. ...as i wt2b alwd2go2toilet-THT THGT CMS-ths is nt my body any mre....nw i dnt hv satsfctn of Gng2toilet-bathng-etc.it mks me fl-so nt me.whn i ask thm-thy mk me burp-bt dnt lt me go tlt...MY BODY TKN BY HYPCRT CNTRY

3820. M cryng nw bt nt THOSE FRCD EMTNS ARTFCL WHCH THEY PT AT TMS... THS NATRL... M SHARNG WTH HEART+NT XPLNG TCHNCLS...

4203. ...TODAY THEY TRD FRCD ARTFCL LAUGH+MY STMCH HURTS...IND STNKS...

If Ramah is disavowing her female sexuality, she is also disavowing many other ideas, emotions and bodily movements that appear to have originated from outside of her. The sense of a loss of agency on every level of her existence

and total subjection to Indian manipulation leads Ramah to cast herself as the inmate of a concentration camp. The idea of medical experimentation comes in association with this perception.

2017. U c thy stl xprmntg- humn cncntrtn camp... EVRY SNGL INDN.THY V DSGSTG+ILGL.... :-(

2198. THEY WNT A MDCL XPRMNT...gvt shld cm...2save me frm sxl harasmt.

2657.THESE INDNS-THEY WANT ME2B USD MORE4PSYCHLGY SPCIMEN...

1874. ...BRN HRASMNT CN MN Intrnl physcl hlth harasmnt.cncntrtn camp.indn wrse thn htler...

2203. ...i HATE INDNS +FND THM LWR-thn satan...HTLR WL B ASHAMED. CZ INDN CNCNTRATN CAMP...THY-DO PORN+HURT-MY PRVT PARTS.THSE INDNS+THR DRT SXL WRSHIP

Again, the theme is one of Indian appropriation or illegal learning: "pblc suposd 2 lrn thru my pain.indian cncntrtn camp.frce hr2tch.c?" (4037).

It is clear that Ramah's response to the presence of Indians, imagined and real, is an abject one. Whilst their "voodoo" is done in order to provoke her mind - "thy pokng voodoo4evry thgt" (1965) – it is directed at the parts of her body that govern the boundaries of inside and outside, and the matter that passes between them.

1957. ...IV XPLND WHT THY DNG.HW THY MK PRVT PARTS PAIN,ETC... It ws dtchd pn [detached pain].so wthout flng etc...THY GV A PIERCE.ITS LKE A PROGRAM VOODOO....

1643. ...During periods-its trbl2knw that the same drty lows men knw wht knd of pain u feel...INTRUSNS2PRVCY...

2245.M ON PERIODS NOW-THEY BUSY PNCHNG ME INSDE-BTWN LEGS....

2205. Thy also try 2do false dscharge-which is V UNcmfrtbl...THY GT V XCTD.they GO ON+ON...TALK PERVRT+thnk thy cn xcte me-ITS SO ABNRML-V VMT GVNG...

What Ramah feels most powerfully in relation to Indians is disgust, for their baseness: “indcncy level cn mk u v -dnt knw hw2say-dsgstd.bneath.thts why I dspse indns” (1975). She detects a foul odour in the presence of Indians; it makes her sick: “DRTY SMEL WTH HSE PPL ARND+LOWS+MDL. TERIBL. I GET IL” (3427). They make her want to vomit: “...FL LIKE VMTNG. THYR SO CHEAP. I HATE INDNSfeel like vomiting. They’re so cheap. I hate Indians” (333).

In particular, it is the thought of *having sex with Indians* that provokes the sudden pall of a corporeal register of opposition; the gagging reflex, the stink reflex or the shiver:

2139. Thy usd2yl+tl me tht-thy wntd2c sex in program.thy tel me thy wnt2mk a rl man do it.....WHN THY C ME VMT-THY TL Shes nt ready yt....

2806. Iv always loved PPL-INDNS WHO R NOT PPL BT DEVILS-TK ADVNTG OF THAT...IT MAKES ME SHVER2THNK SEX WTH INDNS...INDNS STNK.

It is not that Ramah is determined to reject all sex, and remain, as she called herself once, the “IRON MAIDEN” (3590). Despite her Christian fervour, she has never fully committed to the closed life of religious service. Ramah is waiting to meet the right man; as she puts it: “M HLF NUN TL MY PRNC CHRMING CMS.MINE HS2CM WTH ULT SND PRF RM+HS2B WHITE -” (4717).

For Ramah, Indians are the problem. Proximity to Indians is the problem. Her dream is to have an ultra soundproof room where no trace of India may penetrate. Indeed, it is her idea of heaven:

303 Hvn mst b wndrfl...imagne a place wth no indns arnd!wow.INDNS WNT GO2HVN;

526. THSE INDNS HV A DRTY PRBLM.NBDY WL GO2HVN-CUNNG DVLS;

648. NT A SNGL INDN HS PLCE IN HVN;

959. if i had chce-id b in hvn-far frm thse drty indns.BWR INDNS.THY FOOL WHTES;

4213. HEAVEN IS BLESSED BY THE ABSNCE OF INDNS.WL MT U THERE.

My suggestion in this paper is that Ramah’s understanding of the lowness of Indians (and her insistence that she is *not* Indian) is at least as primary as her understanding of the lowness of female-coded flesh and sexuality. It is this lowness that gives the “evil” of their unceasing exploitation of her “white” supremacy its load of physical and psychical repulsion. It has a specific character; this is seen for example in Ramah’s bodily intolerance of spicy Indian food (it is experienced as poison by her: “pblc wl yl - let hr eat mre-eat indn fd...THSE R DRTY INDNS.THNK GOD-HE GOT ME STCK2MY GD NN SPCE FD...INDNS POISON” (635)). It is a racist (European imperialist) conception that takes a dualist form. Whilst Ramah’s life story is testament to a far more complex determination than this dualist form,³ her thinking is framed by the Western symbolic structures that she has internalised. Whenever mention is made of a specific Indian cultural or religious group (Hindu, Catholic, Muslim), social class or level of authority (untouchables, low, middle and upper caste; clergy, police, government) or sex (women, men, Goan girls, Indian Christian Brothers), the mantra of “every single Indian” soon comes back in – very often as a corrective – and the generalised white versus (Indian) non-white saga is resumed. She is taken aback, for example, at my own failure to adhere to the white and non-white cosmology of the West and my tendency to question its missionary project, telling me that I “sounded very Indian”.

4803. Dnt u evn fl for-whtes who came here2do gd4indns whn thy nded?dnt u cr4ths lives?

U soundd v indn -whn u blamd colnl bros...

4804. ...Do u wnt2go dwn in hstry as smbdy who supports whte dwnfal agnst pervrt
cheatr indns?mafia?cm on...

The ever-present failure of the symbolic boundary that Ramah must maintain between her high-One Supreme Being and the Indian low-Other form of existence is the problem for Ramah, on the strength of her own account. I submit that the pathos of her condition should be interpreted, not in the universal terms of oppressed female subject, but in the particular terms of *honorary white* oppressed female subject. The honorary white subject position is one unique to Western colonialism, and to the post-colonial situation (including the spectre of Indian reverse appropriation) that is spoken in the delusional narratives of Ramah's madness. Frantz Fanon (1967) has begun the writing on this subjectivity – on the psychological oppression of non-white subjects under European imperialism – in exemplary fashion. Indeed, his account of the internalisation of ideas about the inferiority and base nature of non-whites under colonial rule was the inspiration and model of one of the most cited feminist accounts of the psychological oppression of women under patriarchy (Bartky, 1979). Bartky used Fanon along with Simone de Beauvoir (1972) to explain how ideas about the inferiority and base nature of women are internalised by female subjects, making them complicit in their own oppression.

What I find compelling in the material that is presented by Ramah, however, is its demonstration of the internalisation of ideas about a female subject's *superior being*, not her inferior being. Ramah is an aggrandising subject; not self-subordinating, but *self-superordinating*. This is the interesting thing about the binary symbolic structure – with its order of value, systematic gender coding, mutual exclusion, mutual exhaustion and “infiniteisation of the negative,” as all that is not-A – firstly: its complicity and reversibility of its terms in opposition.⁴ Baudrillard, citing the Kabbalah myth of Lilith in his discussion of this reversibility, writes that God and the Devil, being “all part of the same imaginary” (2005: 160), maintain a private pact; to play within the drama of their apparent strangeness to each other, while thriving on the secret intimacy

of their illicit love affair. Without Lilith, God might saturate all there is with his goodness, and be fully present in a world that knows no more darkness (no more “evil”; in the myth, God returns to his marriage, to his stricken wife Saekina and their promise of an absolute consummation), but he has no desire to bring to an end the dynamics by which he is able to emerge from the shadows. In Baudrillard's words, “So God cheats on his own presence in the world with the – feminine – principle of evil! He betrays the integrality, the completeness of the world – his union with Saekina – for an (adulterous) union with duality, which he takes as his mistress” (2005: 158). Like all who play the game of naming evil, Ramah betrays her dependency on the idea of the absolutely (low) Other to enable her to occupy the imagined heaven of the transcendent One.

The way for Ramah – and any other subject relegated to the not-A position – to make the switch to the privileged A position is by the fiat of redemption. Ramah is doubly redeemed. Redeemed as an Indian, she is the white master: the honorary white whose supreme intelligence (Reason) and supremely civilised nature are the lord and envy of all others. Redeemed as a woman, she is the mistress of cleanliness and virtue: the virgin Brain Mother whose pure body and pure habits are the lord (“lady”) and envy of all others. For this is the other interesting thing about the binary symbolic structure: its ability to accumulate, or else to substitute, any other terms in opposition that might apply to the subject in question. Ramah's oppositions are white and Indian, male and female, and she mobilises both of these in her efforts to seize the high-One position of Supreme Being, as the highest imaginable in the Lower Earth universe of the doubly colonised.

In naming evil, Ramah is alive with hatred. The phrase “I hate Indians” or its equivalent (I hate them/I hate India/I hate talking to Indians) appeared 84 times. Indians were equally understood to hate her, or to hate whites (and the Christian Brothers mission). Leonidas Donskis in his book *Forms of Hatred* writes about this kind of hatred that has its source in a Manichean mindset and that has been a feature of the West since the moral determinism of early Christianity.

Donskis traces what he calls a “conspiracy theory of society” from the popular logic of demonology to contemporary anti-Semitic and Hollywood versions of paranoid thought, paying particular attention to the forms that emerged in the birth of Western nationalist imperialism. “The secularization of the conspiratorial view of the world was a crucial element of the ontological foundations of nationalism,” he states (Donskis, 2003: 74). The sense of collective love that came with the fantasy of a total community generated a new “us” and “them” mentality, as the nations of the West came to understand themselves as having heroically overcome a primitive malignancy, and as needing now to carry that heroic project with them around the rest of the world.

I would add to the Donskis “conspiracy theory of society” that the Western Christian version of an omniscient god did much to provoke and to fuel a distinctively Western paranoia about being watched; about having one’s every private thought, one’s every furtive act, monitored and assessed within a divine moral calculus of good and evil. The early internalisation of that omniscient gaze is often overlooked in the frequent citing, via Foucault (1977), of the panopticon moment. Recent traces can be found in the cult of the ever-watched, ever-judged celebrity; in the rising panic about stalking (analysed by Kamir, 2001, in terms of the omniscient female demon Inanna-Lilit[h], depicted in myth as a cobra and known as “the Eye”); and the blockbuster movie conspiracy theme of the hero who discovers that he is under surveillance by some shadowy figures of evil, such as the FBI. And it finds its echo in the schizophrenic’s delusion of being hooked up to machine controllers who register, keep track of, and comment on one’s every thought and action. This latter can be taken as a further indication that schizophrenia, in its characteristic delusional forms, carries the imprint of the West *in particular*, and not just that of some generalised “modern society.” The dualist “us” and “them” mindset that fuels the suspicious, paranoid thinking of conspiracy got a boost with Western nationalism, according to Donskis, and finds expression in the feeling of besieged and self-monitoring greatness that is found in the thinking of both the coloniser and the (colonised, in this case) schizophrenic.

Ramah describes a state of being “Where evry sound+etc+is reactd2. evry thgt...it mks exstnc bad” (223); and comments, “Wsh FBI WLD HLP ME TRACE THEM-” (3801). One of the American movies that she frequently cites is “The Pelican Brief” (1993), which stars a young female law student who must unravel the many layers of an elaborate conspiracy: “Pelcan brief of INDN PBLC. EVRY RLGN.THEY WRK TGTHR” (2580). Ramah is comforted, however, in the thought of her omniscient Christian God: “they continue to spread lies with ther hope that they will continue to protect themselves...again they are wrong... because God watchhes” (64); “MY GOD WATCHES THESE EVIL PPL+THEY WL B PUNSHD...GOD WL ATCK THEM” (261). She likens her suffering to the long night of the Passion of Christ, through which example on earth God the Father offered human redemption.

2282. ...the yelling, the sex, the hitting...everything they did - including physical pain - stopping my toilet etc.....poisons were real... and now they are doing things with machinebecause i am a machine.....i think its like the passion of Jesus...

4308.PHYSCL IS XCRUCIATNG.I BEAR IT LIKE REPEATD CRUCIFITION IN GODS NAME...

The punishment that Ramah imagines her God bringing down upon the low people of the Indian subcontinent ranges from the natural: “3 years ago - when they did those ‘artificial masterbate thing’...i said - god will bring natural calamities.....and there was rain everyuwhere and floods” (5158), “Guess ? - there was an earthquake at Pak!!think God is with me” (5167); to the man-made: “INDNS ND HTLER.SMBDY HAS2SHOOTAL THM.HEY REM I SD GOD WL CM.HE WL CM” (5167), “I blv in GOD+1 DAY GOD WL PUNSH INDIA.IT DSERVS A HIROSHMA” (4994).

In a key quote from these texts, Ramah is seen to demonstrate her understanding of the mirroring effect of the binary opposition. In the efforts of her enemies to force her to take on the sexual thoughts and feelings that are theirs, and not hers, she becomes “a mirror of what they put in - their dirty language -

which echoes back to them” (2124).

I submit that what Ramah presents to us, her white readers, is a mirror of what we have put in, through the Christian Brothers mission – our language of white supremacy – which echoes back to us in the “traumatised” form of these messages from post-colonial India.

As for Ramah, she has a song in her heart; she is happy to be the envy of others (“:-o”) and the star of this Western classic tale of good and evil:

1517. The SOUND OF MUSIC -lay-ee-lay-who oo!-rly am glad 2go by rt+wrng+am
ok nt2fit indns+b wth god...

794. Hls,trees!THT WHO WS JLS OF HER SD- maria-is thre anythng u do nt
knw:-o.

2744. ... NOW U KNOW M REALY SM1TO B PROUD OF.u always knew that-BT
DID U EVR IMAGNE A STAR+THE BEST HUMAN BEING EVR?
It takes A LOT OF CHARACTER2FACE WHAT I HAVE+STIL B A STAR
PERFRMER+AN XCLENT BEING.....JST KNW THAT MILIONS WANT2B LIKE ME.

The appeal of Ramah’s “writing from below” is to be recognised as “writing from above.” In responding to this appeal, it is necessary to recognise a form of social protest that draws on the secret of duality and reversibility – which we might call, drawing away from Baudrillard, “the intelligence of unreason.” When Ramah insists, “millions want to be like me,” it is this fantasy appropriation of Supreme Being that we might take her to mean.

Notes

1. The name has been changed in order to respect the privacy of ‘Ramah’.
2. I note that I did write to Ramah that I suspected that she suffered from

schizophrenia (May 19, 2005), but she rejected this idea, and as far as I know, she has never seen a psychiatrist. Certainly, the possibility of mental illness had not occurred to the Christian Brothers, nor to most of my own extended family before I raised the question; they had simply found her character manipulative and off-putting.

3. ‘Ramah’ was born to a Muslim family and raised as a Catholic among the majority Hindus. She maintains a complicated relation to both the Brahmin class of Indian higher authority, and to the working class-born Australian and Irish missionaries in India.

4. It is well known in contemporary studies of domination, for example (Benjamin, 1988) that the master and the slave must work together to maintain their relation, and that their order of power may be considered in reverse (so that the slave is the master of the master).

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