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INVISIBLE QUEERS:

Investigating the 'other' Other in gay visual cultures

by

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DECLARATION

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I declare that *Invisible queers: investigating the 'other' Other in gay visual cultures* is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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31 August 2008

SUMMARY AND KEY TERMS

The apparent 'invisibility', or lack of representation of black men in contemporary mainstream gay visual cultures is the primary critical issue that the study engages with. The study presupposes that the frequency with which white men appear in popular representations of 'gayness' prevails over that of black men. In order to substantiate this assumption, this study analyses selected issues of the South African queer men's lifestyle magazine G*ay Pages*. Gay visual cultures appear to simultaneously conflate 'whiteness' and normative homosexuality, while marginalising black gay men by means of positioning 'blackness' and 'gayness' as irreconcilable identity constructs. Images of the gay male 'community' disseminated by queer and mainstream media constantly offer stereotypical, distorted and race-biased notions of gay men, which ingrain the exclusive cultural equation of white men and ideal homomasculinity. The disclosure of racist and selectively homophobic ideologies, which seem to inform gay visual representation, is therefore the chief concern of the dissertation.

By investigating selected images that ostensibly embody the complex cultural relationship between race and homomasculinity, the study addresses the following forms of visual representation: colonial representations of 'blackness'; so-called gay 'colonial' representations; black self-representation; *gay* black self-representation; and contemporary representations of homomasculinity in advertisements and queer men's lifestyle magazines such as *Gay Pages*. A genealogy of images is explored in order to illustrate the ways in which 'blackness' and 'whiteness' are respectively positioned as contradictory to and synonymous with dominant visual representations of homomasculinity in gay visual cultures. The hegemony of 'whiteness' in images sourced from colonial systems of representation, queer male art and commercial publicity, for example, are thus critiqued in order to address the various race-based prejudices that appear to be symptomatic of contemporary gay visual cultures.

Key terms: black homophobia; 'blackness'; black self-representation; colonial fantasy; colonial representations of 'blackness'; consumerism; gay black self-

representation; gay 'colonial' representations; the gay niche market; *Gay Pages*; heterosexualisation; homomasculinity; 'Othering'; the South African gay press; 'whiteness'; queer advertising images; queer racism.

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

As a vantage point, it is imperative that the visual realm should not be conceived of as a solitary entity, but rather as a product of the many, diverse visual *cultures* that permeate contemporary society (Corbett 2005:18, 19). Moreover, one should not consider this miscellany only in terms of media or the divides between traditional art history and visual studies, but also in terms of the varied socio-cultural groups, organised around race, gender or sexual orientation, which cultivate the melange of visual cultures that one is faced with today. The process of locating and investigating the visual culture of a particular social group is, however, further complicated by the inherent pluralism that seemingly characterises such constituencies. The feminist critique of traditional art history, for example, is based on the political notion that patriarchy acts as an organising principle that elevates male production and discourse at the expense of the exclusion and oppression of women (Parker & Pollock 1987:87).

Nevertheless, the feminist movement has long come under scrutiny for being white-dominated and exclusive with regard to the ways in which it has not always accounted for the disparities among women along the lines of race, class and sexual orientation (Broude & Garrard 2005:1). The critique hinges on the notion that the interests of black feminists, lesbian feminists and even black lesbian feminists suffer when the discipline is aligned with a particularised and essentialist category of 'woman' that is normatively white, middle-class and heterosexual, but professes to represent or speak on behalf of 'all' women. Thus, although the field of visual culture owes a great deal to the scholarly advances made by feminism, the discipline simultaneously reminds one of the pitfalls that accompany academic studies that do not account for internal differences amongst social subjects assumed to be the 'same'.

Similarly to the manner in which feminism critiques patriarchy, queer theory conceives of the dominance of heteronormative culture as creating a social

milieu in which sexualities are structured hierarchically, and therefore within which heterosexuality exists as the norm against which all other sexual orientations are measured (Foucault 1980:45; Corber & Valocchi 2003:3). In order to curb the restrictions imposed on queer culture by heteronormativity, gay and lesbian artists, publishers and media-workers, in conjunction with civil rights movements and other efforts at political mobilisation, seemingly set out to create a queer visual culture that attends to the so-called 'gay experience'. Following suit, scholars seek to theorise queer visual culture and base their research in a variety of disciplines, such as sociology and art history, that explore, analyse or excavate queer presences in contemporary cultural artefacts (Gamson 2000:351).

Yet, referring to a singular or unified queer visual culture, instead of concerning oneself with the many possible visual expressions of gay identity that are created, inevitably suggests a quandary that resonates with the critique of feminism as seemingly inflected by race and class-based biases. The key to more adequately theorising queer visual culture is to differentiate between dominant and marginal representations of 'gayness', because although mainstream representations of queers are the most accessible and disseminated, they are often based on stereotypical, ideal models of white gay masculinity (Sullivan 2003:67). The challenge when exploring queer visual culture is therefore to expose images that are prejudiced in terms of their adherence to white, male and middle-class norms. It is the endeavour of this dissertation to challenge the 'taken-for-grantedness' of race in discourses on male homosexuality, and to critically analyse the intersections of racial and sexual identity in selected arenas of gay visual cultures.

1.1 Background and aims of study

The main objective of the study is to point out and critique the ways in which black gay men appear to be constantly marginalised within the queer community, and therefore have limited 'visibility' in gay visual cultures. The study presupposes that images of black gay men are far less ubiquitous than 'normative' representations of white gay men. In view of this, the critical

stance of the dissertation hinges on exploring the contested and problematic nature of gay black masculinity in relation to the following premise: the many contrived, one-dimensional and misguided representations of gay people in visual culture seem to have created a homogenous gay community that is articulated through a variety of media that are informed by colonial fantasy, queer racism and black homophobia. It appears that for many black gay men, the white faces staring back at them from the television screens, magazines and advertising campaigns of queer media seemingly bear no likenesses to their own beings.

Amongst other forms of visual representation, selected colonial imagery, a number of works by gay black artists, and the visual character of the South African gay men's lifestyle magazine *Gay Pages* are explored, analysed and critiqued in order to disclose the race-based prejudices that seemingly characterise contemporary mainstream queer visual media. In exploring the various images that reveal the complicated relationship between queer and racial identities, the study distinguishes between the following forms of representation: colonial representations of 'blackness'; so-called gay 'colonial' representations; black self-representation; *gay* black self-representation; and contemporary representations of gay masculinity in advertising images and visual media such as *Gay Pages*.

The study thus explores a genealogy of images of black and gay masculinity, in order to illustrate the manner in which such visual representations inform, relate to and sometimes contradict one another. Traditional, colonial images of 'feminised' and emasculated black men, for example, are discussed as a means of demonstrating that *contemporary*, normative black self-representations subsequently shun homosexuality in order to reclaim the masculine attributes that black men were denied in white supremacist systems of representation. In view of this, the study shows that black self-representation centres on machismo – constructing black men, mostly, as the antithesis of effeminacy. In the process of reclaiming black masculinity amongst the various colonial representations that circulate in the media,

images of 'real black men' therefore seemingly reinscribe patriarchal, heterosexual privilege.

In challenging the restrictive categories of both race and sexuality, certain gay black artists, however, seek to affirm both their blackness and queerness as equal and complementary elements of their identities (Brod 1995:29). Artists such as Nicholas Hlobo, Rotimi Fani-Kayodé and Lyle Ashton Harris are mentioned in the dissertation and their self-representations noted as examples of how black queer identity is contested, and asserted, in visual culture. The study ultimately seeks to provide a critical evaluation of how black gay men are seemingly *doubly* disenfranchised: not 'black enough' to be black, and not 'queer enough' to gain entry to hegemonic gay communities and cultural forms. The predicament of not quite 'fitting in' or 'appearing' anywhere ultimately steers the study towards an exploration of how black gay men are not only silenced, but also rendered *in*visible.

The invisibility of black queers must therefore be understood as the result of dominant, mainstream gay representations and black self-representations that expel images of gay black men and contain them at the peripheries of visual culture. Gay 'colonial' representation is in fact an exercise in pastiche by which traditional images of the frontiersman, the serviceman and other archetypes of white, male domination are 'queered' (Nast 2002:887). Films like *Brokeback Mountain* (2006), which tells the story of a relationship between two gay cowboys, and the camp appeal of cowboy-chic, for example, re-write the colonial narratives of conquest and serve to further romanticise 'whiteness' and alienate black queers from the ideals of homomasculine beauty and desirability. This exploration of queer visual culture deals not only with that which *is* frequently represented (white homomasculinity), but also, more significantly, with that which *is not* (black homomasculinity).

A considerable part of the study centres on *Gay Pages* and the way in which the commodity images that it contains seemingly promote a hegemonic gay male identity. The magazine was established in 1994 and is the most widely distributed and read South African gay men's lifestyle magazine (Gay Pages

SA 2007:[sp]). According to the magazine's editor Rubin van Niekerk (2008), *Gay Pages* has 45 000 readers in South Africa, and a print run of 12 000 copies per issue. The magazine's official website furthermore proclaims that *Gay Pages* is the only queer magazine that has been consistently present in South Africa for the last fourteen years – as many as fifteen other gay magazines have apparently "started and stopped publishing [in South Africa since 1994, and most] of them survived for less than a year" (Gay Pages SA 2007:[sp]). The magazine is published quarterly and is available in over 700 media outlets across South Africa, Namibia and Botswana, while roughly 200 copies of *Gay Pages* are distributed to gay organisations and travel agents all over the world (Gay Pages SA 2007:[sp]; Van Niekerk 2008).

The study engages with six issues of *Gay Pages*, of which four were published in 2007, while two editions published in the first half of 2008 are also analysed. In articulating the connections between consumerism, the gay niche market and the gay press, these selected issues of *Gay Pages* are employed as purposive samples. A variety of commodity images from these magazines are thus approached from a critical perspective underpinned by the assumption that black queers are 'unacceptable' versions of gay life (Sender 2001:75). As a result, a class, race and gender specific image of queer consumers is seemingly created in line with the interests of marketing, heteronormative ideals and the stereotype of all gay people being 'generally well-off'.

Images of white gay men are not marked by the taint of race and therefore do not threaten white supremacy *or* heteronormativity, but apparently re-affirm it: 'gay people' are imagined as being exclusively made up of white men, and therefore belong to the *same race* as those in power, whether it be politically, economically or culturally (Chasin 2000a:164). The narrow, extremely limited representations of gay people seems to cultivate an exclusive, imagined, homogenous and inaccurate portrait of the queer constituency (in the minds of heterosexual and gay South Africans alike) and begs the question that informs this study: if 'belonging' is articulated through the consumption of

queer culture, what then of those queers who do not fit the image of normative gay masculinity standardised by gay print media?[1]

1.2 Literature review

It is important to establish that the literature dealing with visual culture, queer culture *and* racial identity is not located within a specific seminal text, volume of works or discipline. Visual studies is in itself interdisciplinary and therefore draws from art history, cultural studies, sociology and queer theory, to name but a few (Bal 2003:5, 6). Therefore, it should be apparent that the *discourses* dealing with race, sexual orientation and visual culture appear more frequently than isolated academic studies that explicitly investigate or surmise the links between these issues. However, owing to the scope of the dissertation, certain subject-specific texts do lend significant insights to its many avenues of investigation. In conjunction with a collection of relevant journals and articles, the following books address the main concerns of the study.

Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron's (1994) *Defiant desire. Gay and lesbian lives in South Africa* is considered a groundbreaking text with regard to the very limited sources focused on queer issues that have been published in South Africa. The publication traces how gay cultures have been shaped historically and organised politically in South Africa since the early twentieth century. The book combines the personal memoirs of gay and lesbian South Africans, retrospectives of 'struggle' and law reformation, and the impact of apartheid on the development of a local queer counterculture in order to grapple with what it means to be homosexual *and* African. Evidently, the contribution of *Defiant desire* to this dissertation is immense, especially with regard to its concerns with dispelling the myth of homosexuality as 'un-

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[1] Lifestyle magazines aimed at other social constituencies, such as women and straight men, similarly propagate normative notions of, for example, femininity and heteromasculinity. The production of homogeneity is therefore not symptomatic of gay publications only, but articulates the overarching manner in which magazines routinely construct readerships that automatically include or exclude other readers in an attempt to instil the notion of a shared identity (Laden 1997:128). Nor, of course, do people automatically agree with the norms and ideas disseminated by the magazines they read (Laden 2003:203).

African' and its chronicling of gay life amidst the social tumult that has played such an important role in defining this country.

In *Black visual culture. Modernity and postmodernity*, Gen Doy (2000) critically explores the theory and practice of black visual culture, and thus considers cultural production by black and Asian artists, as well as the representation of black subjects in contemporary visual spheres and academic discourses. *Black visual culture* is central to the study, considering that much of its critique deals with the construction of black identity in the presence of racism, essentialism, homophobia and the stifling nature of Western art history. Doy seeks to articulate the manner in which black artists contest their own racial identities, seeking rather to be acknowledged purely as artists than as *black* artists, but also as *gay* artists (Doy 2000:3). Furthermore, the book expresses the differences between black and white attitudes toward postmodernism in terms of political, and personal, views of history, power, identity, sexuality and memory. *Black visual culture* resonates with the main concerns of the dissertation by enunciating the complex atmosphere in which black identities are created, with regard to economic power, the power of representation, objectification, colonialism and postmodernity.

Nikki Sullivan's (2003) *A critical introduction to queer theory* and *Queer studies. An interdisciplinary reader*, edited by Robert Corber and Stephen Valocchi (2003), aid the study in terms of delineating the origins, main objectives and contemporary concerns of queer theory. Furthermore, both publications strongly address racism with regard to the unequal distribution of power (and visibility) in the gay community. Sullivan, Corber and Valocchi therefore articulate the theory's key critiques of 'heteronormativity', but also seek to scrutinise the discipline in terms of its neglect of anti-racist theory. The authors provide, and employ, analyses that are structured in line with exploring queer culture without omitting or ignoring the interplay between queerness, class, gender and race.

White on black: images of Africa and blacks in western popular culture is Jan Nederveen Pieterse's (1992) seminal contribution toward critically examining Western culture, and visual culture, with regard to its views of the 'Other'. Pieterse explores the 'recycling' of stereotypical images of blacks in contemporary visual culture, which were primarily created by colonial ideology and that are still perpetuated. The focus of *White on black* must be understood as not dealing simply with images of blacks, but rather with *white culture's* images of blacks (Pieterse 1992:10). In other words, modern visual representations of black individuals remain stereotypical when not created from a perspective unaffected by racism, sensation, fantasy, exoticism and white supremacy. In understanding how black masculinity has become so far removed from queerness, one must investigate how colonial representations have set the image of 'the black man' in stone by means of typecasting it as unequivocally heterosexual, amongst a series of narrow depictions that include 'the savage', 'the primitive' and 'the entertainer', for example (Hall 1995b:21).

Alexandra Chasin's (2000b) *Selling out: the gay and lesbian movement goes to the market* facilitates discourses on the interrelationships between the gay movement, consumerism, the gay press and the gay niche market. Chasin explores the manner in which gay identity, group affiliation and citizenship have become increasingly commodified and sets out to critique the contemporary, market-driven shift that has seemingly removed gay identification from the political sphere, in favour of an almost exclusively 'consumerist ethos' (Valocchi 1999:220). The economic disparities that exist between differently raced gay men are therefore explored in relation to the apparent social dilemma of markets and gay media primarily adhering to, and perpetuating, a commodified version of homomasculinity that hinges wholly on the linking of 'whiteness' with affluence (Chasin 2000b:36). Moreover, with regard to the vexing issue of black gay men's marginalisation in queer visual culture, the text's critiques of the so-called 'white-run' gay press (Chasin 2000a:160) are indispensable to the endeavours of this study. The presence and ideological position of black gay men is therefore extracted from these

publications in order to meet the needs of the research, although none *overtly* address the relationship between queer and black cultures.

1.3 Theoretical framework

The theories that are employed in the study are varied, yet related to and dependent on one another: they mainly comprise queer theory, gender studies and postcolonial theory. Holistically approaching the topic of the dissertation means considering the majority of cultural aspects that appear to affect, impede, shape and contest the queer identities of black men. The study critically considers the constituencies of race, gender, class and sexuality, as they are discursively located in these theoretical approaches. The relevance of queer theory is self-evident when considering that the study hinges on the formation of 'alternative' sexual personas that challenge the dominance of normative heterosexual identities: not accepting, but rather criticising the 'naturalness' of heteronormativity is nevertheless queer theory's major concern (Corber & Valocchi 2003:4). Judith Butler's contributions to queer theory and the study of sexualities and gender, for example, are seminal – her book *Gender trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity* (1990) "offers one of the most incisive and widely read critiques of heterosexuality" (Hennessy 1994:37).

Butler views the dominant cultural order, so-called 'heteronormativity', as categorising sexualities that do not abide by socially assigned gender-roles as perverse and deviant (Butler 1991:21; Foucault 1980:36, 37, 38): same-sex practices disrupt the stability of masculinity and femininity, and that which is expected of each gender, and are therefore excluded and oppressed. However, in this dissertation, queer theory itself comes under scrutiny for its 'race-blindness', whereby a discourse is created in which the impact of the paradigm is legitimised, but simultaneously re-articulated to cast a wider net with regard to multiple ethnic and racial gay identities. Queer theory still contributes significantly to understanding how power is unequally distributed in society amongst differently sexually oriented individuals, but it does not always account sufficiently for some queers being discriminated against on

grounds of sexuality *and* race. The study engages with particular tenets of queer theory, such as its critique of the 'heterosexualisation' of gay culture (Chasin 2000b:45), but by no means situates it as the key theoretical paradigm that informs the research.

Feminism and men's studies are also integral theoretical components of the investigation. Although the discourse of men's studies is seemingly closer to the heart of the study, since it chiefly explores aspects of *male*, black homosexuality, feminism is by no means disregarded. Throughout this study, the feminist approach is not explicitly made use of, but its contribution to other theories (in terms of facilitating expansive critiques of sexuality and the social construction of 'femininity' and 'masculinity') is recognised. For the purposes of this investigation, masculinity is engaged with more thoroughly, and although all of the theory's intricacies are not applicable, male homosexuality and race are discussed with regard to a specific, and insightful, tenet of this approach: the notion of 'essential' or hegemonic male identity.

Masculinity, like femininity, is a *construct* and is therefore created in line with particular attributes, such as sexual prowess and physical strength, which are conceived of as categorically 'male' (Brod 1995:16). What hegemonic masculinity does is project these attributes onto men as a collective, thereby creating a homogenous, singular and obviously restricting social group, without acknowledging the disparities that exist between men (Brod 1995:22). Thus, in the process of essentialising men, many masculinities are 'silenced', because that which is dominantly thought of as 'masculine' is a patriarchal, Western and often homophobic ideal (Ouzgane & Morrell 2005:4). In curbing hegemony, the discourse of men's studies has shifted toward exploring the possibility of many masculini*ties*, which include homomasculinity and black masculinity – a venture perpetuated by this study.

However, neither the dissertation nor the majority of scholarly approaches to masculinity explore queer and black masculinities uncritically. Similar to the way in which hegemonic, mainstream masculinity seeks to uphold certain 'standards' of what it means to be a man, both queer and black masculinities

have their own restrictions. Race and homosexuality are seemingly denied, respectively, in homomasculinity and black masculinity, thus creating circumstances in which black, gay men find themselves in an untenable situation. In other words, one aspect of black queer identity constantly has to take precedence over another in order to legitimate *either* 'blackness' or gayness, but these elements seemingly cannot exist alongside each other (Sullivan 2003:69). 'Blackness' is, however, not approached uncritically and the study therefore engages with critiques of racial essentialism, in terms of the social constructedness of race (Hall 1995b:443) and so-called 'post-black' theories (Van der Watt 2004:48).

Furthermore, 'whiteness', in comparison with 'blackness', is seemingly a non-raced construct and therefore poses as a natural and transparent quality (Van der Watt 2005:120). In other words, white queers seemingly do not face the same dilemma, because their racial identities are 'invisible' and therefore 'irrelevant'. 'Whiteness' presents itself as neither threatening nor deviant, because it cannot challenge or dismantle the norm; it *is* the norm. However, theorists such as Richard Dyer (1997) seek to 'race', or develop studies of, 'whiteness' and expose it as a construct that continually represents and re-inscribes white superiority (Van der Watt 2005:120). Dyer's book *White* (1997), for example, explores the manner in which 'whiteness' appears quite pervasively in visual culture, but remains unchallenged despite the fact that it functions to buttress specific social and political inequalities, of which 'entry' to the gay community can, for example, be inferred with regard to the study.

Closely linked to these notions, and used mainly in conjunction with the theories of masculinity, postcolonialism constitutes the third major theoretical approach of the dissertation. Fundamentally, a history of white supremacy is articulated in the study as directly contributing to the apparent masculinity-crisis facing black homosexuals, because of hegemonic masculinity being conceived of as originating during the colonial era (Ouzgane & Morrell 2005:23). In view of this, the emasculating colonial practices of scientific racism, segregation and degradation created imbalances between black and

white *masculinity*: Western patriarchy does not merely constitute power over women, it also allows for the control of 'other' men (McClintock 1995:14).

Theories of 'The Other' form an integral part of postcolonial theory and manifest in numerous texts dealing with imperialism, white supremacy and the objectification of black people. Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), for example, points out the manner in which the 'powerful' and 'masculine' West constructs the Orient as 'feminine' and accordingly attributes notions of passivity, weakness and inferiority to it and its inhabitants, especially women (McClintock 1995:14). The process of 'othering' thus entails a particular group defining itself in opposition to an 'other' group, by endowing itself ('Us') with positive or superior qualities, while projecting negativity and inferiority onto 'Them' – its antithesis (Crang 1998:61). Anne McClintock (1995:14), in her re-evaluation of Said's text, suggests that 'othering' ultimately entails *power relations* that include, but are not limited to, men's control over women.

In other words, black men are not exempt from the 'othering' gaze of Westerners and are therefore imagined as possessing an 'other' masculinity: Kobena Mercer (2000:465) suggests that black men are conceived of as hypersexual in (white) gay discourses and art, such as the photography of Robert Mapplethorpe, and are accordingly objectified to such an extent that the traditional concepts of white, patriarchal authority are rearticulated. The notion of an 'other' Other, suggested in the title of this dissertation, therefore refers to the manner in which black gay men are 'different' in terms of race (with regard to 'whiteness') *and* sexuality (with regard to heteronormativity). In other words, black queers constitute a minority *within* a minority, while white queers are seemingly oppressed only in terms of sexuality, and therefore still benefit from their racial identities (Hennessy 1994:164). Thus, the disgrace of always having to be measured against the superior, white male, has led to the exaggeration of black masculinity, to a point where any suggestion of 'queerness' or effeminacy is seemingly met with hostility and denial (Nagel 2000:114, 123).

1.4 Methodological framework

The research is carried out qualitatively, in the sense that the study embraces a strong theoretical background and makes use of various paradigms to personally interpret and explore relevant visual phenomena and to offer speculative explanations. A brief content analysis that discloses the incongruities between the frequencies with which black versus white men appear in several issues of *Gay Pages* is also undertaken. Furthermore, in order to fully comprehend queer theory, gender studies and postcolonialism, the implementation of a literature study evidently plays a significant role in the dissertation. In other words, grappling with the theory itself, before applying it to an example from visual culture, ultimately constitutes the methodological framework that this dissertation employs. In dealing with the myriad representations that reflect the complex nature of the image of black homomasculinity, theoretical approaches are appropriated to critique, reinforce or refute what such depictions may imply.

Selected examples of colonial and gay 'colonial' imagery are, for example, analysed from postcolonial perspectives, which seek to undermine the ideological drives that equate 'whiteness' and humanity, but demonise or fetishise other races. However, colonial representations of 'blackness' amount to a single strand of the research: other forms of representation, as outlined in the aims of the study, are similarly scrutinised despite being dispersed in a variety of media or calling for theories other than postcolonialism. The research methodology can be structured as firstly identifying appropriate visual artefacts, and subsequently inferring relevant theoretical approaches that aid the analyses of colonial and gay 'colonial' representation, as well as black self-representation, *gay* black self-representation and queer advertising images.

The images are generally interpreted iconographically, and are therefore read as texts that correspond to particular conventions or archetypes that characterise visual representations of gay and black masculinity throughout different historical periods and visual cultures (Adams 1996:36, 37). The

apparent genealogy of the images thus predicates that the visual analyses combine information and critiques from various visual media, comprising: "cultural themes [such as the valorisation of white masculinity], available contemporary texts [such as advertisements], texts transmitted from past cultures [such as colonial imagery] … [and] artistic precedents" (Adams 1996:37) such as oil paintings.

1.5 Overview of chapters

The first of the two major chapters of the dissertation, namely *'Blackness', queerness, masculinity, and representation*, explores the links between sexuality, race and masculinity with regard to gender studies, queer theory and postcolonial theory. The colonial construction of 'the black male' and the re-articulation of white supremacy through queered 'colonial' images are investigated in relation to the notion of homosexuality as 'un-African' and the dilemma seemingly facing black gay men in terms having to elevate either 'blackness' or 'gayness' at the expense of denying the other (Epprecht 1998:645).

This chapter encapsulates what has been referred to as colonial representations of 'blackness', which emasculate black men and cast them as inferior vis-à-vis white masculinity (Pieterse 1992:89, 124, 132), and gay 'colonial' representations, which unequivocally equate 'whiteness' and the aesthetic and ideological ideals of homomasculinity (Mirzoeff 1995:135, 136). Furthermore, the manner in which black gay identity is asserted and contested in visual culture in the works of artists such as Nicholas Hlobo, Rotimi Fani-Kayodé and Lyle Ashton Harris, is also briefly considered. This chapter explores the 'macho' or 'straight' qualities of normative black self-representation in comparison with the simultaneous affirmation of 'blackness' *and* 'gayness', as located in *gay* black self-representation (hooks 1995a:92; Mercer 1996:122).

The third chapter, *Markets, media, and the gay press: the marginalisation of black queer men in contemporary gay visual cultures*, provides critiques of the

gay niche market, gay print media and advertising images targeting or depicting gay men. Here, the study centres on consumerism and the way in which markets and capitalist ideology appear to propel the mainstream gay press toward creating a homogenous, 'imaginary' queer community that functions in terms of race and class-based biases (O'Dougherty 2003:75). The assimilation and subsequent 'heterosexualisation' (Chasin 2000b:45) of 'gayness' by dominant, heteronormative culture and the pervasiveness of the image of the so-called 'good' (white, male and middle class) homosexual in gay visual cultures are therefore critiqued (Smith 1994:64).

The manner in which gay publications, such as *Gay Pages*, seemingly exclude gay black men serves to facilitate critiques of the manner in which racism and 'white' editorial power continually appease market forces by perpetuating the culturally tolerated ideal of white male homosexuality (Chasin 2000a:160). This chapter analyses a selected number of images, primarily advertisements, as a means of critiquing the cultural dominance of 'whiteness', its synonymy with 'gayness' (Dyer 1997:233), and the manner in which black gay men are positioned as 'less' queer and rendered invisible in gay visual cultures. The fourth and final chapter of the dissertation provides summaries of the preceding chapters, as well as my suggestions for further research. My contribution is highlighted in the chapter, together with the limitations of the study.

CHAPTER TWO
'BLACKNESS', QUEERNESS, MASCULINITY, AND REPRESENTATION

According to Phillip Brian Harper (1995:393), "it is frequently the case that one man's efforts at self-representation implicate distortion in the representation of another". In other words, since representation never implies neutrality, it always operates with a political or cultural agenda and therefore seeks to empower a particular group by creating myths and prejudices around another, despite the fact that these constructs are often not accurate reflections of social reality (Pieterse 1992:227). This chapter identifies several types of representation that illustrate the manner in which black men are stripped of agency; stereotypically depicted; marginalised or not represented at all; and subjected to essentialism. These representations are found in a variety of visual cultures and comprise colonial representations of 'blackness'; so-called gay 'colonial' representations; black self-representation; and gay black self-representation.

Selected examples from each of these forms of visual representation are mentioned in this chapter. They are not structured as isolated phenomena; instead, this chapter creates a sense of coherence between these seemingly disparate cultural expressions of race, gender and sexuality. In order to sufficiently address the major concern of the study, which primarily centres on gay black masculinity in *Gay Pages*, the many avenues through which discourses on 'blackness' and queerness permeate are identified.[1] Therefore, this chapter stretches across contemporary and traditional images that appear to play defining roles in grappling with the problematic nature of the representation, or lack of representation, of gay black subjects. Yet, more significantly, this part of the study makes transparent the manner in which no

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[1] Although a number of stereotypical representations of black men, for example, are discussed in this chapter, not all of them are invoked in the subsequent chapters and are therefore included in the interest of comprehensiveness. In other words, this chapter contextualises my critiques of *Gay Pages* that appear in Chapter Three by dealing with the many forms of representation, such as gay 'colonial' representations and normative black self-representation, that appear to inform the cultural segregation of 'blackness' and homomasculinity, which constitutes the main critical issue explored in the remainder of the study.

single image exists independently, but is always created in reaction to, or in accordance with, representations that already circulate in society.

Colonial representations of 'blackness' are explored at the outset of this chapter, specifically because images from the colonial era seemingly affect present-day depictions of black men. This occurs in terms of contemporary visual cultures simply rehashing outdated, racist stereotypes *or* seeking to negate such narrow conceptions of black masculinity by countering them with affirmative imagery. Selected images of black people produced under white cultural imperialism are pointed out as a means of exposing the supremacist logic of the colonists with regard to the supposed inferiority of cultural Others. The social 'constructedness' of race is also alluded to by considering the processes of 'othering' by which 'blackness' is placed on a continuum with several other characteristics that are not only different from those attributed to whites, but also always subordinate to them (Hall 1995a:443; Crang 1998:61). It is the feminisation and subsequent emasculation of black men, meant to contrast with the virility and dominance of the masculine West, that forms the focus of this section of the chapter. The stereotypical positioning of black men as servants, entertainers and children is therefore explored with regard to a number of images that speak of the manner in which black masculinity is constantly demeaned in colonial ideology.

The second part of the chapter concerns itself with proposing that the cultural, and visual, synonymy of 'whiteness' and gayness is somehow partly predicated on gay visual culture's nostalgia for colonial ideals, especially in terms of romanticising and queering traditional white heroes of the frontier. In other words, gay 'colonial' representations are conceived of in this study as perpetuating the supposed superiority of white masculinity by rearticulating the mythic qualities of cowboys and other hypermasculine icons in a gay vernacular. The rise of so-called homomasculinity and the gay 'clone' era (Fritscher 2005:[sp]), or the fashioning of gay masculinity after heterosexual, 'butch' aesthetics in Western spheres of the 1970s and 1980s, is analysed as seemingly creating a gendered and racialised hierarchy in queer culture. White gay men are dominant within this system of power, seemingly because

of the explicit parallels that are sometimes drawn between 'whiteness', beauty, and hegemonic, 'straight' masculinity.

The commodification of cowboy-culture, as well as the ubiquity with which white men appear in homoerotic depictions of desirability, is critiqued as not only fostering the notion that gayness is farther removed from 'blackness' than 'whiteness', but also as creating the bias that gay black men embody less appealing versions of gay masculinity. With regard to black self-representation, this study aligns itself with the notion that the majority of images depicting black men in popular visual culture hinge on machismo, and therefore seemingly reject any signs of effeminacy or queerness (Gray 1995:402). In the process of restoring black masculinity, these images seemingly challenge colonial, racist depictions of black men by removing them from the realm of the 'feminine' and therefore, simultaneously, from the constraints of 'inferiority'. However, what becomes evident is that conventional black self-representation or so-called 'Cool Poses' (Saint-Aubin 1994:1059), despite providing an affront to 'whiteness', also reinforce heteropatriarchy by primarily depicting 'true' black masculinity as being normatively characterised by sexism, homophobia and 'toughness'.

In effect, this study's critique of black self-representation ultimately aims to create awareness around the fact that 'authentic' black masculinity seems to be hostilely positioned against black, male homosexuality, thereby excluding black queers from their own communities and from claims of 'real blackness'. Furthermore, the often-militant reinforcement of heteronormativity in many black cultures is explored with regard to notions of homosexuality as 'un-African', or as something 'foreign', and therefore 'white', imposed on blacks by perverted colonists. The reluctance of black masculinity to admit the possibility of black gayness is exposed as being somehow affected by the linking of 'whiteness' to queer culture, despite evidence that it is *homophobia* and not homosexuality that was introduced to indigenous black cultures during European 'civilising missions' to Other spaces (Epprecht 2005:254).

The final part of this chapter engages with gay black self-representation and the manner in which queer black artists, such as Lyle Ashton Harris, Rotimi Fani-Kayodé and Nicholas Hlobo, challenge not only the dominant 'whiteness' of gay visual cultures, but also the hegemony of 'authentic' black masculinity. Firstly, the conditional acceptance of the postmodern paradigm in black visual culture is explored with regard to issues of agency, subjectivity, history and identity. Postmodern notions of the instability and flexibility of identity seem to be adopted especially by gay black image-makers seeking to challenge discourses that homogenise blacks and propagate 'essentialism', while these artists appear to simultaneously retain modernist notions of subjectivity in order to overtly express their gay black 'selves' (Doy 2000:141). Moreover, this section also ties Homi K Bhabha's discourses on 'mimicry' and 'hybridity' (Doy 2000:134) to normative black self-representation and gay black self-representation: whereas 'Cool Poses' seemingly 'mimic', but partly subvert, original conceptions of black masculinity, gay black self-representation appears to fuse racial identity with a multitude of other subject positions, including homosexuality. Finally, a few images that illustrate the manner in which gay black artists subvert black masculinity by reconciling queerness and 'blackness' are discussed in order to legitimate that black homosexuality is not only a reality, but it is also made 'visible' in certain contexts.

2.1 Images of emasculation: colonial representations of 'blackness'

In dealing with racial identity, the construction and representation thereof, and the manner in which it inscribes 'difference', one must explore the historical events and milieus that have played defining roles in shaping modern societies that are unequally divided along the lines of class, gender, sexual orientation, and race. This section of the study therefore aligns itself with Gen Doy's (2000:102) assertion that contemporary manifestations of prejudice, exclusion and oppression can be traced back to the earliest forms of capitalism that, through economic exploitation, positioned the West at the seat of power.

Evidently, what Doy refers to is the history of colonialism: a span of centuries that articulated an overarching Western imperialist project that involved (amongst other injustices) slavery, taking unwarranted ownership of indigenous spaces, and establishing the Eurocentric notion of white supremacy (Stam & Spence 2004:878, 879). As Anne McClintock (1995:5) notes, imperialism should not be conceived of as a 'external' phenomenon that occurred exclusively beyond Western borders: acquiring knowledge, often contrived, of 'Other' cultures, ultimately aided Europe's *self*-definition. In other words, "early European colonisers didn't consider themselves 'white'; they identified as 'Christian', 'English', or 'free', for at the time 'white' didn't represent a racial category … [therefore] the 'white race' evolved in opposition to but simultaneously with the 'black race'" (Keating 1995:912). The construction of an Other, whether it be in terms of skin colour, cultural practices or geographical location, ultimately served as a scapegoat onto which negativity and inferiority could be projected (Crang 1998:61), in order to legitimate that the inverse of these attributes typify colonial sensibilities (Mirzoeff 1995:136).

The imperialist rhetoric of white superiority, black inferiority, and romanticised, patriarchal notions of 'conquest' and 'the frontier', manifested discursively in colonial fiction narratives, anthropological studies and, of course, visual culture. Mike Crang (1998:71), for example, explores the manner in which the novels of Joseph Conrad, Rider Haggard and their contemporaries portray Africa as 'the Dark Continent', metaphorically 'enlightened' by the civilising missions of European explorers. In colonial fiction, the white, unequivocally male, protagonist takes it upon himself to free indigenous people from their 'savagery' by, ironically, enslaving them under colonial rule: in Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1887 [1885]), for example, the fictional Kukuana tribe's 'blackness' is constituted as an ethnographic object of knowledge, "and at the same time controlled" by the novel's white protagonists in order "to make [the Kukuanas] palatable for a [Victorian] audience" without obscuring their "exotic and erotic potential" (Bunn 1988:13).

Furthermore, the end of the eighteenth century signalled an influx of scientific research aimed at providing 'logical' explanations for the differences between the races (Pieterse 1992:42). Such studies were, however, already infused with racism, because they were primarily conducted from an imperialist subjectivity and therefore fixated on naturalising the 'inherent' superiority of the white race by, for example, equating blacks and primates (Figure 1),[2] while propagating the synonymy of 'whiteness' and 'humanness' (Saint-Aubin 2005:32). Colonial, racist ideologies were therefore also predicated on biological disparities between the races that were assumed to point toward imagined cultural differences: whites as 'naturally' civilised, and blacks as 'naturally' primitive (Saint-Aubin 2005:23). Moreover, one must bear in mind that visual representations of scientific racism, like 'Camper's facial angle', form part of a larger genealogy of images that are historically positioned against racial equality.
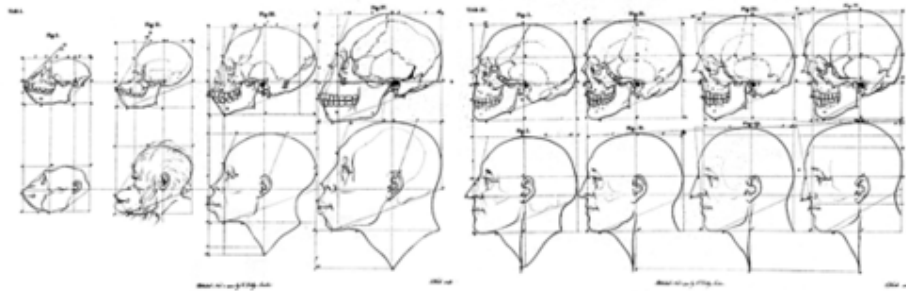
Figure 1: Pieter Camper's facial angle, 1791.
(Pieterse 1992:47).

Given that this dissertation is based within the field of visual culture, it has an ardent affinity with the visual, in terms of analysing representations that reveal social relations, struggles and ideological structures. In studying the history of colonialism, this dissertation is, in fact, in the process of studying a history or iconology of *images*. History, in itself, is contentious, because it is not a mere

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[2] 'Camper's facial angle', for example, is a scientific process of measuring human faces as a means of discerning which race is 'closer' to animals (developed by the Dutch anatomy professor Pieter Camper in the eighteenth century), thereby creating a racial hierarchy in which white men occupy the prime position, while blacks represent the "lowest human variety" (Pieterse 1992:46).

reiteration of the past, but rather an interpretation thereof. In other words, the process of recording the past, or 'making history', is a rather subjective endeavour that, to a certain degree, involves an exercise in power. Similarly, representation also hinges on power relations (Lacey 1998:143), since the party that is represented is subjugated to the party that *represents it.*

In terms of such power relations, it is important to realise that the various visual examples that are discussed throughout this dissertation are not neutral or innocent, but are loaded with ideological intentions. With regard to visual media dating from the colonial era, Jan Nederveen Pieterse (1992:10) states that these representations are not simply images of blacks; they are *white cultures's images of blacks*, and therefore can inevitably be read as biased and distorted. Thus, Pieterse (1992:9) argues that colonial imagery serves to constantly 'recycle' notions of Western (white) hegemony, by portraying black people in a variety of stereotypes that relegate "people of African descent to an inferior position" (Keating 1995:906).

The rationale for studying colonial representations of 'blackness' is twofold with regard to this study. Firstly, the very nature of these images positions them in need of analysis, because they are created and ultimately disseminated as stereotypes (Pieterse 1992:9). These stereotypes are, however, rarely positive, empathetic or pluralistic representations of 'blackness', and the consequences of their circulation are more often damaging than empowering. A stereotype functions by stripping a particular social or cultural group of its differences, thereby oversimplifying and homogenising its members, as a means of serving the interests of the group by which it is created (Lacey 1998:135, 138, 139).

With regard to colonial imagery, for example, the supposed 'inferiority' of black subjects seems to directly legitimate the supposed 'superiority' of white Westerners, because "the relations depicted [between whites and blacks] are not those of dialogue but of domination" (Pieterse 1992:10). Furthermore, although stereotypes are not accurate reflections of social reality, they do *impact* on the socio-cultural landscape by prescribing role-expectations, and

thereby 'fix' black people in particular subject-positions (Dyer 2002:2). What remains to be explored, however, is the manner in which these representations affect the self-image of the black subject, which forms the second vein of this inquiry into stereotyping.

Frantz Fanon's seminal text *Black skin, white masks* (1986 [1952]), a psychoanalytically inspired study of colonialism and racism (Hall 1996b:15), is readily invoked by black cultural theorists such as Stuart Hall and bell hooks, because of Fanon's notion of blacks as 'internalising' colonial, racist and stereotypical discourses that centre on the black subject (Hall 1996b:16). It is therefore important, first and foremost, that race be conceived of as a social construct, or what Fanon calls a process of 'epidermalisation': "the inscription of race on the skin" by colonial rule (Hall 1996b:16). In other words, colonial ideology seemingly encounters 'blackness' psychologically, thereby "using the [appearance of black skin] as a metaphor for [or signifier of] … an ineradicable, physical sign of negative difference" (Pollock 1992:46).

Race does not exist outside of discourse, but is in actual fact *created* by the images, 'objective' sciences and racist rhetoric that circulate in society and specifically in the media (Hall 1995a:443; Pieterse 1992:10). Images of blacks not only articulate, and subsequently shape, white attitudes toward 'blackness', but simultaneously affect the lens through which black people view themselves. In other words, the many stereotypical positions that black people occupy within racist images that are underpinned by the notion of blacks as somehow 'lesser' beings, in the tradition of colonial thought, are negated or subverted by blacks as a means of counteracting the inherent debasement of such representations (Hall 1996b:19). However, the manner in which these negations manifest occasionally creates new dilemmas surrounding black subjectivity: bell hooks (1995a:209), for example, argues that in denying a loss of agency, certain images, especially of black men, are created in line with sexism and homophobia.

Scholars like Stuart Hall (1996b:20), in following Fanon, believe that representation is the ideal site for asserting black identity by means of 're-

epidermalisation'; thus re-defining race or 'blackness', by self-defining it. Yet, as illustrated by hooks's statement that patriarchy and heteronormativity sometimes inform black self-representation, one should not consider exercises in 're-epidermalisation' as unambiguously positive. These issues, as pertaining to black self-representation, *gay* black self-representation and black masculinity, are explored in the subsequent sections of this chapter. At present, however, further justification for deliberately investigating visual images created during the colonial area is necessary.

Firstly, one must realise that stereotypes concerning 'blackness' have not disappeared from the social imagination of Westerners and therefore still feature prominently in popular visual culture, despite having "undergone numerous drastic modifications" (Pieterse 1992:12). In support of this, Hall (1995b:21) argues that the stereotypes created and propagated by imperial literature and iconography still feature in the domain of modern entertainment media, despite being "somewhat blunted by time". Secondly, in order to comprehend why (and which features of) colonial imagery incite outrage or counter-representations, one must view contemporary representations of 'blackness' as having their origins in the 'base-images' of colonial fantasy: the 'slave-figure', the 'native' and the 'entertainer', to name but a few (Hall 1995b:21).

The genealogy of images that inform racist discourses did not somehow come to an end the moment colonialism did; rather, these representations have trickled down the centuries and therefore still resonate with present-day studies such as this. Gen Doy (2000:245) motivates that history is of great significance to the study of black visual culture, and therefore to this dissertation with regard to its investigation of black self-representation, since most blacks share "a common wellspring in the transatlantic slave trade and colonialism" (Powell 1997:13). Grappling with the 'aesthetics' of, and issues addressed by, the diasporic art of certain black image-makers, therefore requires that one garner knowledge of the many forms of discrimination and segregation that constitute a collective experience for many blacks (Powell 1997:13).

Before delving into a number of colonial representations of 'blackness', it is, however, important to delineate exactly what it is that this study investigates with regard to these images. This dissertation finds its bases in men's studies, queer studies and discourses of race, and therefore explicitly explores black masculinity and gay identity, as well as the intersections between them; intersections that are sometimes repudiated. In other words, the manner in which colonialism, and its many forms of oppression, influenced the gendered, sexual and racial identities of black *men*, is fundamentally what this study sets out to explore.

The processes of colonisation are frequently portrayed, and subsequently theorised, in terms of gender relations, but more often than not, they appear to hinge on a male-female dichotomy: "As European *men* crossed the dangerous thresholds of their known worlds, they ritualistically *feminised* borders and boundaries" [emphasis added] (McClintock 1995:24). Furthermore, the work of modernist, so-called 'colonial artists' such as Paul Gauguin reflects "the fantasy scenarios and the exotic mise-en-scène for not only masculinist *but also imperialist* narratives" [emphasis added] (Pacteau 1999:90). Such artistic practices appear to fix male artists in a dominant position from which to objectify, eroticise and colonise women; especially those who form part of the West's imaginary spaces of exoticism and 'otherness' (Figure 2) (Pollock 1992:7, 8, 10).[3]

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[3] Gauguin's colonial journeys to Tahiti in the late nineteenth century, for example, placed him in "a precarious but nevertheless political position of power which authorised him to look and to represent what he saw within [the] interface of … ethnographic and tourist gazes" (Pollock 1992:67). Therefore, Gauguin's depictions of Tahitian women reflect the manner in which the white masculinist endeavours of colonialism manifested in modernist art by making 'other' women signifiers "of a culture that is distanced and subdued, put in its place like a native child – wild, primitive and superstitious, but desirable" (Pollock 1992:68).
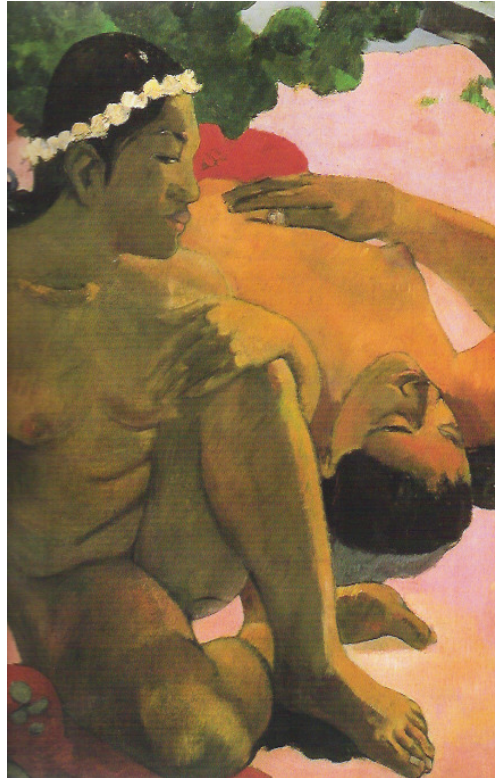
Figure 2: Paul Gauguin, *Aha oe feii?* (detail), 1892.
Oil on canvas, measurements unavailable.
Pushkin Museum, Moscow.
(Eco 2004:13).

The colonial 'penetration' of virgin territories and diagrams of female bodies, with 'mountainous breasts', that pose as maps (McClintock 1995:3, 24), for example, thus speak of a specifically male-oriented objectification of "a *purely feminised geography*" (Pacteau 1999:90). In view of this, David Bunn (1988:11) states that a significant relationship exists between gender-based power and mapmaking in colonial depictions of foreign spaces, owing to the notion that such landscapes are seemingly positioned as uncharted territories waiting "to be inscribed by masculine colonising zeal". In terms of colonial ideology, the time/space dichotomy, which inevitably translates into a masculine/feminine dualism, articulates the masculine vernacular of colonialism with regard to the 'mobility' of white men as 'travellers', who have the prerogative of moving between spaces, which are the static, inferior domains of women (Massey 1994:6, 7).

Thus, there "is a whole set of dualisms whose terms are commonly aligned with time and space … time [is aligned with] History, Progress, Civilisation, Science, Politics and Reason … [while space is aligned with] the other poles of these concepts: stasis, ('simple') reproduction, nostalgia, emotion, aesthetics, the body" (Massey 1994:257). In view of this, Linda Nochlin (1991:35, 36) states it is symptomatic of patriarchal, Western colonial ideologies to conceive of 'natural', feminised 'other' spaces, such as 'the Orient', as characterised by *'timelessness'* or the absence of culture and advancement, which are the faculties of the masculine. At first glance it may appear that imperial projects of conquest and domination, and their repercussions, primarily articulate relations of power between *differently* gendered individuals, but struggles *amongst* men are equally present and significant (Pieterse 1992:174). McClintock (1995:14) argues that the postcolonial condition is not experienced in the same way by both genders, presumably because the force of white domination affected men and women differently.

Yet, although one can establish that the 'othering' of non-Western cultures was not reserved for the construction of, and power over women only (McClintock 1995:14), one must also pursue the methods employed by white men in containing and ruling over black men. What is key to making sense of the power structures that inform the primacy of white manhood, is realising that black and white masculinity are reciprocally positioned, "for not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man" (Hall 1996b:18). According to Cara Aitchison (2000:135, 136), the process of representing 'others' (black men), visually or otherwise, therefore always entails the simultaneous creation of a supremacist masculine 'same' (white men) to be other *to*, while the 'other' is gendered as feminine and therefore allocated an inferior position.

In view of this, Griselda Pollock (1992:42) states that colonial domination implicates "both coloniser and colonised in distorted figurations [such as stereotypical visual representations of black men] … in which … African peoples [are turned] into projections for Westerners of the 'Otherness of the

Self'". The very existence of the white man, and every supposed cultural, sexual and economic privilege that he inherently possesses, seems to depend on constructing the black man as 'lacking': the negative pole on the scale of masculinity. Black men are not mere 'others', but are, in fact, indispensable to the colonial project of establishing and maintaining white supremacy (Hall 1996a:5). Nicholas Mirzoeff (1995:136) similarly argues that the profound differences between 'whiteness' and 'blackness' "was *necessary* to mark the superiority of [the West] and to convince [colonists] that the Other played no part in the Self, that the coloniser was radically different from, and superior to, the colonised" [emphasis added].

Furthermore, the exploration and colonisation of foreign spaces was propelled by a need to strengthen and disseminate imperial rule and therefore articulates the manner in which spatial "dimensions can be viewed as including the differential use, control, power and domination of space, place and landscape for social, economic [and political] … purposes" (Aitchison 1999:25) Yet, colonisation also marked a rite of passage for young, Western men, owing to the fact that within imperial patriotism the frontier was viewed as a place where 'boys became men', outside of the 'softening' domesticity of their homelands, and where they could acquire the skills needed to rule an empire by facing the 'unknown' – and conquering it (Crang 1998:73, 74).

Lahoucine Ouzgane and Robert Morrell (2005:7) purport that patriarchy not only allows for men's subjugation of women; it also provides some men with the power and ideological buttressing to control other men. Colonialism functions as one such form of patriarchy (Ouzgane & Morrell 2005:7), in terms of positioning white men as the exclusive agents of masculinity, culture and civilisation, while equating white women with black men in a subordinate position. In other words, colonial masculinity "constructed its self-image on the backs of its equally constructed Other ['blackness'] … much as phallocentrism sees its self-flattering image in the mirror of woman defined as lack" (Stam & Spence 2004:879). A telling aspect of colonial ideology is thus the manner in which white women constituted the inferior gender of a superior race, while black men constituted the superior gender of an inferior race (Saint-Aubin

2005:23). Therefore, within the gender-race matrix of colonial ideology (McClintock 1995:5), black masculinity continually found itself in an imbalanced relationship with white masculinity.

Gail Ching-Liang Low (1996:20) argues that in "the equation of body, racial and national health [which coincides with] the late Victorian fusing of Christian gentility, imperialism and social Darwinism … [manliness] was seen as a *natural* characteristic of the British [colonial] race" [emphasis added]. In other words, white masculinity constitutes a normative, hegemonic ideal of manhood that is estimable, and therefore a construct against which all 'other' masculinities are measured (Saint-Aubin 2005:23). Race seems to be the defining marker of difference in colonial ideology, since black men are still conceived of as inferior, despite being a 'superior' gender in terms of blackness. Ultimately, race simultaneously overrides gender, and *becomes gendered* (McClintock 1995:55).

bell hooks (1995a:206), for example, invokes a speech made by the nineteenth-century abolitionist Theodore Tilton in order to illustrate the manner in which white men refuted the possibility of a masculinity that could challenge or dismantle their own:

> In all those intellectual activities that take their strange quickening from the moral faculties … processes which we call instincts, or intuitions … the negro is the superior to the white man … equal to the white woman. The negro race is the feminine race of the world.

Bunn (1988:14) states that in colonial fiction white men are ideologically positioned at the heart of "action and reaction", while such forms of active masculine expression are "opposed by a more passive, insidious, irrational power in Africa [and blacks, which is] also associated with the feminine". The parallels drawn between 'blackness' and femininity also manifested in the visual culture of the colonial era in a number of stereotypical images, which comprise blacks as servants, entertainers and 'children' (Pieterse 1992:89, 124, 132). The common thread woven through these images entail processes of emasculation (Pieterse 1992:128), by which black men inhabit positions

that either undermine their 'manliness', or situate it as inauthentic.[4] With regard to white, 'muscular Christianity' and 'racial virility', "the [colonial] body politic was articulated against a concept of femininity and 'effeminacy'" (Low 1996:21).

Initially, representations of black men appeared prominently in so-called 'enemy images' (as threatening and robust warriors) (Figure 3) that served to glorify imperial heroism through propaganda (Pieterse 1992:78). These representations were however replaced by images of 'tamed' blacks as the initial violent pursuit of, and rivalry amongst European powers over, foreign land came to an end (Pieterse 1992:88). The retreat from the explicit militarisation of black men signalled a shift toward an iconography that expressed the colonial ideology of superiority and inferiority (Pieterse 1992:88). An important part of disseminating the colonial superiority complex, was fixing blacks, women and children on a continuum, so as to maintain white, middle-class men at the pinnacle of the social hierarchy (McClintock 1995:55). Therefore, "the culturally feminised and racially othered body … carries the projected burden of the cultural *lack* … against which the European man can maintain his fictional superiority" [emphasis added] (Pollock 1992:47).

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[4] The significance of tracing these images once again has to do with the seeming backlash against effeminacy in black self-representation that suppresses the sexual identities of black queers (Gray 1995:403).
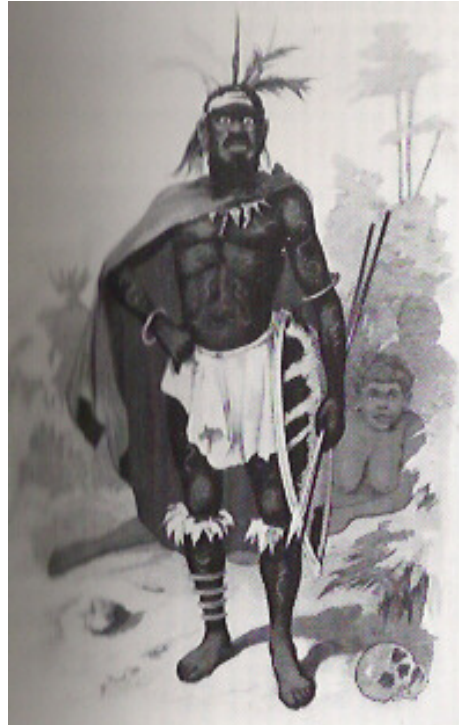
Figure 3: Typical colonial 'enemy image', 1886.
(Pieterse 1992:79).

In order to simultaneously marginalise women, by defining colonialism as an exclusively male endeavour (McClintock 1995:24), and oppress so-called 'natives', it appears that the coherence between women, blacks and children was justified by seeking to establish certain similarities between them. Firstly, in colonial, patriarchal ideology, women *and* blacks were viewed as being somehow 'closer to nature', more emotional, intuitive and passive (Pacteau 1999:89, 90). Conversely, the discourse of white colonial masculinity seemingly "privileges rationality, reason and the dominance of the spiritual [and physical] over the emotional" (Low 1996:60). In fostering a more tangible connection between femininity and black masculinity, however, black men were often portrayed as exhibiting physical attributes that are supposedly 'typical' of white women (McClintock 1995:55). In an image depicting Zulu men (Figure 4), for example, one can observe that the subjects are, first and foremost, posed as passive; poses that resonate with the manner in which women appear as 'decorative' for the pleasure of the male spectator – indeed, as they still do in contemporary advertising (Berger 1972:46, 47; Goffman 1977:317).

Figure 4: Feminised Zulu men, 1836.
(McClintock 1995:54).

Yet, upon closer inspection, this image also reveals the physical similarities that were conceived of as existing between black male and white female bodies in colonial discourses. Not only did Carl Vogt, a mid-nineteenth century 'analyst of race', observe likenesses between the skulls of white adult women and white male infants, he also noticed "that a mature black male shared his 'pendulous belly' with a white woman who had had many children" (McClintock 1995:55). Representations of this nature effectively illustrate how racism and sexism are inextricably linked, and support each other. Moreover, the 'inherent domesticity' of women in terms of surrendering to male control and busying themselves with domestic duties (Goffman 1977:307, 308), similarly points toward yet another conflation of femininity and black manhood, namely "the language of *servitude* [that] can be applied generally [to women, and to black men]" (Pieterse 1992:221; Bunn 1988:20).

According to Pieterse (1992:124), representations of blacks as servants and entertainers form the bulk of colonial imagery, and speak of the manner in which minorities were refused occupations beyond these stereotypical positions. The exclusion of blacks from the spheres of professional work once again denotes a linking of black men with white women, in terms of the so-called 'cult of domesticity' that played a central role in constructing Western imperial identities (McClintock 1995:36). The divides between 'private' and

'public' spaces, and the subsequent gendering of these spheres, prescribed that women busy themselves with the 'trivialities' of housework, while 'real' work constituted the exclusive domain of white men (Pollock 1988:67; Auerbach 2002:9).[5] In terms of Doreen Massey's (1994:6, 7) notion that time and 'mobility' occupy a masculine position in Western discourses on spatiality, one can conclude that women and blacks were defined by spaces "of sentiment and duty from which money and power were banished [while men] moved freely between" domestic spheres and those of public, professional work (Pollock 1988:68).

The prominence of black men as domestic workers in colonial times illustrates not only the levelling of 'blackness' and femininity, but also the manner in which domestic space was racialised (McClintock 1995:36). Evidently, the ideology of 'domesticity' was instituted to maintain the superiority of white men by curbing the threat of the possible economic, cultural and social progresses that could be made by both women and blacks if they were to occupy similar professions (McClintock 1995:35).[6] In view of this, there is not only interplay between racism and sexism, but classism constitutes yet another dimension of imperial hierarchy. The inferiorities attributed to groups of a particular 'race' are similarly projected onto differently categorised constituencies, whether in terms of social status, gender or religious conviction (Pacteau 1999:90). Blacks also formed part of a supposed 'degenerate class', which included Jews, prostitutes and proletariats, amongst others, that was constructed in opposition to the admirable and dominant white, male middle-class (McClintock 1995:35, 53).

Reading images of blacks as servants reveals the black man as domesticated and therefore 'feminised', but also always in a position, ideologically and

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[5] In view of this, Erving Goffman (1977:317) states that in modern industrial Western societies "women have [traditionally] … been gravitated to … jobs which sustain the [gendered role] established for them in households". Therefore, employment pertaining to "the garment industry, domestic labour, commercial cleaning [and] secretarial labour [are] often defined as [jobs] filled by someone [a woman] who … doesn't expect or want to make a career out of the labour" (Goffman 1977:317).

[6] At the anomalous times that blacks were allowed to practice skilled labour, under slavery in America, for example, they were viewed as not posing a threat to white men in similar positions, because of their inferior statuses as 'slaves' (Pieterse 1992:124).

visually, inferior to white men. John Riley's oil painting *Charles Seymour – 6th Duke of Somerset* (1646) (Figure 5), for example, portrays the white man as a dignified and superior being "surrounded by inferior creatures, the black and the dog, who share more or less the same status" (Dabydeen 1985:26). By examining this image one can infer several elements that are characteristic of representations of black servitude, and that point toward the colonial superiority complex. Firstly, the servant is depicted as rather small in comparison to the white man, with 'smallness' here denoting the black's subordinate status (Pieterse 1992:124). Secondly, the prestige of the white man is further strengthened by the manner in which the black gazes at him in admiration, a gaze shared by the dog (Dabydeen 1985:26).

Figure 5: John Riley, *Charles Seymour – 6th Duke of Somerset,* 1646.
Oil on canvas, 208,2 x 144,7 cm.
(Dabydeen 1985:27).

In view of this, the equation of servants with domestic animals in colonial representations of 'blackness', legitimates the domesticity of blacks; it lowers their status to that of an animal's; and incorporates them as mere decorations that are employed to enrich the image (Pieterse 1992:125, 126). This image

'feminises' the black man by arranging him as an aesthetic element that improves the visual spectacle of the artwork, much in the same way that women are traditionally conceived of 'pleasing to the eye' in patriarchal rhetoric (Berger 1972:47). Moreover, the decorative nature of the black suggests his anonymity and unimportance, because although the identity of the Duke is acknowledged, and his superiority thus re-affirmed in the title of this painting, the black is represented as "a mute background figure … a shadowy figure with no personality or expression … not as an individual in his own right" (Dabydeen 1985:21).

Furthermore, the superiority/inferiority binary opposition of colonialism draws some of its insights from the stereotypical construction of black men as 'children' (Hall 1995b:21). The black servant-boy in Riley's painting (Figure 3) can just as effectively be read as a metaphor for the overarching notion of black men as naive, loutish, 'innocent' and childlike (Pieterse 1992:88). It seems that the process of infantilising black men articulates the so-called *paternalism* of colonial masculinity (Low 1996:60), which positions white men as fathers-figures 'burdened' with the task of civilising their primitive black 'boys'. The construction of black men as 'children' and white men as 'fathers', however, inevitably suggests a relationship in which the colonialist is yet again in a position of authority. Thus, the psychological, emotional, and visual emasculation and feminisation of blacks in colonial power relations finds its basis in denying the black man his status *as* a man: Pieterse (1992:89) suggests that black men were believed to possess particular virtues, "although not of the kind which Europeans cared to claim … kindness, compassion, humour – they were 'soft' virtues, not the hard, manly ones" associated with white men.

Amongst the 'soft' virtues that Pieterse (1992:89) refers to, it is the so-called 'innate humour' of certain races (Hall 1995b:22) that constitutes another stereotype of blacks in colonial visual culture – namely the 'entertainer'

(Figure 6).[7] Primarily, the image of the entertainer was employed to refute the existence of racial discrimination in colonial settings, since blacks successful at entertaining were seemingly integrated in white society (Pieterse 1992:132). One must, however, realise that 'famous blacks' were few and far between: this not only illustrates that the celebrity status of blacks was rather anomalous, but it also reveals that belonging to a dominant white culture was conditional; for it depended on black people's ability to 'perform', whether it be on stage or on the sport's field (Pieterse 1992:132).

Figure 6: Poster for *Entartete Musik* (Degenerate Music), 1938.
(Pieterse 1992:144).

Hall (1995b:22) raises an important issue by questioning whether whites actually laughed *at*, or *with* these all-singing, all-dancing blacks. In other words, the image of the entertainer may just as well be read as another politically driven initiative aimed at highlighting the 'care-free', 'ignorant' nature of black people (Pieterse 1992:132). Robert Stam and Louise Spence (2004:878) state that colonial ideology's "insistence on [producing so-called]

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[7] Slaves were, for example, encouraged by their masters to sing and dance, as they are 'naturally inclined' to do, in order to defend the process of slavery as a humane endeavour characterised by 'content' black people (Pieterse 1992:132).

'positive images' [such as the black 'entertainer'] … obscures the fact that 'nice' images might at times be as pernicious as overtly degrading ones, providing a bourgeois façade for … a more pervasive racism". What is especially relevant to this study with regard to the 'entertainer' and the construction of black masculinity on white culture's terms, is the manner in which entertainment and the dramatic arts, for example, are seemingly conceived of as the domain of the feminine in Western patriarchal ideology (Goffman 1977:317). Pieterse (1992:141) thus reads the image of the 'entertainer' as representing a sexual or gendered preference.

Allocating black men the role of performing, ultimately casts them in a feminine role, because the qualities required for the stage, such as emotional expressivity, spectacle and decoration, are stereotypically 'female' abilities in the vocabulary of patriarchy (Pacteau 1999:90). John Fiske (1989:22) argues that patriarchal ideology positions 'earning' and 'working' as characteristically masculine, and 'leisure' and 'entertainment' as characteristically feminine. In other words, one must not lose sight of the notion that the disparities between production and consumption, or *'work'* and *'play'*, operate within gender-based power structures that position women as busying themselves with entertaining 'trivialities' such as shopping, while men occupy the superior spheres of seriousness and productivity (Fiske 1989:18, 19). Considering this, black male entertainers were, in fact, emasculated by the supposed emancipation, or inclusion in white culture, that their roles as entertainers promised. The 'emancipated' black performer was in itself a false claim, since it was a provisional role that effectively aimed at suppressing black masculinity by imposing certain restrictions on the manner in which such performances were conducted (Pieterse 1992:141).

Firstly, virtually no distinction is drawn between black men as servants and black men as entertainers, because entertainment is also a type of service that is provided to be enjoyed by whites: in selected images of black, male entertainers (Figure 6) and servants (Figure 7), for example, "the bartender's [or waiter's, or houseboy's] tuxedo is the same as that of the night-club musician"; thus illustrating how notions of subjugation flow seamlessly from

one black stereotype to another (Pieterse 1992:141). Even as a supposedly splendid entertainer, the black man is still in an inferior, feminised position of servitude, created in opposition to the white man's privilege to gaze at his performance. Secondly, Pieterse (1992:141) states that black men were expected to perform in a *desexualised* manner, in order not to appear as threatening or deviant. Black male sexuality could not be lived out explicitly, but was deemed to remain concealed beneath ambivalent sexual innuendos that manifested in the slang of, for example, black jazz musicians (Pieterse 1992:141).

Figure 7: 1950s advertisement for a Dutch grocery chain.
(Pieterse 1992:194).

Denying black men their claims to sexual virility and male prowess is another fundamental element of colonialist attempts to undermine black masculinity, whilst maintaining the primacy of white masculinity (Saint-Aubin 1994:1059). The various processes by which black men are emasculated in images depicting them as servants, entertainers and naive 'children', ultimately also serve to simultaneously reveal white culture's ambivalent attitudes toward black sexuality, and the manner in which it seeks to curb the fear that is situated in one half of this ambivalence (Pieterse 1992:172; Pacteau

1999:101). Returning to the stereotypical representations of 'blackness', discussed throughout this section of chapter, in search of ways in which black male sexuality is 'kept at bay', surveyed and even pathologised, reveals that white rule played a very significant role in defining and subsequently distorting the black masculine subject.

As a vantage point, it must be stated that in the codes of Western ideology, 'black' also denotes 'sexuality' (Pieterse 1992:187). In other words, the construction of 'dark', foreign spaces in the Western imagination seemingly coincides with the construction of the 'primitive' races that inhabit these landscapes as sexually uninhibited (Pacteau 1999:89, 90). In certain works of art, for example, black subjects have an erotic meaning and are employed "to sexualise the society in which he or she is found" (Pieterse 1992:128): Manet's *Olympia* (Figure 8) can be interpreted as representing the manner in which the black woman is included to intensify the sensuality of the painting by lending some of her 'exotic', 'candid' sexuality to the white woman (Pollock 1992:35). Thus, one can confirm that black men *and* women are subject to the processes of 'othering' by which qualities that are deemed 'deviant', but remain secretly desired, are projected onto 'other' cultures in order to legitimate the civilised nature of white cultures (Pieterse 1992:173).
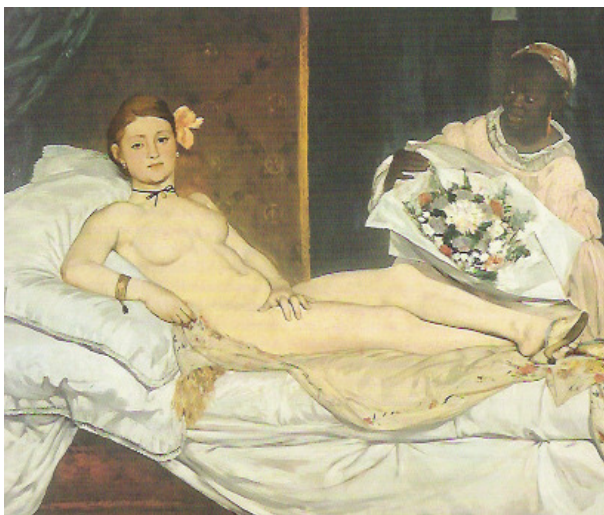
Figure 8: Edouard Manet, *Olympia*, 1863.
Oil on canvas, 130 x 190 cm.
Musée d'Orsay, Paris.
(Eco 2004:339).

In dealing with black masculinity, this study is, however, specifically concerned with the *different* approaches toward black male and female sexuality in colonial, patriarchal and racist fantasies. Whereas representations of black female sexuality are seemingly fetishised (Pacteau 1999:97) (Figure 8), black male sexuality is repressed or denied in representations that cast black men in positions similar to the one occupied by the black woman in Manet's *Olympia*. Consider, for example, this painting by Peter Lely (Figure 9): On a formal, denotative level it resonates with *Olympia* in terms of the black man offering the white woman flowers; thus adopting a position of servitude that is shared by the black woman in Manet's image. Yet, since black male servants are often depicted as 'feminine' (Pieterse 1992:221), the relationship between the black man and white woman in Lely's image is inevitably different from the relationship between Olympia and her female subject.

Figure 9: Peter Lely, *Elizabeth Countess of Dysart*, 1650.
Oil on canvas, 124,4 x 119,3 cm.
Ham House, Surrey.
(Dabydeen 1985:32).

The fear of black male sexuality held by Western patriarchs regarding the degeneration that could possibly result from a sexual relationship between a black man and white woman, manifests in representing black men as

'castrated' (Pieterse 1992:128).[8] In no way is the countess in Lely's image sexually available to the black servant – she is the 'property' of the white man, whose masculinity is intact and not compromised as the black man's is. In other words, the relationship between Lely's countess and her black servant is seemingly reminiscent of what Bunn (1988:20) refers to as "those archetypally powerful [and desirable] women such as Sheba and Cleopatra who are traditionally guarded by *eunuchs*" [emphasis added]. So, the emasculation of black men must be understood as resulting from the many forms of 'castration' that articulate the links between white male domination, 'sexual paranoia' and fear (Stam & Spence 2004:888): they comprise psychological and emotional humiliation; poverty or 'economic castration'; social inferiority; political disempowerment; and the visual representations that appear to vocalise these injustices (Pieterse 1992:177).

The sexual virility of the white man is emphasised by an unwillingness to accept the black man as an equal, regardless of the grounds on which the black man's 'inferiority' is founded. Furthermore, the repercussions of emasculation oscillate between positive effects for white men, and damaging effects for black men. The containment of black male sexuality presents a 'sexual gain' for white men, since they hold the privilege of having access to both black and white women: a mulatto born of a black woman does not threaten the 'purity' of the white race in the same way that a mulatto born of a white women does (Pieterse 1992:174). For *black* men, however, the processes of emasculation had far more detrimental effects: one of the most salient of these is the way in which the degradation of black masculinity "destabilises [traditional] male-female relations because the black man cannot function as breadwinner, has little social status, [and] is thus in a weak position *vis-à-vis* the black woman" (Pieterse 1992:178).

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[8] Castration, and the many forms in which it manifested, was justified by creating particular myths surrounding black masculinity that are founded upon white culture's fear, and fascination with, black sexuality: Black men were, for example, imagined as having 'abnormally' large penises that represented their uncontrolled, animal-like sexual appetite (Pieterse 1992:175). Thus, black men were conceived of as having evolved 'inconsistently', since their 'primitivism' is a sign of being controlled by the loins, instead of by a well-developed, 'civilised', mind (Saint-Aubin 2005:33).

In other words, black men were not allowed the patriarchal 'privilege' of controlling 'their women', because colonial rule refused them particular signifiers of social manhood, such as the ownership of land and economic stability (Epprecht 1998:641). It seems that only *some* men benefit from patriarchal ideology, despite the fact that it sets a normative, revered 'standard' of masculinity that every man is expected to aspire to. Patriarchal, colonial ideology thus functions by combining elements of racism, classism and sexism to continually justify the superiority of white men, while systematically breaking down black men's confidence in their masculinities.

The black man's presence in, and access to, hegemonic white society is ultimately conditional: if the black man appears, he must *either* manifest as the desexualised, 'castrated' entertainer, servant or child; *or* as the bestial super-stud that is menacing and therefore in need of 'control' (Pacteau 1999:101). At one end of the spectrum of colonial representations of 'blackness', one finds black men that are always already emasculated, while at the other, one observes black men that supposedly represent exactly *why* 'castration' is necessary. In the following sections of this chapter, which respectively investigate gay 'colonial' representations, black self representation and *gay* black self-representation, the significance of exploring the colonial 'roots' of representing black men proves to be of great significance.

First and foremost, the manner in which representations of black men during the colonial era inherently centred on diminution in the form of emasculation, seemingly elucidates the 'recovery' of black masculinity in certain black self-representations by means of negating black male homosexuality. Secondly, the queering of the traditional hero of the frontier in gay 'colonial' imagery, speaks of a re-inscription of the supremacy of white masculinity that, evidently, figures rather prominently in colonial visual culture. Lastly, *gay* black self-representation can be viewed as representing a dual critique, for it is positioned against the 'macho' quality of heteronormative black self-representation, but also appears to grapple with the notion that these images,

in turn, are structured against colonial representations of the black male subject.

2.2 Where have all the straight cowboys gone?: gay 'colonial' representations

In 2006, the director Ang Lee's critically acclaimed film *Brokeback Mountain* queered the silver screen by projecting images of male homosexual love and desire onto the social imagination, thereby intensifying the already popular presence of gay subject-matter in modern day visual culture. Lee's film recounts the romantic relationship between two ranch-hands, Jack Twist and Ennis Del Mar (Figure 10), as they struggle to express and accept their attraction to one other amidst the homophobic landscapes of rural America (Tuss 2006:244). Yet, *Brokeback Mountain* is by no means the first cinematic venture to 'queer' the myth of the frontier, and present an affront to the traditional, heteronormative agent of Western, command-and-conquer narratives, namely the cowboy (Le Coney & Trodd 2006:[sp]).

Figure 10: Still from *Brokeback Mountain*, 2006.
(*SL Magazine* April 2006:28).

The year 1969 marks the release of two such films – John Schlesinger's *Midnight Cowboy* and Andy Warhol's *Lonesome Cowboys*: Tinged with homoerotic undercurrents, these films undermine the conventional

construction of 'The Western' as a filmic genre typified by honourable, heterosexual protagonists, nowhere as present as in the characters embodied by the All-American cowboy, John Wayne (Le Coney & Trodd 2006:[sp]). Furthermore, Schlesinger's 'counterculture Western' appeared in conjunction with the advent of civil rights movements and protests against the Vietnam War in the United States, and thus exemplifies the disillusionment of the American Dream and frontier masculinity as ideological myths underpinned by the exclusion of, and hatred toward, cultural 'others' (Le Coney & Trodd 2006:[sp]).

However, as the political tumult of the 1960s and 1970s raged on, internal strife plagued the gay rights movement as the debate over the acceptance of effeminate gay men, so-called 'fairies', became central to the movement's political agenda (Le Coney & Trodd 2006:[sp]). While *Midnight Cowboy* links the 'queerness' of its main character's tragic descent into male prostitution to the fragility and eventual destruction of frontier masculinity, Warhol's film seems to be concerned with the manner in which the rise of the gay 'clone' era pitted gay men against each other in a power struggle over the definition of homomasculinity (Le Coney & Trodd 2006:[sp]; Clarkson 2006:192).

The gay 'clone' era refers to the historical period of the 1970s and 1980s during which gay men adopted a hypermasculine style of dress and demeanour based on a working-class aesthetic of 'ruggedness', as a means of vigorously opposing the stereotypical depiction of homosexual men as flamboyantly effeminate (Clarkson 2006:193). As a result, images of blue-collar masculinity, cops, construction workers, soldiers and cowboys, for example, dominated queer urban centres like New York, and have become mainstays of gay visual culture that still appear (Clarkson 2006:193; Barrett & Pollack 2005:440). The significance of investigating how the 'straight' appeal of these so-called 'clones', or 'cookie-cutter' masculinities (Green 2002:534) is perpetuated, relates to the manner in which they create hierarchies *within* the male gender that signify power relations between gay men in which hegemonic, patriarchal masculinity is reiterated, together with racism and sexism.

In view of this, the camp aesthetics of Warhol's film, personified by the limp-wristed town sheriff who occasionally dabbles in transvestism, speak of "a relationship of tolerance between the macho gay cowboy and the drag queen sheriff; a union of seeming opposites" (Le Coney & Trodd 2006:[sp]). Whereas *Midnight Cowboy* hinges on notions of alienation and dystopia, Warhol constructs a frontier utopia in which 'fairies' and 'clones' exist peacefully alongside each other; a scenario employed specifically to critique the dominance of white, hypermasculine gay men in social reality (Le Coney & Trodd 2006:[sp]). *Brokeback Mountain*, *Midnight Cowboy* and *Lonesome Cowboys* are evoked here in order to foreground that the frontier myth is performative[9] by nature, because it can be appropriated in a different, even contrary, context or 'queer' setting (Le Coney & Trodd 2006:[sp]).

Of even greater significance to this study, is that "the virility of the gay white cowboy image is intelligible culturally because it relies on previously cemented images of virile white heterosexual cowboys and frontiersmen … who conserved and shored up the white-supremacist, misogynist nation" (Nast 2002:887). The images conceived of as gay 'colonial' representations in this section of the study originate from the gay media, fine arts and advertising and are investigated in order to reveal the apparent standards of masculinity in queer culture, the fetishisation and commodification of the 'frontier', gay beauty ideals, and the racist ideologies that exemplify such homoerotic visual manifestations.

It is necessary to firstly explore what exactly is meant by homomasculinity, and how this gendered construct functions at the expense of marginalising certain gay men. Feminist ideology is responsible for opening discourses on the subject of gender and how it is socially constructed, especially with regard to patriarchy and the inferiority attributed to women, but in the wake of this

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[9] The term 'performativity' is closely associated with Judith Butler's theories of the incongruities between sex, biology, sexual orientation and gender identity, which are explored in her seminal text *Gender trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity* (1990). At the core of Butler's theory of performativity lies the notion that instead of being pre-existing, biologically determined constructs, gender and sexuality are continually constituted and re-constituted through cultural and social relations, practices and 'performances', such as dress and demeanour (Kates 1999:26, 27, 28).

theoretical body, discourses of masculinism or men's studies arose to specifically address the *male* sex role (Connell 1992:735). Central to the concerns of men's studies, is the manner in which hegemonic masculinity suppresses 'other' masculinities by continually reiterating its supposed supremacy (Ouzgane & Morrell 2005:4), as can be seen with regard to the emasculating images of colonialism in the previous section of this chapter.

As RW Connell (1992:737) states, it is, however, important that one does not conceive of male homosexuality as the antithesis of masculinity, because such assumptions reinscribe the supposed naturality of heterosexuality. Gay men may be oppressed, but they are surely not excluded from masculinity; it is, in fact, more vexing for gay men than effeminacy (Fritscher 2005:[sp]). Adam Green (2002:531), for example, critiques queer theory's notion that all non-heterosexual practices are always already transgressive, because both gay and straight men "undergo the same ranges of gender socialisation" and therefore apparently construct their masculine identities from the same iconic embodiments of manhood given at a specific historical period.

The gay 'clone' era and the still-present images of hypermasculine aesthetics, seemingly results from gay men's response to being expected to *behave like men* and perform masculinity, despite being told through stereotypes and homophobia that they are *not men* (Clarkson 2006:193). By fashioning themselves after archetypal masculine icons, like the cowboy, gay 'clones' represent a nostalgic, romantic longing for 'a man's man' that is traditionally associated with heterosexuality and that does not carry the stigma associated with over-the-top, effeminate queers: "Homomasculinity [therefore] seeks the archetypal best that males can do, not the stereotypical worst" (Fritscher 2005:[sp]). Manifestations of gay hypermasculinity are, however, also undeniably 'camp' by definition, in terms of being created by or expressing a gay aesthetic sensibility (Babuscio 1993:20). Yet, the fact that camp hinges on 'theatricality' and therefore "responds particularly to the markedly attenuated and to the strongly exaggerated" is especially significant with

regard to this study's investigation of homomasculinity (Sontag 1964:279, 280).[10]

According to Susan Sontag (1964:290), the "peculiar affinity and overlap" between the style of camp and gay men can be attributed to the fact that camp is ultimately a gesture of 'self-legitimisation' and "homosexuals have [therefore] pinned their integration into society on promoting the aesthetic sense". In other words, Jack Babuscio (1993:24, 25) states that since gay men do not conform to conventional, heteronormative sex-role expectations, which leads to the stigmatisation of homosexuality, camp often produces the experience of 'passing for straight' by rejecting stereotypical, effeminate gay characteristics in favour of 'highly charged' (hyper) and stylised performances of masculinity that are accompanied by "the exaggeration of sexual characteristics" (Sontag 1964:279). Therefore, 'straight-acting, straight-looking' (Fritscher 2005:[sp]), hypermasculine gay men seemingly "impersonate heterosexual citizenry" by employing camp aesthetics that express "a heightened awareness and appreciation for disguise … and the distinctions to be made between instinctive [gay] and theatrical ['straight'] behaviour" (Babuscio 1993:25).

What Jack Fritscher (2005:[sp]) does not account for in his overly positive definition of homomasculinity as the 'archetypal best' that gay men can do is, however, the manner in which queer challenges or subversions of hegemonic masculinity seemingly replace one system of oppression with another. In other words, homomasculinity reiterates hegemonic masculinity with regard to the queer constituency, considering that it excludes effeminacy, transvestism, gay blacks and less 'acceptable' forms of gay male expression from its self-definition (Clarkson 2006:196). Hypermasculine, white men, and the fetishised images that accompany them, internalise the gender codes of

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[10] 'Theatricality' is but one of the more than 50 features of camp discussed by Susan Sontag in her seminal text *Notes on "Camp"* (1964). The emphasis that camp places on performance, style and role-playing, is purposely isolated in this dissertation as a means of delineating the manner in which gay men seemingly fashion their sexual identities after 'amplified' versions of masculinity.

heteronormativity and therefore 'normalise' particular homosexual lifestyles by being selectively homophobic and racist (Clarkson 2006:205).

In this advertisement for mobile pornography (Figure 11) from *Gay Pages*, for example, the queer cowboy appears as a 'hot' commodity available for the consumption of fantasy; a fantasy that can be traced to the "can-do erotic American cowboy image [The Marlboro Man] … reeking of homosexual fraternity … [that is] the subliminal key behind every homomasculine face/body/image" (Fritscher 2005:[sp]). According to Michael E Starr (1984:50, 54), early American 'Western' films positioned cigarette smoking as an explicit symbol of male virility, thereby transmuting cigarettes into the preferred "accoutrement of the masculine man", which resulted in a "barrage of [images] showing rugged cowboys … smoking Marlboro filters astride a horse and surrounded by a Western landscape". In fact, with regard to the apparent adoration of 'manly' men in gay culture, no "more self-conscious expression of the appeal to … rugged masculinity … exists than the Marlboro man" (Starr 1984:54).
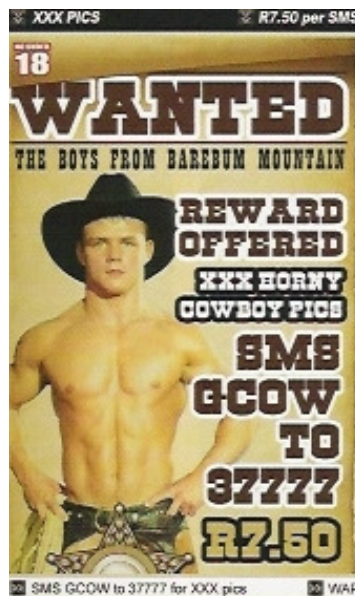

Figure 11: *The Boys from Barebum Mountain* advertisement, 2007.
(*Gay Pages* Winter:93).

Furthermore, the images that accompany other cigarette brands, such as Camel, similarly manifest primarily in terms of hypermasculine, 'frontier'

aesthetics and values: the Camel man has a 'three-day stubble', is muscular and handsome, and seemingly embodies notions of exploration, escapism and the myth of the lonesome, adventurous 'cowboy' (Erasmus 1996:25, 28). It is the combination of 'butch' queer aesthetics with the ideological structures of 'frontiersmanship' that casts the image of the white, gay 'cowboy' as the epitome of normative Western masculinity. In other words, the supposed autonomy of 'frontier' masculinity (Erasmus 1996:30), in terms of existing independently of women, shunning effeminacy and conquering feminised, 'natural' landscapes, is elevated when the man embodying this masculine identity is gay (Figure 11). This can be attributed to the fact that ideal gayness is not only hypermasculine, but simultaneously articulates the total absence of women in favour of male same-sex eroticism and camaraderie. Consequently, Camille Paglia (1990:14, 15) argues that:

> Male homosexuality may be the most valorous of attempts to evade the femme fatale and to defeat nature … By turning away from the Medusan mother, whether in honour or detestation of her, the male homosexual is one of the great forgers of absolutist western [masculine] identity … as embodied in today's boyish male hustler [who disappears] to other loves, other lands. He is a rambler, *a cowboy* and sailor [emphasis added].

The image therefore does not exist as an isolated phenomenon, but points toward the manner in which colonial fantasy and the sexual magnetism of the frontiersman are constantly recycled in mainstream and gay media, such as the American cigarette advertisements of the 1950s and 1960s (Starr 1984:53, 54). *The Boys from Barebum Mountain* can be interpreted as a less poignant, but by no means less telling, pastiche of Ang Lee's homage to same-sex love in *Brokeback Mountain,* for example. According to Heidi Nast (2002:887), the image of the cowboy is frequently commodified and fetishised (Figure 11), exactly because this process eradicates the violent, racist history of colonialism and romanticises frontiersmen.

The selling of cowboy paraphernalia, as well as performing frontiersmanship, manifests as harmless queer trends, but in actual fact 'skim over' the historical reality of the frontier as a project characterised by exploitation and racist exclusion (Nast 2002:887). Similarly, the fetishisation of *The Boys From*

Barebum Mountain erases the fact that "cowhands in the nineteenth century were a group of diverse races and ethnicities" (Le Coney & Trodd 2006:[sp]) by white-washing the image of the cowboy and subsequently 'colonising' the gay media by perpetuating representations of homomasculinity that many gay men, owing to their racial disposition, cannot identify with.

In view of this, following Matthew Sothern's (2004:185) critique of Nast's findings (with regard to her focus almost exclusively on the *images* of gay, white patriarchy), this study is also concerned with moving beyond the images of homomasculinity in order to investigate the manner in which representations of this nature seemingly reflect and shape the lives of actual gay men. Martin Erasmus (1996:25) states that one must not lose sight of the fact that our "behaviour and images of the self are informed by the discourses [that permeate visual culture, for example] to which we are exposed". A significant example of the manner in which the distance between the images of homomasculinity and the social interactions of gay men collapse (Sothern 2004:185) is the "enormous gay demand for straight-acting, straight-looking [men]" (Fritscher 2005:[sp]).

The privately funded website StraightActing.com (Clarkson 2006:191, 192), for example, exists as a forum where gay men who identify as 'straight-acting' discuss their own 'performances' of masculinity (Babuscio 1993:24, 25), and what they find sexually appealing about men who construct themselves in a similar way. However, Jay Clarkson's (2006:199) analysis of the website, and the comments of its patrons, reveals that the aesthetics of 'straight-acting' appear to be "conflated with the cultural archetype of primitive, uneducated, and crude depiction of working-class man". Furthermore, Clarkson (2006:199) states that some men even equate masculinity, yet again, with the image of the cowboy and its present-day version, the outdoorsman. Clarkson's analyses of homomasculinity effectively illustrate that the imagistic power of the gay 'clones' of the past still govern standards of masculinity in queer cultures of the present.

However, what is troubling about 'straight-acting' gay men and the archetypal images that they valorise, is the hierarchy of gender performances that result from positioning homomasculinity at the apex of Western male identity constructs (Clarkson 2006:202; Paglia 1990:14, 15). The admiration of masculine forms of sexual expression may in fact embrace traditional white, patriarchal disdain for, and oppression of, the feminine 'other' (Clarkson 2006:202). In a pair of decisive essays, *Geisha of a different kind: gay Asian men and the gendering of sexuality* (2006) and *They don't want to cruise your type: gay men of colour and the racial politics of exclusion* (2007), Chong-suk Han explores the primacy of white, masculine-identified men in queer cultures, along with the marginalisation of gay blacks[11] in those same constituencies.

In engaging with Han, it appears that the 'colonial' in gay culture is at its most explicit with regard to the manner in which gay blacks are conceived of, and represented. Han (2006:9, 10), in following Edward Said, states that the processes of 'othering' by which 'the Orient' was created in the Western imagination, hinged not only on notions of mystique and romanticism, but were also politically driven in terms of establishing the superiority of the West against all that is represented by the East. Moreover, the supposed dominance of Western powers "took on a distinctively gendered tone" in which the male Asian body figured prominently as 'feminine', a feature common amongst the emasculating, colonial images of African men as well (Han 2006:10).

Han (2006:13, 17) therefore argues that the historical 'feminisation' of the East is rearticulated in the construction of the gendered identities of gay Asian men as the 'feminine' counterparts of 'masculine' gay white men. However,

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[11] With regard to the colonial representations of 'blackness' discussed in the previous section of this study, the term 'black' is employed to refer primarily to Africans. Han (2007:51), however, explores a variety of ethnicities, Asian American, Latin American and African American, for example, subsumed under the phrase 'people of colour'. For the purposes of this study, however, the term 'black' is preferred, and points toward all gay men who stand in opposition to normative 'whiteness'; except where it is necessary to explicitly distinguish between different ethnic identities – as Han (2007:57) does with regard to the manner in which gay Asian men occupy a different position in gay 'colonial' representations than black (African) men.

since images of white gay men are privileged in mainstream gay visual cultures, while images of gay blacks are practically non-existent (Reddy 1998:68), the domain in which the gender-divides between black and white subjects are the most visible is pornography (Han 2007:52). This evidently points toward the problem of the conditional acceptance and inclusion of blacks in gay culture and media: gay blacks seemingly appear solely as fetishised objects for the pleasure of white gay men, but are practically 'invisible' beyond the realms of sexual commodification (Han 2006:25; Chasin 2000a:158).

The manner in which gay blacks are differently represented from white men in hardcore pornography also reveals that the gender hierarchy present in gay culture is apparently inescapable. Han (2006:16,17), for example, observes that in print pornography "white men are often shown full-frontal, while Asian men are shown mostly from the back … it is the white male cock (manhood) that is desireable as opposed to the Asian male, whose most desireable attribute is his ass (womanhood)". Consequently, it is again the white man that epitomises homomasculinity, in a traditionally patriarchal, colonial vocabulary, by performing his sexual prowess as active and dominant through the penetration and 'conquering' of the passive, inferior and feminised, but not necessarily *female*, 'other' (Boone 1995:92; Radel 2001:54).

The coloniser/colonised dichotomy can be conceived of as being reinstated with regard to the images and practices of gay culture that attribute gendered and racial identities to black 'others', while constantly reaffirming that those same constructions, as applied to white men, are somehow more deserving. Nast (2002:887) states that the Apache Club in Bangkok writes one such gay 'colonial' narrative in that it "features young Thai boys, dressed up like Apache Indians, who perform … on stage … inviting conquest [from wealthy white patrons or pseudo-cowboys], the Far East collapsing into a Wild West". Thus, whereas the image of the cowboy, for example, represents a romantic, masculine ideal that may improve the self-image of white gay men, the image of the submissive, frail 'geisha' devalues the gay Asian male body (Han 2006:21).

From a psychosocial point of view, Han (2006:22) shares Frantz Fanon's notion that stereotypes of 'otherness', produced by white cultures, are internalised and performed by blacks themselves (Hall 1996b:16). Han (2006:18) observes that in contemporary queer communities and interactions amongst gay men, the feminisation of gay Asian men appears to be so ingrained that relationships between them are contemptuously defined as 'lesbianism' by other gay Asians who prefer white partners. In view of this, Han (2007:62) argues that some gay blacks seemingly also internalise the supposed primacy of white masculinity and the aesthetics or physical 'ideals' that accompany it, since they are more likely to explicitly exclude 'blacks', even more so than gay white men, when seeking out companionship.

The ubiquity and veneration of images of white men in the gay media therefore has further detrimental effects for gay blacks that seemingly also value race-biased, Westernised notions of 'beauty' or desirability (Han 2006:22). This is evident in the manner in which gay blacks prefer white partners, and are selectively racist with regard to the notion of blacks as unbefitting sexual partners (Han 2007:60). However, by placing white masculinity on a pedestal, gay blacks are not only re-inscribing white supremacy, but are also left with feelings of inadequacy because of not measuring up to the Eurocentric standards of physical beauty that manifest in gay visual cultures (Han 2006:23). The image by Tom of Finland (Touko Laaksonen), for example (Figure 12), is appropriately entitled *Perfection* and illustrates how the artist "chose to construct the gay male body as a square-jawed, scruffy and stubbled, hypermasculine knot of bulging muscles with narrow waist and broad shoulders" (Gonzales-Day 2002:[sp]).
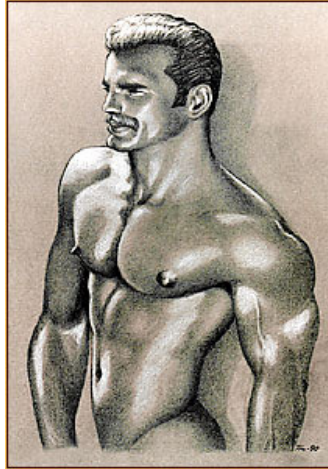
Figure 12: Tom of Finland, *Perfection*, 1990.
Lithograph, 48,2 x 34,7 cm.
(The Tom of Finland Foundation 2007:[sp]).

According to Ken Gonzales-Day (2002:[sp]), Tom of Finland achieved iconic status in gay visual culture by circulating his intensely homoerotic, hypermasculine drawings that are created in line with the, equally popular, gay 'clones' of the 1970s and 1980s: Tom of Finland's repertoire therefore comprises depictions of sexual desire between conventionally masculine men, most of whom are *white* bikers, soldiers, sailors and policemen (Figure 13), that "defined homomasculinity … for the [twenty-first] century" (Fritscher 2005:[sp]). What becomes clear when critically viewing these so-called 'defining' images within the gender-race matrix is, however, that Tom of Finland's 'masculine' aesthetics are predicated not only on musculature and facial hair, but seemingly also on 'whiteness'. In view of this, Mirzoeff (1995:2, 3) states that the ideal human form is a "principal subject of Western art [history]", and he adds that the visual representation of immaculate bodies functions by "promoting certain physical characteristics [such as complexion] *at the expense of others*":

> The process [of representing the ideal male body] has been extended so that *certain* bodies have become the subject of a discursive inscription [of beauty and excellence, for example] so thorough that they are invisible in any other way. This overwriting has [therefore] rendered the [black body] as 'visibly' different [and therefore inferior], confirming the perfection of the Western [white] subject by this 'self-evident' difference of race [emphasis added].

Figure 13: Tom of Finland, *Untitled*, 1985.
Graphite on paper, 29,8 x 20,9 cm.
(The Tom of Finland Foundation 2007:[sp]).

The ideals of beauty signified in contemporary homomasculine imagery can therefore be viewed as resonating with traditional, possibly racist, Western art historical discourses surrounding that which is considered aesthetically appealing in visual representations of the male physique. According to Whitney Davis (2001:247, 272), most of the major homoerotic art collections in existence consist of a combination of contemporary and pre-modern artefacts that set "canonically beautiful", homoerotic reference points in relation to one another – thereby perpetuating a homosexual ideal in visual culture. In these anthologies, the prevalence of works dating from classical antiquity is definitely not unexpected if one considers the appreciation and glorification of same-sex relations that characterised Greece and Ancient Rome (Davis 2001:247; Saslow 1999:14).

During these pre-Christian periods, homosexual love was celebrated, not condemned, in mythology and art depicting the supposed bisexuality of both gods and mortals. Vases and pots were adorned with images of men's sexual advances toward male youths, while Zeus' pursuit of Ganymede, and the 'queerness' of Apollo and the demigod Hercules, for example, were often

depicted in literature, philosophy and visual culture in order to demonstrate that even the most revered beings have homosexual love affairs (Saslow 1999:14, 15, 23). These sexual virtues were also 'visualised' in ancient societies across different genres of artistic expression and became deeply embedded in the cultural fibre of classical antiquity (Saslow 1999:15).

Amongst these cultural icons, it is the male nude (Figure 14) that "emerges … as the paradigm of the classical style", and that is predominantly adopted by modern gay visual cultures as a template from which to create, or re-create, the perfect male body (Saslow 1999:31). Tom of Finland's fetishised male figures are, for example, consistent with the ideals of virile masculine beauty that constitute the classical male nude: James Saslow's (1999:22) list of qualities regarding the male body in antiquity, which include "broad shoulders, well-defined muscles in the chest and above the hips … a narrow waist [and] prominent buttocks and massive thighs", is almost synonymous with Gonzales-Day's (2002:[sp]) description of Finland's homoerotic drawings. Along this genealogy of homomasculine images that follow from classical antiquity, it is, however, the works of the contemporary American artist Delmas Howe that most explicitly link gay 'clone' aesthetics with ancient mythology and art, as well as with colonialism (Mann 2005:[sp]).
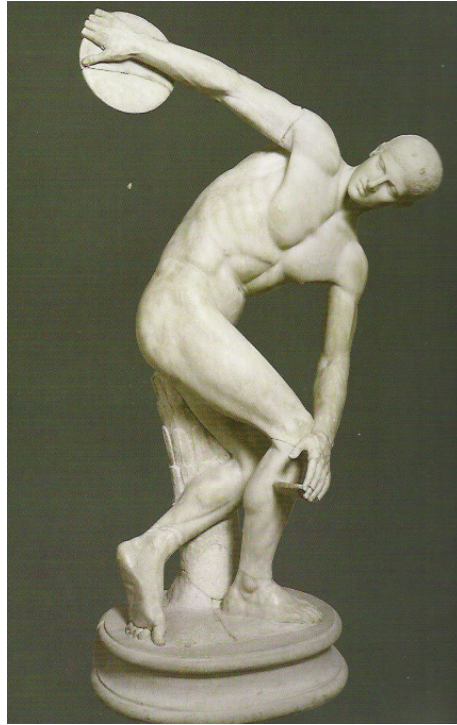
Figure 14: Miron, *Discobolus*, 460-450 BC.
Museo Nazionale Romano, Rome.
(Eco 2004:44).

Howe's depictions of *Atlas* (Figure 15) and *Apollo* (Figure 16), from a major series of paintings entitled *Rodeo Pantheon*, are isolated here in order to address the issues of race that seemingly arise from endowing the cowboy-figure with mythic qualities. Howe elevates the statuses of these frontiersmen by naming the works, and therefore presumably the individuals that are depicted, after god-like beings that feature in ancient mythology; invoking Apollo is especially significant considering that his sexual conquests were infused with homoeroticism (Saslow 1999:14). Furthermore, the physical 'perfection' of the men depicted, evidently follows the aesthetic guidelines that are embodied by the male nude, whether it be Miron's or Finland's. In agreement with the art historian and curator Edward Lucie-Smith, Lester Strong (1998:148) states that Howe "is taking two Western cultural heritages [Greek myths, and the myth of the cowboy] and assimilating them into the gay male perspective, saying that gay men relate to them in their own way".

Figure 15: Delmas Howe, *Atlas*, 1982.
Oil on canvas, 129,5 x 154,9 cm.
Artist's private collection.
(Delmas Howe 2007:[sp]).

Figure 16: Delmas Howe, *Apollo*, 1991.
Lithograph, 55,8 x 40,6 cm.
Artist's private collection.
(Delmas Howe 2007:[sp]).

Yet, Strong's statement is rather vexing if one were to consider exactly *which* gay men relate, or can relate more effectively, to these images and the traditions that they exemplify. Firstly, regardless of traditional cowboy cultures not being exclusively made up of white men (Le Coney & Trodd 2006:[sp]), the images discussed in this section of the study are testament to the unequivocal linking of 'whiteness' and the myth of the frontier. Secondly, Kobena Mercer (1991:192) argues that the canonical status of the male nude in Western art history is intrinsically racist, since "the model of physical perfection embodied in classical … sculpture serves as the mythological origin of the ethnocentric fantasy that there is only one 'race' of human beings who represented what was … beautiful".

Strong's (1998:148) 'Western cultural heritages' appear to be interchangeable with '*white* cultural heritages' *or* traditional, modernist art historical discourses, which are based in Western cultural imperialism, aesthetics and academic powers that have largely ignored the presence of blacks, as both objects and subjects, in visual culture (Doy 2000:24). Consequently, Howe is actually fusing two aesthetic cultural phenomena that historically exclude blacks from conceptions of masculine and, for that matter, *gay* masculine beauty. The exclusion of black bodies from the homomasculine ideal becomes quite perceptible when viewing Howe's *Black Male* (Figure 17) in relation to his depictions of *Apollo* and *Atlas*. Initially, this image devalues the 'black male' by concealing his identity, while, in turn, the white cowboys are explicitly not anonymous, but are endowed with titles loaded with grandeur.

Figure 17: Delmas Howe, *Black Male*, 1991.
Lithograph, 55,8 x 40,6 cm.
Artist's private collection.
(Delmas Howe 2007:[sp]).

Furthermore, the black male does not share the dignified poses of the cowboys, but is depicted from behind, his eyes not meeting the spectator's gaze in the confident, almost defiant, way that Apollo's does. Similarly, his 'nakedness', in comparison to the semi-*nudity* of Howe's cowboys, adds to his vulnerability, positions him as 'closer to nature', and therefore ultimately subjects him to the colonial notion of primitivism. In other words, Kenneth Clark (1956:1) argues that to "be naked is to be deprived of our clothes and the word implies some of the embarrassment [or diminution] which most of us feel in that condition … [nudity] projects into the mind … not [an image] of a huddled and defenceless body, but of a balanced, prosperous and confident body". Yet, the 'nude' white male body is used "as a point of final explanation of social difference [and racial superiority, because it] presents itself not as typical but as ideal" (Dyer 1997:146, 147, 151).

Mercer's (1991:187) reading of the photography of Robert Mapplethorpe (Figure 18) can be readily applied to this image, in terms of Howe seemingly

participating in "the ideological reproduction of 'colonial fantasy' based on the desire for mastery and power over the racialised other". With regard to the anonymous *Black Male* and the named, but fragmented and still objectified, *Derrick Cross*, the coloniser/colonised binary of gay 'colonial' representation manifests not only at the level of the image itself, but is also present in the production thereof: as white, gay male artists, Howe and Mapplethorpe occupy powerful subject-positions, which enable them to subjugate and fetishise black male bodies *as* objects (Mercer 1991:186; Meyer 2001:297; Mirzoeff 1995:140).
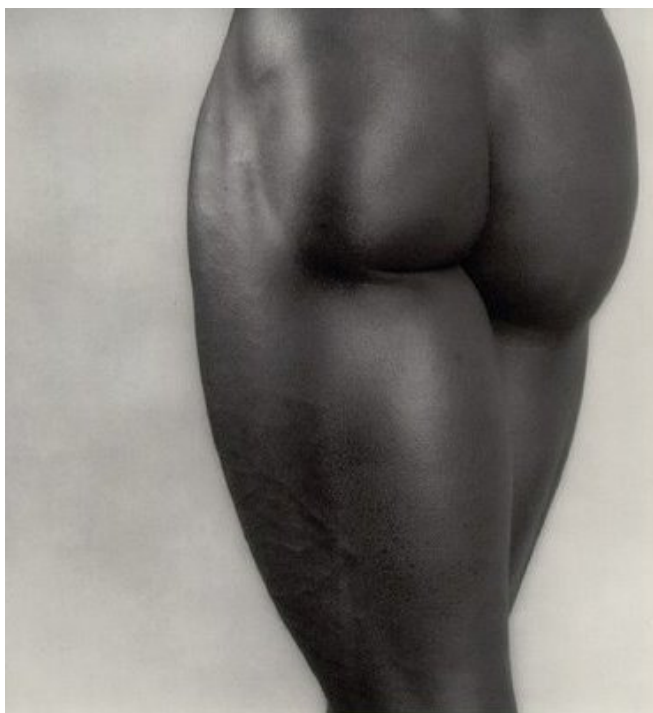
Figure 18: Robert Mapplethorpe, *Derrick Cross*, 1983.
Black and white photograph.
The Estate of Robert Mapplethorpe.
(Doy 2000:170)

The 'nakedness' of Howe's *Black Male* is a far cry from the Western paradigm of the male nude, since the power relations that underlie the image constantly oscillate between 'negrophobia', which diminishes the black body, and 'negrophilia', which overvalues the black male physique to such an extent that it eventually signifies nothing but sexuality (Mercer 1991:187). Therefore, black men seemingly appear only because they *are* black, and their occasional 'nakedness' serves only to exaggerate their 'blackness', because

to "be naked is to be oneself ['black']" (Berger 1972:54). Conversely, nudity "is placed on display" (Berger 1972:54), and white men therefore appear not *because* they are white, but because they express or 'exhibit' the values of (homomasculine) beauty (Clark 1956:6). These values can be conceived of as being historically and ideologically tied to 'whiteness' within dominant Western aesthetic discourses of which the male nude is evidently an example (Dyer 1997:151; Saslow 1999:31; Mirzoeff 1995:3).[12]

Apollo, Atlas and other queer white cowboys appear frequently, and therefore 'naturally', in gay visual culture, while the black male's appearance is conditional, since it either reinforces the superiority of homomasculine white men, or serves to fulfil colonial fantasies regarding black, male sexuality (Han 2007:57). In other words, Western conceptions of idyllic homomasculine beauty are seemingly sustained and made possible by the "imperfect body of the racial Other", since "the divine drive towards perfection is as much marked by the inferiority of the [black body] as by the perfection of the white" (Mirzoeff 1995:135, 136). Ultimately, colonial ideology is re-figured in gay visual culture on several fronts, which include the objectification and 'othering' of blacks; the deification of white masculinity; the 'colonisation' of the gay media through the conditional acceptance of blacks; Western cultural imperialism; racist aesthetics; and the commodification of frontiersmanship.

It seems that Fritscher (2005:[sp]), Gonzales-Day (2002:[sp]) and Strong (1998:148) are applauding the supposed advent, and present proliferation, of homomasculine imagery, despite acknowledging that most of these representations exclude gay blacks from the gay rhetoric of the 'body beautiful'. The 'perfection' represented in homomasculine, erotic visual images, is unattainable for most gay men; *especially* gay blacks, because their very racial identities remove them even further from the ideals of beauty that occupy a prime position in gay culture, art and social consciousness (Han

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[12] The manner in which 'whiteness' seemingly operates from an ideological position that renders it 'undetectable' or 'invisible' (Keating 1995:904), is explored in more detail in the following chapter of this study. The exclusion of blacks from the South African gay print media, with specific focus on the lifestyle magazine *Gay Pages*, is investigated by means of uncovering the racist practices by which 'whiteness' maintains its primacy, and prevalence, in gay visual cultures.

2006:23). Furthermore, Han (2007:60) motivates that whereas the self-esteem of gay blacks suffers because of the majority of images in the gay media that make them 'invisible' and therefore 'un-desireable', "white men have no reason to hate themselves in a society that [constantly] reinforces their privilege".

The notion that homomasculinity or 'straight-acting' performances are liberating constructs, because they supposedly subvert hegemonic masculinity (Clarkson 2006:204), can be refuted by considering that in attempting to replace stereotypical, effeminate images of gay men, new stereotypes centred on 'whiteness' seemingly emerge (Han 2007:52). Han (2007:53) argues that 'whiteness' in the gay community retains its seeming naturality by appearing incessantly and upholding the stereotypical images from which it benefits. In other words, while feminised images of gay Asian men and hypersexualised images of gay African men are sometimes resisted by gay blacks at the margins of gay communities, 'straight-acting' white men forge stronger masculine identities by consuming, and defining themselves in opposition to, feminine or threatening 'others' (Green 2002:536).

2.3 Strike a 'Cool Pose': black self-representation

What distinguishes this section from the preceding parts of the chapter is that it deals with representations of black men that are created and circulated not only by white cultures, but, presumably, by blacks cultures as well. The manner in which 'blackness' supposedly figures in the social imagination of *black* constituencies is explored with regard to discourses on race, cultural attitudes toward homosexuality, and the manifestation of these issues in a few selected images from visual culture. On the topics of colonial representations of 'blackness' and gay 'colonial' representations, for example, this dissertation centres on the powerful position that white cultures occupy within the politics of representation. Thus, seeing the world through the eyes of whites ultimately reveals that blacks are in the unfortunate position of being emasculated, demonised, fetishised and rendered invisible by the images that aim to perpetuate white supremacy in Westernised patriarchal cultures.

Analysing black self-representation, however, signals a departure from defining the relationship between the object and the subject of the gaze as being predicated on power structures amongst differently raced individuals or groups; or 'whiteness' versus 'blackness'. Instead, black self-representation is specifically studied here to expose the standards of blackness, which seemingly appear in certain images of black men, and that signify an 'authenticity' or 'essence' that excludes certain blacks from actively participating in their *own* cultures (McBride 1998:365; Cohen 2003:46). Furthermore, amongst those excluded from the 'essential' black community, marginalised gay blacks form the focus of this trajectory of the study because it appears that a significant number of black self-representations eschew male homosexuality.

This study does not propose that *all* forms of black self-representation are inherently homophobic, since the images that are produced by blacks are pluralistic, with some explicitly embracing queerness (Doy 2000:163). However, several theorists, which include but are not limited to bell hooks (1995a:209), Joe Wlodarz (2004:10) and Herman Gray (1995:402), concur that strong emphases on heteromasculinity and heteropatriarchy characterise many, if not most, of the images of black men that appear in popular culture. Determining which of these images are self-representations depends on whether "they speak to us about … the experiences of living in a body that is marked black-male in a white supremacist, patriarchal culture – even if they speak to us uncannily or metaphorically" (Saint-Aubin 1994:1069).

In other words, images of black men that simply recycle colonial notions of 'blackness' are seemingly distinct from self-affirming images of blacks: black self-representation is historically structured against Western, hegemonic discourses on race and masculinity, and therefore articulates dissatisfaction with such constructs by emancipating the images of black men from the constraints of dominant, racist forms of visual representation (Stam & Spence 2004:882; Gray 1995:401). Hall (1995a:441, 442) states that contemporary black cultural politics seek to transform dominant regimes of representation by, firstly, accessing representation and positioning blacks as subjects instead

of objects in representative practices and thereby, secondly, contesting the marginal, stereotypical representations of blacks by promoting 'positive' black imagery. Black self-representations therefore 'speak' to us through the subversion of stereotypical conceptions of black masculinity as 'feminised', inferior and subordinate to white masculinity.

However, while challenging the ideological structures of 'whiteness' and colonialism, for example, that position white men as the main agents of representation, reclaimed images of black men simultaneously strengthen traditional definitions of black masculinity as unequivocally heterosexual, patriarchal, and therefore 'authentic' (Gray 1995:403). In view of this, Dwight McBride (1998:365, 366) states that the problem with the construction of an 'authentic' black masculinity is that it operates in terms of inclusion/exclusion by allowing race to override sexual orientation, gender, class and other disparities between blacks. Hall (1995a:443, 444) argues that placing an 'authentic' black subject, seemingly defined in terms of race alone, at the helm of representation does not necessarily ensure an all-encompassing depiction of 'the black community', owing to the fact that 'blackness' "cannot be represented without reference to the dimensions of class, gender, sexuality and ethnicity". Therefore, it appears that the most salient marker of 'true blackness' is racial identity; an identity that suggests discontinuity between itself and homosexuality, since 'gayness' is inextricably linked to 'whiteness' (McBride 1998:369).

In fact, Hall's (1995a:443, 444) critique of 'authentic blackness' is shared by cultural theorists such as Paul Gilroy (2000) and Liese van der Watt (2004) who seemingly seek to transcend the very category of race in favour of abolishing the essentialism that stifles divergent black identities. I align myself with Van der Watt's (2004:47) insistence that contemporary society is established within a 'post-identitarian' climate; a world in which identity is constantly fluctuating, mutating and transgressing the borders of essentialist subjectivities. In other words, the cultural and theoretical shifts toward articulations of post-blackness (Van der Watt 2004:48), for example, illuminate the manner in which disparities of ethnicity, gender and sexual

orientation "challenge the unanimity of racialised collectivities" (Gilroy 2000:24).

It is, however, important to bear in mind that the academic endeavour of moving beyond the exclusivity of terms such as 'blackness' does not negate the fact that race is positioned in culture as one of the clearest markers of difference, categorisation and group affiliation (Van der Watt 2004:48). Gilroy (2000:29) states that "the elaborate cultural and ideological work that goes into producing and reproducing [race] is more visible than ever before" and it is seemingly impossible to completely discard race or 'blackness' in a world so intent on constantly reiterating its primacy. In view of this, it is *amidst* race and the discourses that saturate it, that post-blackness "expresses a desire to move on from notions of ['pure' or 'authentic'] identity and acknowledges the difficulty of that search" (Van der Watt 2004:48). Thus, this study still effectively refers to 'blackness', not as a means of maintaining its monolithic status, but in order to infer critiques *of* that status, which manifest in terms of the exploration of 'macho' black aesthetics and the disruptive practices of gay black self-representation discussed in the following section of the chapter.

In returning to the equation of homosexuality with white culture, one can conceive of this synonymy as being apparent at two distinct levels: gay self-representations of 'gayness' are primarily constituted by images of white homomasculinity, while black self-representations of 'blackness' are mainly informed by heterosexuality (Sullivan 2003:69). The supposed weakness, passivity or effeminacy associated with homosexuality is a 'white thing', and therefore not constitutive of 'true', strong, black masculinity (McBride 1998:371). However, situated at the second level of black masculinity's denial of queerness, is a far more deep-seated bias that emerges from the fallacious notion that homosexuality is a perversion of colonialism, introduced to indigenous black cultures by imperial powers (Pincheon 2000:42).

The notion of homosexuality as un-African, or 'exotic' to the African continent (Epprecht 1998:645), is a discourse that has become increasingly vexing for scholars of cultural studies, queer theory and sociology seeking to marry

ethnicity and sexuality (Sullivan 2003:71). Despite evidence that homosexuality did exist and was actively practiced by pre-colonial, indigenous African cultures,[13] many blacks still believe that gayness shares an undeviating bond with 'whiteness' (Dlamini 2006:128; Wells & Polders 2006:21). Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe, for example, often expresses his distaste for homosexuality as a 'white man's disease' (Epprecht 1998:644), while the homophobic undercurrents of Winnie Mandela's statements during her trial for kidnapping and assault in 1991 illustrate that the

> explicit racialisation of sexual orientation in discourses of cultural nationalism … sought to represent homosexuality as an implicitly white contamination of black culture, thereby attempting to racially mark homosexual desire and homosexual acts as circumstantial products of colonisation and apartheid (Holmes 1997:163).

With specific focus on South Africa, Helen Wells and Louise Polders (2006:21) state that homosexuality endures more censorship in South African black communities, and homophobia tends to manifest more frequently and violently in black cultures across the country. Moreover, Gregory Lewis (2003:60) purports that the condemnation of homosexuality is rife amongst African-Americans, quite possibly because of blacks beyond the African continent also internalising, and subsequently perpetuating, the notion of homosexuality as originating during the colonial era; a period that articulates an overarching, collective experience of injustice for most blacks (Powell 1997:13).

In view of this, Deborah Amory (1997:5) argues that the exclusive linking of homosexuality to the West must be disbanded in order to curb the dilemma that black queers are facing in terms of existing in a 'non-space' (Pincheon

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[13] Busangokwakhe Dlamini (2006:129), for example, motivates that in certain African cultures, homosexuality (especially amongst traditional healers, like *izangoma* and *izinyanga*) has great religious significance and has been a constant element of indigenous African spirituality and cosmology. Accordingly, Marc Epprecht (2005:258) states that indigenous Venda and Shona tribes described homosexuality in non-threatening terms, and that in these cultures homosexual individuals were respected as revered beings possessed by spirits from the opposite sex. Furthermore, male homosexuality is reported to have been practised amongst the Azande of northern Congo since the early twentieth century, with men taking younger boys as 'wives'; some even paying 'bride price' to the youth's parents (Dlamini 2006:133).

2000:47), because of not being fully immersed in either black or gay cultures. In opposing the stifling discourses that rigidly separate homosexuality and 'blackness', Marc Epprecht (2005:254) and Busangokwakhe Dlamini (2006:135) therefore promote an understanding of colonialism as creating the *taboos* surrounding homosexuality, not homosexual conduct itself. Bill Stanford Pincheon (2000:43) explains that what one should bear in mind is that most of the literature and anthropological studies on indigenous black cultures, which exclude Africa from the 'map' of gayness, are based in Eurocentricity itself and therefore reflect white perspectives on 'other' cultures.

In other words, since colonial ideology added very little value to the traditions and practices of indigenous African cultures, it seems that customary beliefs in the spiritual power of same-sex relations could just as effectively have been deemed 'uncivilised' (Dlamini 2006:130). Epprecht (2005:254) follows this argument by stating that colonisation in southern Africa was characterised by harsh laws regarding homosexuality, which were instated in line with Christianity and nineteenth-century scientific discourses that pathologised homosexuality (Epprecht 1998:645). A large part of Europe's 'civilising missions' to Africa involved creating shame around homosexuality, ultimately tarnishing the casualness with which gayness was handled by indigenous cultures (Epprecht 2005:258). Moreover, Dlamini (2006:132) argues that by portraying blacks as unaffected by homosexuality, which was conceived of as a purely cultural phenomenon, colonial powers enforced notions of Africans as 'closer to nature', since heterosexuality suggests a 'natural state' within Western, heteronormative rhetoric.

White men accused of homosexual crimes in the colonial space of Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), for example, faced legitimate punishment and the media fervently covered their exploits, but black men engaging in homosexual acts were mostly excused from criminal liability and media scrutiny (Epprecht 1998:639). Homosexuality was viewed as a crime amongst the 'civilised', not something that necessarily would have affected blacks unless they were somehow corrupted by foreigners with gay proclivities (Epprecht 1998:640). Consequently, the fear of homosexuality, and subsequent criminalisation

thereof, was hegemonically propagated to black cultures by white settlers, Christian missionaries and the Calvinistic apartheid regime in South Africa (Epprecht 1998:646; 2005:256).

The notion that homosexuality is 'foreign' to African soil can thus be attributed to the colonial powers that sought to impose their own biases on blacks, thereby erasing traditional customs and replacing them with Western sentiments. It seems that it is a combination of the positioning of white men as the sole propagators of homosexuality, and the emasculation of blacks during the colonial era that resulted in anti-colonial rebellion being exemplified by "revulsion and anger against African men who betrayed the … dignity of African masculinity by having sex with males" (Epprecht 2005:259). In other words, by exempting black men from homosexuality, but simultaneously denying them certain masculine attributes, 'true' black masculinity often manifests in terms of machismo; subsequently condemning gay blacks as 'siding' with the white race by accepting their oppression as 'feminine', inferior men and therefore not aiding the ongoing struggle against racism (Sullivan 2003:68).

If not necessarily fostering black homosexuality itself, colonial ideology can possibly be held accountable for creating a crisis in black masculinity, because despite being disconnected from queerness by Western homophobia, black men are constantly exposed to images and discourses that cast them as 'effeminate'. With an apparent disregard for discourses that refute the notion of homosexuality as un-African, like those presented by Dlamini (2006), Epprecht (1998 & 2005) and Pincheon (2000), many forms of black self-representation seemingly stem from a need to address, and counter, degrading colonial images that are often read as not only feminising, but also *queering* black men. By insisting on depicting black men as symbolically castrated slaves, entertainers and children, colonial rhetoric is critiqued by black theorists such as Frantz Fanon (Epprecht 2005:262) for actively introducing homosexuality to black masculinity (hooks 1995a:206).

In view of this, bell hooks (1995a:209) argues that in order "to counter the 'soft' image created by subjugation … the black male body must refigure its hardness" and therefore appears in visual cultures driven by blacks as hypermasculine, traditionally patriarchal figures aimed at controlling women and denying homosexuality, in order to recover the male agency lost under colonial rule and ongoing white cultural imperialism. Furthermore, hooks (1995a:206) claims that the endorsement of the hypermasculine black image is analogous to the manner in which gay men adopt homomasculine identities and 'clone' aesthetics as a means of countering theories and representations that cast them as 'lesser' men.

In effect, amidst the melange of white supremacist imagery that degraded black masculinities, black men seemingly opted for embracing and identifying with the images of sports figures, which are historically the most representative of hypermasculinity (hooks 1995a:206). Although the image of the black athlete represented only conditional acceptance to dominant white cultures and served to propagate racist stereotypes of black men's brutish physicality and poor intellect (Pieterse 1992:148), prominent black sportsmen, like the American boxers Jack Johnson and Joe Louis (Figure 19), "symbolised for black people of their generation, and black men in particular, via their rebellious masculinity, an assertion of militant resistance to racial apartheid" (hooks 1995a:206).
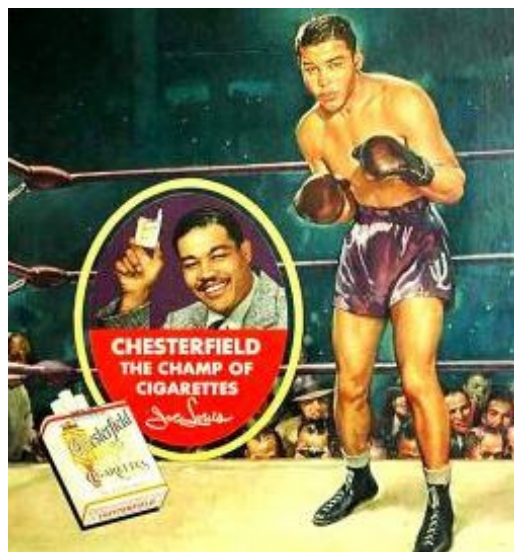

Figure 19: Joe Louis advertising Chesterfield cigarettes, 1947.
(Pieterse 1992:149).

As the 1960s drew to an end, the figure of the black male athlete, however, lost its political edge and became assimilated, and neutralised, through mass commodification (hooks 1995a:207). From the late 1970s onwards, images of black athletes joined the celebrity spectacle of gangster rappers and other black male heroes of popular culture, to cultivate the contemporary visual sphere in which black men feature almost exclusively as 'flattened out' (Guerrero 1995:396), homogenous signifiers of heterosexual, masculine privilege (Gray 1995:402). Arthur Saint-Aubin (1994:1058) believes that "the prevailing cultural crisis of many black men is the limited stylistic options of self-image and resistance" that dominate visual culture, and prescribe fixed identities that only some black men can identify with.

Ed Guerrero (1995:396) asserts that the majority of images of black men in popular visual culture can be divided into two categories that articulate the fear/desire obsession that surrounds black masculinity: especially in news media, for example, black men are often criminalised and feature as threats or menaces, while the cultural industries of sport and music elevate the statuses of black men and subsequently cast them as heroes (Guerrero 1995:396; Barrett 1997:116). In view of this, much of what has been termed black self-representation with regard to this study, appears to engage with the latter category, possibly because such images negate white supremacist discourses and visual representation that cast black men as inferior or 'feminine'.

The South African magazine *Hype*, for example, consists primarily of a black editorial staff and although the focus of the publication is on rap, hip-hop and kwaito, it also includes a regular sports feature (Figure 20), supported by advertising images that seem to anchor the glorification of the black athlete (Figure 21). This yet again illustrates the manner in which representations of black men are perpetually recycled in visual culture, with the images of modern day sportsmen from *Hype* being almost interchangeable with those of the past: although images of Joe Louis, for example, no longer form an integral part of popular culture, the links between true 'blackness', athleticism

and hypermasculinity persist, and so does black self-representation's attraction toward it.[14]

Figure 20: *ESPN* Slam-Dunk feature article, 2007.
(*Hype Magazine* June/July:70).

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[14] The study employs *Hype* solely as a purposive sample in order to illustrate the consistency of Guerrero's (1995:396) categories in visual culture, but does not simultaneously assume that all 'black' media are symptomatic of such images. In other words, *Hype* is isolated, because it is indicative of the manner in which some media controlled by blacks are instrumental in (re)producing notions of black masculinity in an affirmative tone (Laden 2003:195). Furthermore, this is done exactly because the study subsequently critiques these images as homogenising black men, and as alienating gay black men from their racial identities and communities.
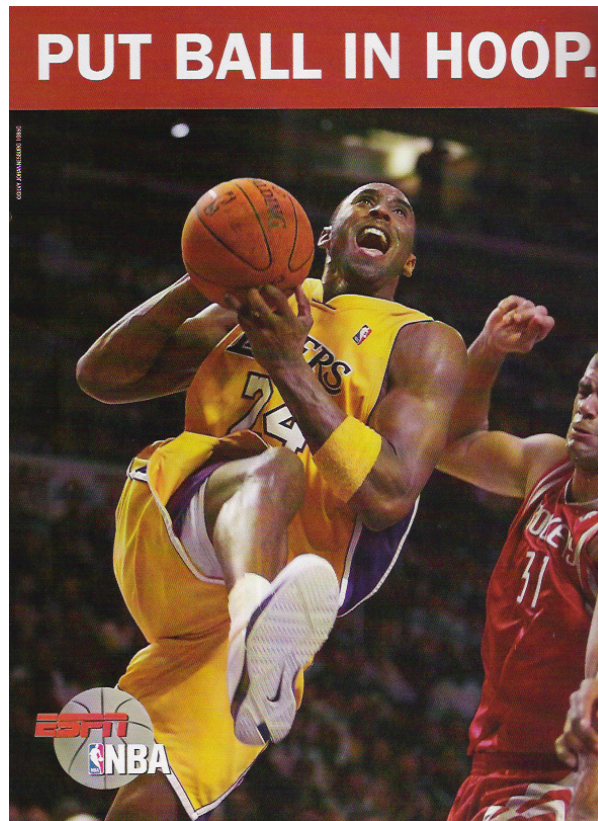
Figure 21: *ESPN* advertisement, 2007.
(*Hype Magazine* June/July:46).

Saint-Aubin (1994:1059, 1060) argues that in resisting identification with some images produced by white cultures and images of whites themselves, black men perform different degrees of 'coolness' that communicate a sense of toughness, control and detachment, all of which emanate from the black body and are typically conceived of as faculties of the 'masculine'. Therefore, many subjects in black self-representation can be conceived of as striking 'Cool Poses' that ultimately serve to restore the dignity of black masculinity by, firstly, detaching black men from effeminacy or feminine attributes and, secondly, by using the black male body as a vehicle that expresses its 'inherent masculinity' and refusal to accept white supremacy (Saint-Aubin 1994:1057).

Although black self-representation cannot just be reduced to the 'Cool Pose' (Saint-Aubin 1994:1059), the ubiquity with which images that are reflective thereof appear in popular culture, in the body language, style and demeanour of male rappers (Figure 22) and athletes, for example, suggests that the

"tenets of black macho, true masculinity admits little or no space for self-interrogation or multiple subjectivities around race" (Wlodarz 2004:10). In other words, Saint-Aubin (1994:1061) states that it is the Afro-Americanisation of culture, or the assimilation and appropriation of American black male aesthetics by youth cultures across the globe, that homogenises the self-representations of black men.

Figure 22: Rap-star Flabba strikes a 'Cool Pose' on the cover of *Hype Magazine* June/July, 2007.

Christina Elizabeth Sharpe (1999:1090) states that what one should always take into account is that in the formation of communities, groups or nations, who is included and who is excluded is *always* at stake. The very prominence of 'Cool Poses' in black self-representation ultimately results in the monitoring of 'real' blackness (Cohen 2003:47), since complete membership to this racial group is seemingly determined by one's ability to meet the standards that these images and discourses represent. In terms of the 'Cool Pose' then, gay black men are banished from the constructs of true black masculinity, presumably because the 'hard' characteristics that constitute it are presented as unattainable to them.

Moreover, Joane Nagel (2000:107) argues that "racial and ethnic boundaries are also sexual boundaries", and 'blackness' therefore also depends on one's adherence to the normative heterosexuality that many forms of black male self-representation propagate. Consequently, the dilemma facing many black queers, is that they are demonised inside and outside of their racial communities (Nagel 2000:123), because queerness is seemingly unacceptable to 'blackness' and is often conceived of as a colonial perversion, while 'blackness' features conditionally, but rarely, in gay cultures and forms of representation.

2.4 We're here, we're queer, we're black: gay black artists and self-representation

As a vantage point, gay black self-representations are conceived of in this dissertation as referring to images that are conceptualised, performed and produced primarily by contemporary queer black artists. The aim of this study with regard to such images, is to make explicit the manner in which gay black self-representation is seemingly structured against dominant, heteronormative discourses on 'blackness' *and* the monopoly of images of white men in modern-day gay visual spheres and media. Thus, it is important that self-representations created from a gay, black subjectivity are approached as combating not one, but two arenas of visual culture that marginalise black queers and limit their 'visibility'.

Doy (2000:160), for example, argues that although gay black artists appear to relate more to black communities than gay communities because of queer racism, discourses on gayness that circulate certain black constituencies position homosexuality as a colonial 'disease', or as a threat to the dignity of black masculinity and political mobilisation against white supremacy. In other words, mainstream definitions, expressions and conceptions of 'gayness' and 'blackness' seem to constantly negate the existence and acceptance of black queers by oscillating between normative whiteness with regard to the queer community, and normative heterosexuality with regard to the black community. The challenge of gay black self-representation is therefore to not

only subvert white society (Doy 2000:136), but also to resist the prejudices that appear to plague certain areas of black social consciousness.

According to Tim Edwards (1994:3), there is a certain degree of neglect with regard to the exploration of black male homosexuality in discourses pertaining to queer theory and gay forms of cultural expression. As a result, queer theory's claims of 'inclusivity' are sometimes critiqued by cultural theorists such as Vincent Woodard (2000:1278) and Jennifer DeVere Brody (2000:1274) who argue that racial differences, and therefore black queers, are not sufficiently accounted for in the study of sexualities. However, Ken Gardner Honeychurch (1995:215) states that contemporary visual studies and art historical discourses are some of the most effective sites of resistance against the exclusion of black queers, since they operate in conjunction with a political agenda that seeks to empower or reclaim those areas of visual culture that have been neglected by more traditional, stifling scholarly endeavours.

Exploring the expression of black male homosexuality in this study of visual culture is driven by the need to attribute 'parallel positions' to race, gender and sexuality (Honeychurch 1995:211) in order not to strengthen the already rigorous segregation of 'blackness' and homosexuality. The rationale for specifically locating gay black self-representation within the fine arts, and the works of Lyle Ashton Harris, Rotimi Fani-Kayodé and Nicholas Hlobo, is constituted by Mercer's (1996:122) statement that especially "lesbian and gay *artists* and activists have been in the forefront of decentring the outmoded notion of the essential black subject" [emphasis added]. Moreover, with regard to so-called 'post-black' ideological incentives, which reject racial essentialism, Van der Watt (2004:48) argues that "race is primarily an *aesthetic* practice that has to be disrupted" or, in fact, queered [emphasis added].

It is, however, also important to acknowledge that art history and the broader study of the popular visual domain follow a different trajectory in black visual culture than in dominant, 'white' visual cultures, since postmodernism, as an

antithesis to modernism and as 'The' contemporary paradigm, is not equally embraced by all (Doy 2000:2,103). According to Doy (2000:22), the reluctance of some black scholars and artists in accepting postmodernism is based on the critique of postmodern thought as erasing concepts of truth, history and authorship, which are inherent to the modernist paradigm, but still have great significance for many blacks. Therefore, despite postmodernism signalling the end of Eurocentric grand narratives, it simultaneously limits black cultural practitioners in expressing their 'blackness', which is historically contingent in terms of the social construction of race and therefore not in vogue with postmodern notions of abandoning individual agency or subjectivity (Doy 2000:22).

In other words, it seems that the moment blacks gained entry to the art world, previously situated in white academic power under modernism, the postmodern rejection of absolute truths inhibited the telling of 'black truths'; leaving the black subject yet again silenced (Doy 2000:56). At the expense of being somewhat reductive, Doy (2000:38) argues that the majority of contemporary black artists seem to fall into two categories: those who reject postmodernism and trust in modernist concepts that allow for social and political mobilisation against racism by addressing historical injustices, like colonialism; and those who reject modernism as being inherently racist, sexist and homophobic, and revere postmodernism as breaking down essentialism and creating multiple subject-positions around 'blackness'.

The postmodern understanding of the fluidity of identity seems to be what especially *gay* black male artists are engaging with, because of the current dilemma facing black masculinity in terms of being performed incessantly, through 'Cool Poses', for example (Saint-Aubin 1994:1057), to suggest that all black men are supposedly heterosexual (Doy 2000:178). The modernist notion of an essential, homogenous black community (Doy 2000:2) that presents a united front against white cultural imperialism can be critiqued, to some extent, as propagating that black culture is also *essentially* heteronormative. In view of this, Nagel (2000:113) states that heterosexuality, and the manner in which it operates hegemonically, is probably the most

rigorously enforced norm across a multitude of ethnicities and other social groups.

In order to free black male subjects from the constraints of straight, 'macho' black masculine ideals, gay black artists seemingly seek to dismantle these stereotypes regarding black masculinity in order to "make visible the same-sex desire which is sometimes repressed by black culture" (Doy 2000:163). The process of challenging 'authentic' black male identities through post-black sentiments or aesthetics, is therefore characterised by the struggle "between the person you choose to be and the things [such as heteronormative 'blackness'] that determine your individuality by being thrust upon you" (Gilroy 2000:106). Subsequently, it appears that gay black self-representations do not totally discard agency and accept postmodern sentiments conditionally (Doy 2000:23), since the expression of individual sexuality is exactly what drives queer black artists to challenge the homogeneity of images of black men. In other words, gay black self-representation seemingly retains some subjectivity, but simultaneously communicates, through postmodern discourses, that black male identity is not 'authentically' heterosexual, and "does not describe what we are, but … what we become, recurrently" (Van der Watt 2004:48).

Moreover, one can employ the postcolonial theorist Homi K Bhabha's notions of 'hybridity' and 'mimicry' (Doy 2000:134) to reveal that gay black self-representations are seemingly distinct from more 'traditional' depictions of black masculinity. For the purposes of this study, normative black self-representations that manifest in terms of machismo, athleticism and 'coolness' are conceived of as typical of mimicry, because evoking and then recycling the image of the black athlete, for example, illustrates the manner in which a "flawed identity is imposed on colonised people who are obliged to mirror back an image of the colonials, but in an imperfect form" (Doy 2000:134).

The notion that representations of black sportsmen are products of colonial commodification of the black male body (Pieterse 1992:148), may suggest that although black self-representations of this nature are affirmative for black

men, they still operate within 'white', supremacist ideologies; regardless of whether they are 'imperfect' replications or not (Low 1996:199). In accord with this, hooks (1995b:71) states that many black men seem to construct their masculine identities from the "narrow representations of black masculinity, perpetuated stereotypes, and myths" that can ultimately be linked to the cultural hegemony of whites. Therefore, this study's critique of so-called 'mimicry' in black self-representation (Doy 2000:134) relates significantly to the problem of homophobia in black cultures, since anti-gay rhetoric is seemingly also absorbed from colonial indoctrination and myths, and subsequently internalised (Epprecht 2005:254).

In view of this, gay black self-representations appear to manifest more in terms of 'hybridity' than 'mimicry': in following Bhabha's notions, the images produced by queer black artists can be interpreted as not merely reproducing already existing stereotypes about black masculinity, but as actively seeking to obliterate one-dimensionality, re-construct black male subjectivity and experiment with identity within a postmodern vernacular (Doy 2000:134). The supposed 'hybridity' of gay black self-representation suggests that instead of relying on normative manifestations of black masculinity, these images fuse identities and reverse "the effects of colonialist disavowal", thereby allowing for the reconciliation of 'gayness' and 'blackness' (Low 1996:197). Doy (2000:181) argues that gay black art not only re-articulates black masculinity, but also expresses its dissatisfaction with the black 'macho' by refusing to operate within the heteronormative vocabulary of 'coolness', detachment, sexism and homophobia.

The image by the African-American photographer Lyle Ashton Harris (Figure 23), for example, represents the manner in which the artist rejects traditional conceptions of black masculinity as anti-effeminate, and exposes his gay 'self' amidst the majority of discourses and visual media that cast black men as unequivocally 'straight' (Posner 1995:29; Doy 2000:147). Furthermore, Harris's work can also be conceived of as acknowledging the 'gay black gaze', thereby refusing the 'colonial' gaze as it manifests in the images of some white gay male photographers, like Robert Mapplethorpe, for example

(Doy 2000:174; Mercer 1991:187). Thus, by explicitly depicting his queerness and legitimating black same-sex desire through the gaze, Harris refutes the notion that gay black masculinity is simply a circumstantial product of colonial influence, fetishism and fantasy.

Figure 23: Lyle Ashton Harris (in collaboration with Thomas Allen Harris), *Brotherhood, Crossroads and Etcetera #1*, 1994.
Unique Polaroid, 60,9 x 50,8 cm.
Jack Tilton Gallery, New York.
(Perchuk & Posner 1995:108).

Nigerian-born photographer Rotimi Fani-Kayodé similarly appears to fuse African-ness and queerness through his gay black self-representations (Figure 24). He states that:

> Both aesthetically and ethically I seek to translate my rage and my desire into new images which will undermine conventional perceptions and which may reveal hidden worlds. Many of the images are seen as sexually explicit – or, more precisely, homosexually explicit. I make my pictures homosexual on purpose. Black men from the Third World have not previously revealed either to their own people or to the West a certain shocking fact: they can desire each other (Perryer 2008:112).

Figure 24: Rotimi Fani-Kayodé, *Untitled*, 1985.
Silver gelatin print, 63 x 63 cm.
Autograph ABP, London.
(Perryer 2008:113).

The South-African artist Nicholas Hlobo also explores "the fact that homosexuality is often not considered to be 'an African thing' and is therefore particularly suppressed in black African societies" (Simbao 2007:38). Hlobo's installation *Ndiyafuna* (2006) (Figure 25), for example, may not be as clear a self-representation as Harris's photography, but still addresses the problem of gay *and* black society's reluctance to accept the possibility of bona fide African, male homosexuality. In *Ndiyafuna*, Hlobo confronts the spectator with a black figure bent over a bulbous bag constructed from inner tubing, while the figure's exposed buttocks are made from leather, thereby connecting the sensuality of black 'skin' to sexual fetishism (Simbao 2007:38).

Figure 25: Nicholas Hlobo, *Ndiyafuna*, 2006.
Glass fibre, rubber, inner tube, ribbon, jeans, sneakers, lace and wood,
110 x 170 x 100 cm.
(Simbao 2007:39).

Ndiyafuna is, first and foremost, constructed to elicit a response of fascination or sexual attraction, but the specific manner in which the figure is positioned seeks to inevitably 'queer' the work and thereby connect its 'blackness' to homosexual practice: "As Hlobo points out, such a position is sexual … and if you were to pick up this artwork you'd have to do it" from behind (Simbao 2007:38). Hlobo's art is therefore aimed at making explicit the manner in which homosexual acts involving black men are thought of as transgressive in many African cultures (Simbao 2007:38), because of the level of 'unease' that this work may create for its viewers. Ultimately, Hlobo, Harris and Fani-Kayodé seem to epitomise the notion that black culture, and black visual culture, is not singular, but cuts across sexuality and gender and therefore exists as a heterogeneous constituency.

This chapter explored the relations between 'blackness', gay masculinity and visual culture with regard to four distinct, yet interconnected, types of representation. Firstly, the manner in which imperialist, racist ideologies and white supremacy created visual stereotypes of black masculinity, which inevitably position black men as inferior to normative white masculinity by

means of emasculation and 'feminisation', was investigated with regard to colonial representations of blackness. These representations included, for example, demeaning depictions of blacks as primitives, servants, entertainers and 'children'. Secondly, the chapter focused on so-called gay 'colonial' representations as a means of delineating the manner in which colonial sentiments, such as the reverence of white 'frontier' masculinity, is seemingly re-articulated in homoerotic imagery, thereby re-inscribing the cultural synonymy of 'whiteness' and male homosexuality. In the third section of this chapter, black self-representation was investigated in relation to the notion that the process of reclaiming black masculinity from colonial, racist subjugation often entails the shunning of 'gayness', thus excluding black gay men from the essentialist construction of 'authentic male blackness'.

With regard to the final section of the chapter, which dealt with gay black self-representation, the study illustrated that by infusing their representations with queer, black male interests, artists like Nicholas Hlobo, Lyle Ashton Harris and Rotimi Fani-Kayodé challenge the ubiquity with which white men appear in more popular forms of gay visual culture and also dispel the social myths surrounding the non-existence of black homosexuals. The following chapter deals with the rise of the gay niche market and the ways in which consumerism impacts on the creation of gay identities, as well as the display of 'membership' or 'belonging' to the gay community, with particular reference to *Gay Pages*.

CHAPTER THREE
MARKETS, MEDIA, AND THE GAY PRESS: THE MARGINALISATION OF BLACK QUEER MEN IN CONTEMPORARY GAY VISUAL CULTURES

This chapter touches on the various issues that pertain to the exclusion of black queer men from contemporary popular, visual representations of 'gayness' that permeate media, characterise the gay niche market and abound in advertising images. Gay print media is of central concern to this segment of the study and therefore implicates the analyses of the gay press, as well as the images that are, primarily, sourced from the South African gay men's lifestyle magazine *Gay Pages*. This chapter is divided into four sections, namely: *Consumption as citizenship, the media, and the making of a gay niche market*; *The gay press: access, representation and editorial power*; *Advertising images, the gay stereotype and the 'heterosexualisation' of queer visual representation*; and *'Whiteness', 'blackness' and the visual character of* Gay Pages. In what follows, each of these sections is introduced, and the main critical strands of the issues that they address are highlighted.

The first section explores the manner in which consumption and the ideology of consumerism impacts on identity construction and group affiliation. The conflation of consumption, belonging and citizenship is investigated with regard to the manner in which gay culture has become increasingly commodified (Sears 2005:104). In other words, membership to, and complete enfranchisement by, gay culture appears to occur in and through the market, where commodities and several queer lifestyle choices are employed to signify 'gayness'. This part of the chapter critiques the commodification of gay culture as a cultural development that seems to benefit only those that can afford to 'be' gay (O'Dougherty 2003:75). Instead of neglecting the racial and economic disadvantages, which sometimes occur in conjunction with one another, facing some gay men, this segment of the chapter therefore sets out to scrutinise the manner in which 'white' affluence is positioned as the epitome of gay masculinity, and ultimately revered and reiterated by the market (Valocchi 1999:220).

In the following section, the gay press is positioned as the primary cultural site through which market forces manifest and exercise power over queer culture. The notion that the gay press seemingly excludes black 'gayness' from its cultural, political and visual agendas is conceived of as influenced by the fact that white editorial role-players essentially direct gay media, both internationally and in South Africa (Chasin 2000a:160; Reddy 1998:67, 68). Moreover, the shift in control over the editorial and visual content of gay publications from state repression to capitalist, marketing giants and other advertisers is explored and critiqued as producing a singular, white-washed image of the gay consumer *as* gay citizen (Chasin 2000b:58). In other words, the manner in which white affluence is revered in the gay press is investigated with regard to the notion of publications, like *Gay Pages*, having to constantly conciliate with 'straight' corporations and advertisers (Bowes 1996:222), which provide them with revenue and cultural inclusion, however superficial and prejudiced this form of assimilation appears to be.

The third section addresses the role that advertising images play in creating and disseminating stereotypes of gay men, of which the image of white, middle-class, heterosexualised masculinity is the most prevalent. Furthermore, the development of advertising images depicting and addressing gay men in modern Western cultures is discussed in relation to the class and race-based biases that ostensibly characterise the ideological bases of these representations (Kates 1999:34). The manner in which normative homosexuality seemingly informs the manner in which advertising images exclude less acceptable versions of 'gayness' from the arena of gay visual culture is of central concern to this segment of the chapter (O'Dougherty 2003:77). Lastly, the incorporation, assimilation and heterosexualisation of certain images of gay men, of which several selected examples are discussed, is investigated and critiqued as being indicative of the way in which heteronormativity infuses gay culture with heterosexist sentiments, ideals and norms (Puar 2006:67).

The final section concerns itself with uncovering and ultimately critiquing the ubiquity with which 'whiteness' manifests as a norm in gay visual cultures. In

this regard, the South African gay lifestyle magazine *Gay Pages* appears to be a major purveyor of images of ideal, white 'gayness' (Levina, Waldo & Fitzgerald 2000:740, 741). The study therefore engages with the theory that 'whiteness' generates and maintains its claims of naturality and absolute synonymy with humanity by appearing constantly or to such a degree that its status as the culturally dominant form of civilisation is ultimately taken for granted (Han 2007:52, 53). What is, however, also of great significance to this segment of the study, is fostering an understanding of the manner in which 'whiteness' colonises other social categories in order to perpetuate its supposed supremacy. With regard to this investigation, the apparent equation of white men and 'homosexuality' and the subsequent marginalisation of black gay men within gay visual culture is attributed to the manner in which the ideological mechanisms of 'whiteness' also pervade representations of cultural 'deviance', like gayness (Dyer 1997:11, 219).

3.1 Consumption as citizenship, the media, and the making of a gay niche market

The concept of identity is rather contentious, and is constantly theorised and subject to a number of critiques vying for legitimacy in the process of understanding how people identify with each other and the social realm (Hall 1996a:1). One of the most important developments in making sense of social subjectivity is to be found in the apparent shift from considering identity within the bounds of modernism, to expanding the concept in a postmodern arena. Douglas Kellner (1995:231, 233), for example, claims that whereas modern societies valued identity as a fixed and inherent quality predetermined by one's heritage, postmodern theories of identity privilege the mass media and consumer culture as the main purveyors of subject positions that are multiple, fluctuating and negotiable. In view of this, Robert Bocock (1993:4) suggests that the rise of modern capitalism and consumerism has reduced the importance of work roles in relation to identity construction, while simultaneously positioning consumption, instead of production, as the key site of making one's 'self' known.

For the purposes of this study, consumerism is central to understanding the ways in which gay men, as a 'social status group' (Bocock 1993:5), create their identities in relation to gay media, commodities and each other, but also distinguish themselves from 'straight' cultures, people and practices by the same means. The American civil rights movements of the 1960s, for example, embodied the struggles of blacks, queers and other social minorities to be recognised as authentic cultures that are *different* from the status quo, but no less deserving of equality and tolerance (Irvine 1994:233,234). Bocock (1993:18) states that the most salient characteristic of modern consumerism is that individuals consume in order to achieve and maintain 'distinctiveness', and this is especially true for the disenfranchised. In Western cultures during the second half of the twentieth century, new groups for whom consumption became important were not rigidly divided along the lines of race, gender or class, but consumed as a means of achieving a sub-cultural status that expressed the 'internal dynamics' of these social constructs (Bocock 1993:27).

Moreover, the theorist Steven Kates (2000:497) argues that subcultures emerge in opposition to cultural hegemony, and often give expression to their resistance by means of adopting particular signifiers of style that appear in the form of commodities.[1] In other words, consuming in line with one's sexual orientation, for example, serves to display membership and loyalty to gay culture, as well as the rejection of heteronormativity, since "[consumer] behaviour … responds to … the metaphoric … expression of desire, and the production of a code of social values through the use of differentiating signs" (Baudrillard 2001:49). Since the 1970s, gay people have interacted with the "consumerist ethos of capitalism" and thereby restructured "the dynamics of a lesbian and gay collective identity" (Valocchi 1999:220). Dennis Altman

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[1] In Western societies, the term 'subculture' refers to a specific social group that, based on its supposed 'deviance', challenges and defies the cultural hegemony or ruling cultural constituency (Fiske, O'Sullivan, Hartley, Saunders & Montgomery 1994:307). Therefore, with regard to the notion that power is unequally distributed throughout society, "subcultures … function to win, or at least contest, 'cultural space' for their members" by means of "their often 'spectacular' appearances (their **styles** of fashion and dress, for example) … [that] represent meaningful forms of subcultural response and resistance, through specialised subcultural identities" [bold in original] (Fiske et al. 1994:308).

(1996:80), who is also engaged in this discourse, asserts that contemporary 'gayness' is no longer defined by the practise of homosexuality, but rather by the adoption a set of styles and behaviours. Therefore, an 'out' or visible gay life appears to manifest primarily in a commodified form (Sears 2005:104) or through fashion, material spaces of consumption, bars, bathhouses and nightclubs, for example, and symbolic, textual spaces like gay lifestyle magazines (Bocock 1993:103).

The repercussions of apparently attaining a queer identity through consumption are, however, far-reaching and often damaging to individuals who identify as homosexual, but do not benefit from the creation of a commercial gay community. Alan Sears (2005:92, 93), for example, argues that the depolitisation of the current queer milieu in favour of commercial viability, does not discredit the advances made with regard to the civil rights of gay people, but does create spaces and communities of exclusivity. Mariam Fraser (1999:107) reveals a vexing issue when asking exactly to whom the so-called 'out' gay lifestyle is available or, more importantly, affordable. In other words, what Fraser (1999:107) alludes to is that since the market has become an integral part of creating and maintaining gay group identity (Keating & McLoughlin 2005:131), the notions of *consumer* and *citizen* have become conflated (Freitas, Kaiser & Hammidi 1996:89). Whereas in the past queerness was expressed through militant activism that required political mobilisation, contemporary forms of 'belonging' to the gay community require money and attention to fashion and style (Valocchi 1999:220).[2]

According to Alexandra Chasin (2000b:9, 23, 24) the mass proliferation of goods and services aimed at queers in the 1990s marks the consolidation of the gay niche market with the gay political movement, which in turn has

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[2] Thus, with regard to what one can conceive of as the 'superficiality' of postmodern identities, which are produced through consumption and the media, Kellner (1995:233) states that contemporary subjectivities apparently "no longer [possess] the depth, substantiality, and coherency that was the ideal … of the modern [or Modernist] self". Accordingly, the emphases that are placed on the importance of visual culture and consumerism in the creation of postmodern identities in contemporary societies, seemingly propagate the message that "if you want to become a new you … transform your identity … become successful … [belong to a group] … you need to focus on image, style, and fashion" (Kellner 1995:234).

created the notion that civil rights can somehow be reduced to market-based rights. In other words, it seems that "the right to participate in society and the right to consume become indistinguishable in contemporary life" (Freitas et al. 1996:90). Thus, 'personal liberation' and 'democracy' are expressed in terms of one's ability to consume along with every other legitimate public citizen (O'Dougherty 2003:69). During South Africa's democratic struggle, for example, discourses of 'freedom', 'choice' and 'egalitarianism', which characterised the political incentives of the time, were 'parasitically' incorporated by advertising campaigns, and subsequently aligned with "the imperatives of the market" (Bertelsen 1998:240). For instance, in the midst of the political turbulence that preceded, and followed in the wake of, South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994, an advertisement for Volkswagen "lined up its cars in formation to depict the new [South African] flag" (Bertelsen 1998:226). Together with its message of 'diversity', 'inclusion' and 'equality', Volkswagen employed the image of the flag as a means of transmuting the notion of democratic choice into consumer choice, and "political freedom into the freedom to choose between products" (Bertelsen 1998:240).

In other words, media and markets, and their underlying ideologies of consumerism, therefore seem to attempt "to make of consumption the premise for 'human liberation', to be attained in the lieu of, and despite the [possible] failures of, social and political liberation" (Baudrillard 2001:56). For minority groups like queers, however, consumption appears to be even more significant. The power to 'buy' seemingly creates a sense of public social involvement devoid of discrimination (Hennessy 1994:32) and provides queers with an arena in which to freely express their sexual identity (Keating & McLoughlin 2005:147). Furthermore, consumption apparently also facilitates the display of membership, because of the notion that "if you buy the product or consume the service, you are doing it along with other gay people: indeed, if you are truly 'gay' … you will consume these commodities" (Valocchi 1999:220).

The often celebratory linking of consumption and enfranchisement must, nevertheless, be scrutinised (Chasin 2000b:15), since "market forces are

human forces hierarchically sustained, queer folk not excluded" (Nast 2002:881). The major problem with positioning the gay niche market as emblematic of the entire gay community is that the marketing profiles of queers that are created by advertisers and other capitalist role-players, are based on a one-dimensional assumption of what the so-called gay 'lifestyle' entails (Bowes 1996:221). Marketing aimed at queers is likely to include, address and cater to a specific segment of the gay community, which creates the illusion that the few white, male and middle-class queers that are represented, are *representative* of the gay constituency as a whole (O'Dougherty 2003:75). Therefore, Rosemary Hennessy (1994:32) states that the supposed 'inclusion' of queers in the market must not be understood as a progression toward more social tolerance; it merely illustrates the tendency of marketers to create 'model' gay consumers, hierarchically positioned at the apex of the queer community, that serve to increase profits (Puar 2006:76).

In view of this, Chasin (2000b:18) and Anthony Freitas, Susan Kaiser and Tania Hammidi (1996:91) argue that situating a so-called 'good consumer', who is characteristically "upper-middle class, (mostly) white, and (mostly) male" (Valocchi 1999:220) at the heart of the gay niche market creates and maintains inequalities that cut across gender, race and class. Yet, in spite of Valocchi (1999:220) and Freitas et al.'s (1996:91) critiques, scholars such as Wayne DeLozier and Jason Rodrigue (1996:203) still insist that marketers should be focusing on and targeting affluent, white gay men, because they comprise the most profitable segment of the gay community. What DeLozier and Rodrigue (1996:203) do not consider however, is that when politics are displaced onto the market, as they appear to be (Freitas et al. 1996:90), those who cannot afford to adopt the 'lifestyle' are essentially excluded not only from representation in the market, but also form the gay community and mainstream society at large (O'Dougherty 2003:78). In other words, Lisa Peñaloza (1996:34) concurs that:

> [Certain] aspects of gay/lesbian culture are forwarded at the expense of others in advertising and marketing appeals. Particularly noteworthy are the pervasive images of white, upper-middle class, 'straight looking' [men] at the expense of those more distanced from and threatening to the

mainstream, such as the poor, ethnic/racial/sexual minorities, drag queens, and butch lesbians.

Furthermore, one must also consider that the gay niche market, as a political sphere through which the gay movement supposedly gains momentum and vies for rights, manifests in terms of what can be referred to as (white) commodity patriarchy (Nast 2002:883). The market and media seemingly tend to show interest only in those that can, for example, afford to frequent gay establishments, follow fashion and acquire the social signifiers of 'gayness' (Keating & McLoughlin 2005:148). By doing so, however, these institutions ignore diversity and ultimately entrench the racist, sexist and classist assumptions that underpin the linking of homosexuality with a combination of whiteness and wealth (Chasin 2000b:36). The notion that the market and media offer queers social citizenship, and therefore a political voice, tends to overestimate these so-called benefits by not accounting for those who remain invisible and silenced or unable to enter the commodified realm of gay visibility (Sender 2001:93; Sears 2005:104).

The positioning of queer subjects in society almost exclusively as 'consumer-citizens' (Chasin 2000b:142, 143), and the consequent equation of consumption with democratic choice, is problematic since this status is not equally available to everyone who forms part of the gay constituency. Thus, a number of critiques pertaining to the exclusion and marginalisation of queers who do not conform to the white, male and middle-class norm can be inferred: Firstly, one must consider that if gay identity and political involvement supposedly rest on monetary value, certain queers fall short of being able to participate in mainstream society and the 'movement'. Hennessy (1994:64, 65, 66), for example, states that because of the unequal division of labour in capitalist societies, queers belonging to the lower classes are deemed unfit to be represented in gay media and ultimately forfeit the opportunity to express their sexual identities through the market.

Mark Gevisser (1994:53) and Glen Retief (1994:109) suggest that enforced poverty and segregation under the apartheid regime have similarly affected

the South African queer community. Therefore, a combination of economic *and* racial biases have limited black South African queers in their efforts to participate in local gay communities, institutions, media and markets that have historically centred on white men's economic and political privileges (Gevisser 1994:48). In view of this, the second critique of the 'consumer-citizen' (Chasin 2000b:142,143) concerns the creation of a socio-political gay community based on a fixed identity position in which sexual orientation is the primary identifier (Sears 2005:93). In other words, when homosexuality acts as the main source of gay community involvement and recognition by other queers and heteronormative society, white men tend to colonise 'gayness' based on the fact that they identify *only* as gay, and not as black *and* gay (Chasin 2000b:224).

By fostering media and markets based on an identity that seemingly excludes race, gender and class from its agenda, whilst maintaining sexual orientation, queer culture accommodates only a fraction of gay-identified individuals (Keating & McLoughlin 2005:131). Chasin (2000b:20) agrees that gay culture's sense of catering to each individual who is not normatively heterosexual, by highlighting sexual orientation, is ultimately fallacious and the major cause of inequalities in the gay niche market and community. According to Chasin (2000b:21), for those "whom sexuality is not the primary source of their difference from the universal ideal; the insistence on the primacy of sexuality ignores other identity features … and generates an assimilationist politics that reduces diversity to a superficial value".

Consequently, even though cultural values that manifest as commodities exercise significant influence on those seeking to consume as a means of asserting (sexual) identity, it is presumptuous to assume "that everyone is determined to desire what their cultural group holds up in high esteem" (Bocock 1993:82). The limited perception that marketers have of the gay community and their consumption patterns, based on one-dimensional accounts of how all queers consume the same commodities in the same way (Bhat 1996:215), therefore appears to pay little attention to the fact that sub-cultural consumption is internally diverse (Kates 2002:383). Altman (1996:77)

states that this apparent 'globalisation' of gay identity fails to acknowledge that the image of the, now redundant, queer consumer is also ultimately a Western concept. In other words, queer commodities that manifest as so-called 'symbols of unity' (Chasin 2000b:44) are not necessarily identified with by all gay individuals.

Rainbow Flags, Pink Triangles and other queer commodities imbued with 'gay pride' that originated in the West (Chasin 2000b:111) are, for example, exported to African queer spaces and media, but fall short of articulating the unique experiences of black, African queers (Alexander 2002:230). Not only are these symbols foreign to many 'Other' queers, for whom a belief in the historical existence of homosexuality in indigenous African cultures is a more feasible way of tapping into their sexual identities (Altman 1996:90; Dlamini 2006:129), but they are also not always affordable to them. Dereka Rushbrook (2002:184) suggests that with blackness positioned as 'other' to whiteness and gayness as 'other' to heteronormativity, the assumption that all subjects are ideally white and heterosexual "unless otherwise specified, [presumes] only one axis of difference … and queers of colour are erased from the discourse of cosmopolitanism and globalisation, as consumers and commodities".

Similarly, Chasin (2000b:44) claims that as a result of the gay movement's insistence on commodifying itself, "the cost of enfranchisement … prices some [gay] consumers out of citizenship". Bocock (1993:67, 68) confirms that consumption is a more idealistic than materialistic practice: commodities therefore always posses symbolic values that tie in with the desire to belong to a specific social group, and accordingly operate as signifiers of identity and group affinity. Jean Baudrillard (2001:47, 49) states that:

> [Commodities] are no longer tied to a function or to a defined need …
> [but] respond to … a social logic, or to a logic of desire … [and]
> consumption … assures the … *integration of the group*: it is
> simultaneously … a system of ideological [symbolic] values … and a
> system of communication, a structure of exchange [emphasis added].

In view of this, Katherine Sender (2001:74) engages with Pierre Bourdieu's notions of 'taste', 'cultural capital' and 'habitus' in order to illuminate the manner in which certain queers are seemingly excluded from the commodified gay community. Thus, in the process of consuming specific products, services and media, as well as frequenting particular social establishments, the queer community creates a so-called 'habitus' (Sender 2001:74) that articulates their distinct ways of life. Bourdieu (1984:170) states that it is in the correlation between the two faculties that structure the habitus, namely "the capacity to produce classifiable practices and works, and the capacity to differentiate and appreciate these … products (tastes), that the represented social world … the space of life-styles, is constituted". Moreover, Bocock (1993:61) notes that the social significance of the 'habitus' therefore lies in that it aids in the making of 'distinctions' between straight and queer culture. Therefore, the gay habitus also comprises "a system of differences [and] differential positions … by everything which distinguishes it from what it is not and … from everything that it is opposed to; social identity is [therefore] defined and asserted through difference" (Bourdieu 1984:171, 172).

In other words, in the same manner that the upper classes distinguish themselves from the lower classes and provide evidence of their 'good taste' by consuming goods that embody higher levels of 'cultural capital', such as high-brow art and literature (Sender 2001:74; Bourdieu 1984:172), gay consumers tend to assert their sexual orientation in and through their consumption behaviours and 'habitus'. Sender's (2001:75) critique of the 'habitus' as seemingly connected to sexual orientation, hinges on the notion that there is no *single* gay habitus. The fact that only a segment of the gay community's 'tastes', desires and consumer profiles are circulated in the media is often overlooked, which results in the perpetuation of an exclusive, one-dimensional view of whom the gay community comprises (Peñaloza 1996:26). Therefore, particular conditions, such as 'whiteness', and wealth, for example, are "inscribed within the dispositions of the [gay] habitus", and seemingly regulate exactly which queers are legitimate embodiments of the consumer-driven gay 'lifestyle' (Bourdieu 1984:172).

In her exploration of the gay niche market, Chasin (2000a:157), for example, notes that homogeneity is symptomatic of mass production, advertising and other forms of marketing, and is especially evident with regard to the commodification of gay culture. The divisions of wealth, labour, race and gender that exist within the queer community are negated by the cultural prominence of the white, male and upwardly mobile queer consumer whose 'habitus' reigns supreme (Hennessy 1994:69). Diminishing differences between queers, however, is not the only issue that needs to be addressed with regard to the narrow representation of gay people in the markets, and media that accommodate them. Bocock's (1993:18) suggestion that identity-based consumption is geared toward creating 'distinctiveness', appears to be a suitable point from which to start the next critique of queer consumption-as-citizenship. Accordingly, although the gay community seemingly aims at establishing visibility and political unity through identity-based consumption, it simultaneously risks compromising its distinctiveness from normative heterosexuality in becoming assimilated by the very structures from which it seeks emancipation (Sender 2001:77).

One can thus conclude that the domination of the gay market by white, economically empowered men not only strips the gay community of its disparities, but also de-emphasises the distinctions between queer and heteronormative (Chasin 2000b:22). John Bowes (1996:221) argues that images of affluent, bourgeois gay consumers are not accurate depictions of what gay life entails, or what all gay people look and act like, but merely reflect heteronormative society's ideal incomes, ethnicities and occupations. Hennessy (1994:60, 69) states that the commodity images that appropriate homoeroticism as a form of postmodern chic, not only invite voyeurism from heterosexual cultures, but also alienate many queers who, in reality, are far removed from these fashionable, idealistic representations that profess to capture 'gayness'. The contemporary trend of 'straight-looking, straight-acting' gay men and hyper-feminine 'lipstick lesbians' in mainstream and gay media (Altman 1996:82), therefore serves as a further indication of the manner in

which queer culture is becoming less transgressive, and more 'heterosexualised' (Chasin 2000b:45).[3]

The continued urgency with which mainstream advertisers have been marketing commodities to queers in Western cultures since the 1990s (Chasin 2000b:77; O'Dougherty 2003:73; Bowes 1996:220), evidently concerns the need to acquire greater profits, but also illustrates the manner in which markets and the media seek to invariably 'discipline' or 'normalise' queer bodies (Puar 2006:72). According to Michel Foucault (1980:36, 37, 38), the 'discursive explosion' of discourses on sexuality that characterised eighteenth and nineteenth century Western cultures, not only reinstated the centrality of heterosexuality as a norm, but also led to the constant *surveillance* and *regulation* of 'illicit' or 'deviant' sexual practices through psychiatry, civil law and religious orthodoxy, to name but a few. It seems that in contemporary Western societies, the media and popular visual cultures similarly function as institutions that 'control' or 'censor' homosexuality, and make it "more palatable [to heteronormativity] … by situating it within safe and familiar … conventions" like 'whiteness', wealth and sexual conservatism, for example (Battles & Hilton-Morrow 2002:89).

Puar (2006:72) states that the marginalisation of queer bodies by heteronormative power structures, such as the media, is carried out tentatively, since "there is room for the absorption and *management* of homosexuality" within the cultural hegemony of heterosexuality [emphasis added]. In view of this, the popularised non-threatening, white, male and middle-class embodiment of homosexuality, which is infused with heteronormative ideals and therefore 'accepted' by marketers and the media, seemingly represents one of the "compartmental sexualities that are tolerated or encouraged" in dominant heterosexist spheres (Foucault 1980:46). The

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[3] With regard to the "continued contentiousness of gay and lesbian issues within … heterosexist society", the popular American television series *Will and Grace*, for example, positions its primary gay male character (Will) as fitting "well into the mainstream model of masculinity" (Battles & Hilton-Morrow 2002:88, 90). Therefore, Will's physical fitness, professional job and overall de-feminised version of 'straight-looking, straight-acting' gay masculinity "is in no way different from the same image being sold to heterosexual men" (Battles & Hilton-Morrow 2002:90).

notion that the gay press has somehow become increasingly de-politicised and de-sexualised (Sender 2001:82; Davidson & Nerio 1994:230) is therefore indicative of the influence that heteronormativity has on the making of a gay niche market. In other words, since mainstream advertisers constitute a major source of revenue for gay publications, sexually explicit imagery and overtly political material is kept to a minimum, in order not to make the gay media 'inhospitable' to its 'straight' contributors (Sender 2001:82; Bowes 1996:222).

Chasin (2000b:108) thus concludes that "the market is the prime mechanism for defusing the conflict between sameness and difference, or between assimilation and de-assimilation". Bocock (1993:104) argues that one of the most prominent paradoxes of contemporary society is that queers are seemingly shielded from discrimination and exclusion by creating a 'consumption oriented gay sub-culture' that operates *within* institutions, such as markets and the media that have historically shunned them. In view of this, Chasin (2000b:106) states that the incorporation of queers into mainstream culture is not dissimilar to the so-called enfranchisement of immigrants, 'non-citizens' and blacks through the previously exclusive realm of advertising in the United States during the 1920s and 1930s.[4] Ultimately, Sears (2005:96) professes that the militant beginnings of queer politics have been replaced by calls for broader social transformation that do not necessarily reject the idea of gaining entry to social positions of power, equality and citizenship through established, heteronormative, institutions.

The notion that queer culture seemingly aims to achieve social acceptance through reform-oriented politics, media and markets, however, often ignores the fact that with regard to dominant, heteronormative societal structures, "it is certainly the case that … *some queers are better than others*" [emphasis added] (Puar 2006:71). Hennessy (1994:36, 66) asserts that the inclusion of

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[4] According to Chasin (2000a:148), in the process of propelling mass consumption, advertising ultimately produces homogeneity by seemingly eradicating the identity differences between consumers. Therefore, in "the 1920s … when the advertising industry consistently began to subsidise mass media [in the United States] … the … differences that had to be erased were national and ethnic [in orientation]". Consequently, "following decades of immigration, the attempt to create a mass market went hand in hand with an attempt to Americanise ethnic minorities" (Chasin 2000a:148).

queer subjects in the mainstream operates through class and race-regulated visibility, and that this process of selective assimilation must be critiqued in order to disclose the hegemonic nature of heteronormativity. In other words, since marketing ploys that target queers often rely on representing the most 'acceptable' version of queerness (Sender 2001:92), namely white, male, 'straight-acting' and middle-class, the already existing power relations that centre on race and gender are reproduced (Chasin 2000a:160; Sears 2005:96). With lesbians featuring as passive, domestic goddesses, and blacks appearing primarily as part of some form of erotic exoticism in gay media, the dominance of white, heteropatriarchy is reiterated (Chasin 2000a:158,160).

Kathleen Battles and Wendy Hilton-Morrow (2002:101, 102) state that it is "important to remember that visibility often comes with the price of having to conform to or be made sense of within dominant cultural discourses". The stereotypical representation of black queers and lesbians as somehow inferior, together with the re-casting of white, gay male consumers in the already established figure of the revered straight 'playboy' (Sender 2001:82), seemingly collapses the distances between queer and non-queer. Thus, when and if 'gayness' is addressed, it appears to be almost exclusively represented in a traditionally heterosexist vernacular (Battles & Hilton-Morrow 2002:102). Furthermore, Kates (1999:29) argues that the popular representation of queers in familiar settings of heterosexual 'wholesomeness', whiteness, monogamy and affluence, for example, illustrates the manner in which markets, media and other cultural forms maintain heteronormativity.

Despite sexuality and gender existing as social constructs that are continually performed, created and re-created (Hennessy 1994:36), markets and media constitute yet another social sphere in which heterosexuality attempts to re-establish its supposed naturality, 'originality' and dominance (Kates 1999:29; Hennessy 1994:46). As a seminal figure in queer theory, Judith Butler (1991:21) argues that "in its efforts to naturalise itself as the original [of humanity], heterosexuality must be understood as a compulsive and compulsory repetition" that is "always in the process of imitating and

approximating its own phantasmatic idealisation of itself". The so-called 'heterosexualisation' of queer culture (Chasin 2000b:45; Kates 1999:34), which seems to be propelled by the commodification of gay subjects, therefore re-instates heteronormativity as the primary lens through which to make sense of the social world.

By professing that queers are 'just like us' (Chasin 2000a:164), in other words, heteronormative, mainstream marketers are also discriminatory with regard to which queers qualify as straight 'enough', and are therefore worthy of inclusion. Susan Bordo (1999:23) notes that when advertisers employ male homoerotic imagery as a tactic, it is often done in an ambiguous fashion that piques the interest of both straight and gay men – without heterosexual men necessarily recognising the image's queer edge. Thus, so long as queers do not come across as overtly sexualised, heteronormative consumers will not be 'put off' by their presence (Sender 2001:87; Freitas et al. 1996:89). In other words, despite the unprecedented visibility of queerness in contemporary societies, gay subjects are still concealed beneath, and oppressed by, ambiguities that curb the threat of uninhibited, non-conformist homosexuality to heteronormative conservatism (Rohlinger 2002:65,71). In view of this, Jasbir Puar (2006:71) claims that heteronormativity is *not* uninflected by privileges pertaining to race, class, gender and sexual proclivities, and it has therefore become increasingly important to investigate how media images distort representations of the queer community.

The social visibility and representation of queer subjects, whether in political, economic or media spheres (Freitas et al. 1996:89), is vital to the gay community, because it seemingly creates a *visually* unified group; bound together by shared histories, practices and political sentiments (Cover 2004:81). The ubiquitous mantra of 1990s queer politics, 'We're here, we're queer, get used to it' (Levina et al. 2000:739), is indicative of the manner in which "privileging visibility has become a tactic of late twentieth-century identity politics, in which participants often symbolise their demands for social justice by celebrating visual signifiers of difference that have historically targeted them for discrimination" (Fraser 1999:114). Furthermore, Fraser

(1999:110) states that in Western popular culture, which exists as the major purveyor of 'queer' imagery, 'seeing' and 'knowing' is often equated, thereby cementing the importance of visibility in supposedly conveying social truths.

The primacy given to visual culture in contemporary society is not exempted from particular ideological biases, stereotypes and agendas that, in fact, shape what is to be taken as 'truthful' and 'accurate'. Representation, visual or otherwise, does not operate as separate from the power structures that it seeks to create or sustain, and visual culture cannot be assumed as providing objective, absolute reflections of, for example, queer individuals (Levina et al. 2000:741). Therefore, not only do one-dimensional, exclusive representations of gay people abound in the media (O'Dougherty 2003:75), but these widespread images are also often informed by heteronormativity. In other words, it appears that the intertwining of 'seeing' and 'believing', only truly functions when looking at the world through 'straight' eyes. Battles and Hilton-Morrow (2002:102) thus call for a shift from approaching images of queers from a quantitative perspective, to approaches that are qualitative in nature and accordingly account for the visual mechanisms that constitute representations of queers.

In other words, focusing on the *manner* in which such images manifest, must override explorations of the frequency with which they appear, because more often than not the presence of heteronormativity and selective homophobia is ignored at the expense of assuming that *more* representation automatically constitutes *more* social tolerance (Battles & Hilton-Morrow 2002:102). The remainder of this chapter investigates and critiques the images of queer men circulated in contemporary gay, as well as mainstream media, with specific focus on the gay press, print advertising and the South African gay men's lifestyle magazine, *Gay Pages*. The rationale for investigating these images stems from the need to disclose heteronormativity and its assimilation and subordination of queer culture; explore the reiteration of the dominance of 'whiteness'; and address the proliferation of stereotypes about gay men, which apparently contribute to both the strengthening of 'whiteness' *and* the heterosexual ideal.

3.2 The gay press: access, representation and editorial power

In view of the issues discussed with regard to the formation of a gay niche market in the previous section of this chapter, an exploration of the gay press, its development and its contemporary manifestations is imperative. According to Chasin (2000b:57), the gay press ascended from the gay niche market as marketing to gay consumers proliferated (Bowes 1996:226). The importance of discussing the gay press, however, also rests on the notion that the interaction between markets and the gay movement is nowhere as present as in publications aimed at the gay community (Chasin 2000b:57). The relationship between the gay press and the gay movement is reciprocal in nature, since the political agendas of queer activists identified the potential of niche publications in unifying the queer community, while the press, in return, seemingly did exactly that (Sender 2001:78). In other words, during the civil tumult in the Western world in the 1960s and 1970s, the gay press initially aimed to disseminate the ideological principles of the movement itself (Chasin 2000a:150), addressing the "critical, political nature of visibility in dominant culture" (Freitas et al. 1996:84).

The role that niche magazines play in fostering group affiliation, identity and political viability cannot be ignored or underestimated, because they establish "new praxes of everyday social, cultural and behavioural norms for their target readerships, organised largely through a new range of middle-class goods, lifestyles, and cultural activities, including the magazines themselves" (Laden 2003:194). Sheng Kuan Chung (2007:99) states that the so-called 'media generation' of modern-day society acquires knowledge of the world, others and themselves more actively in and through media, and to a lesser degree by interaction with peers and authority figures, for example. In accordance with this, Kellner (1995:248) argues that in the current postmodern, image-saturated culture, social subjects form and negotiate their identities in relation to representations that populate the media, which ultimately act as powerful mechanisms of socialisation. Tim Benzie (2000:160) argues, however, that the creation of gay-centred publications are even more emblematic of the process of media socialisation, since queers are seemingly further removed

from tapping into their sexual identities outside of the confines of these apparently 'safe', homophile spaces. Benzie (2000:160) states that:

> These magazines provide a guide to the [gay] culture at its most explicit, since unlike mass/popular culture, there is a limited number of gay print outlets which explicitly support the culture. If you want to know a major version of how to dress, act, eat, dance and buy, 'like a gay man', *this* is where you find it [emphasis added].

Moreover, Bethan Benwell (2003:8) identifies men's lifestyle magazines, presumably across the spectrum of gay and straight publications, as performing a dual function, in that they simultaneously exist as cultural *phenomena* and cultural *texts*. As a form of cultural expression, magazines exist as sites where normative, as well as homo-masculinity are *represented* as phenomena, but these subjectivities are also *created*, *contested* and *negotiated* on a textual level (Benwell 2003:8). Thus, one must consider gay men's lifestyle magazines as providing templates of gay identity that can be appropriated or internalised (Kellner 1995:259), so as to bind one's own 'gay' subjectivity to an overarching, media-generated notion of what being a gay man entails. Finding likeness with these images of gay masculinity is, however, not a privilege equally available to all gay men, since the supposed 'wealth' of subject positions offered in postmodern media (Kellner 1995:259), like glossy magazines, is often overestimated.

The fact that cultures, whether structured around race, sexuality or nationality, are multiple and internally diverse (Irvine 1994:241), is seemingly negated by the gay press's perpetuation of subject positions that rarely stray from the white, male and middle-class norm. Although the gay press has the potential to act as "a vehicle of assimilation and cohesion for minorities" (Bowes 1996:224), particular limitations are always present in these publications. In other words, assimilation by the dominant culture, as well as full membership to the gay community, is seemingly possible – provided that it occurs in terms of 'normative' homosexuality (O'Dougherty 2003:77). Puar (2006:67) argues that the assimilation of queers by the mainstream, as driven by gay niche publications, consumption and markets, requires adherence to so-called

'homonormativity' or those attributes revered by heteronormativity: 'whiteness', masculinity, wealth and conservatism.

O'Dougherty (2003:75) concludes that in light of the dilemma evidently facing black queers, one must realise that "there is no such thing as [the gay press]: [it is] not *also* lesbian and/or poor or Black, but rather constituted by upper- and middle-class White gay men unconcerned with inclusion" [emphasis added]. Chasin (2000a:160) also claims that the dissemination of images of black gay men, and the subject of racism in the queer community, are deliberately restricted by white-run gay print media concerned with upholding the principles of 'good' homosexual consumers, which attract corporate advertisers. Furthermore, in tracing the development of gay publishing in South Africa, Gerry Davidson and Ron Nerio (1994:227) state that since their inception, local gay publications have reflected the politics, concerns and interests of white men. This can partly be attributed to the reluctance of these publications to address issues of racism and segregation amidst apartheid sentiments, but the threat of forfeiting advertisers at the expense of representing black gay men is what ultimately gave rise to white-dominated local gay media (Davidson & Nerio 1994:230).

Firstly then, it is important to bear in mind that organisations like The Gay Association of South Africa (GASA), an initial purveyor of the local gay press, have come under scrutiny for its apathy regarding issues of racism and gender inequality in pre-liberation South Africa. Sheila Croucher (2002:318) recalls that the International Lesbian and Gay Alliance (ILGA) shunned GASA because of its unwillingness to support Simon Nkoli, an anomalous black member of the organisation, during his trial for treason regarding his role in the anti-apartheid struggle. In *Defiant desire: gay and lesbian lives in South Africa*, Nkoli (1994:250) expresses his dissatisfaction with white-dominated local gay movements like GASA, which seemingly ignored the predicament facing black queers in terms of being oppressed on grounds of race and sexual orientation. Vasu Reddy (1998:67, 68) argues that because the earliest forms of gay organisation in South Africa were primarily fronted by white, middle-class gay men, the impediments created for black queers are still

present in the manner in which the local gay press, for example, represents a 'particularised' (white) version of gay masculinity.

Secondly, mainstream gay publishing in South Africa has a relatively short history and even contemporarily, locally produced queer media are few and far between. The stringent policing of sexuality during the rule of white Christian Nationalist ideologies (Retief 1994:100), afforded homophile publications limited space and resources, which meant that gay media had to be independently produced or imported and distributed out of public view. It was not until 1982, which marks the advent of the country's first formal queer organisation (GASA) that a bona fide gay publication emerged from the 'underground' and became readily available to the local gay community (Gevisser 1994:48). The simultaneous rise of GASA and its newsletter-cum-mouthpiece *Link/Skakel* seemed to represent the first step towards creating a unified, publicly 'linked' South African queer constituency (Davidson & Nerio 1994:226). The supposed notions of 'inclusivity' and 'solidarity' promulgated by this publication (Reddy 1998:67), however, were seemingly negated by its adherence to a white norm, which evidently resulted from the ideological bases of the political organisation from which it had emerged.

Furthermore, the politically astute character of *Link/Skakel* was short lived and the publication eventually disbanded in 1985, transforming into *Exit*, a more reform-oriented, commercial and market-driven publication that still forms part of the limited repertoire of contemporary local gay print media (Davidson & Nerio 1994:230). This is indicative of the manner in which state repression initially exercises power over the content of gay publications, only to be replaced by the *market*, which primarily controls the contemporary gay press (Chasin 2000b:58). Gay publications can thus be conceived as removing gay identification from the political and publicly visible, as queer magazines become increasingly tame (Peñaloza 1996:27), in favour of establishing a consumerist, privatised and exclusive ethos of gayness (Sender 2001:95). In an effort not to sabotage themselves, gay publications appear to represent only a minority of gay men whom advertisers will have no qualms about being associated with and who can afford to consume the goods marketed to them.

The mutually beneficial relationship that exists between the market, the gay movement and the gay press, has effectively cast the gay community as defined in terms of monetary value (Freitas et al. 1996:94). The financial privileges that some gay men are afforded, because of racial or class-based predispositions, therefore leave many gay men excluded from a press that seems to perpetuate an ideology of white economic and social dominance in gay culture (Chasin 2000b:61). The overrepresentation of white men in gay lifestyle magazines serves to "reinforce the hegemonic message" (O'Dougherty 2003:77) that assimilation by the mainstream, as well bona fide gayness, is reserved for white gay men. By not transgressing the acceptable norms within which gay culture gains social significance at the hand of heteronormative, capitalist role-players, the overwhelming presence of white gay men also reproduces traditional power relations (Chasin 2000a:164).

Benwell (2003:17,18) ascribes this to the manner in which magazines operate through 'self-limitation' and 'constructed certitude' so that race, for instance, "is rarely addressed in a reflexive way in [gay] men's magazines, so the assumption remains, due to the near invisibility of [blacks] … that [gay] magazine masculinity is [certainly] white in orientation". As alluded to previously, the media play a crucial role in providing society with opportunities for self-identification, together with the acquiring of knowledge about 'others'. The condensed 'version' of gay masculinity found in the gay press, however, creates a distorted and exclusive notion of the gay community, based not on what gay men are really like as a collective, but what they *ideally* should be or look like (Laden 1997:128), as previously stated. Therefore, the gay press can be established as playing a significant role in creating an 'imaginary' gay community (O'Dougherty 2003:75), which in no way suggests unity amongst gay men, but merely the illusion of it.

In other words, the exclusive reiteration of images of 'good', white, ideal gay men, fails to account for the multitude of gay masculinities that, in fact, constitute the gay male constituency. Magazines and other media aimed at gay men face contradiction, because although the gay press provides queers with unprecedented visibility, it simultaneously renders the disparities between

gay men, along the lines of race and class, for example, *in*visible (Hennessy 1994:69). Although the role of marketing in shaping the gay press cannot be denied, one must bear in mind that advertisers and media-workers continually attempt to strike a balance between majority (heteronormative) interests and the interests of minorities (queers) (Bowes 1996:223).

One must therefore not lose sight of the fact that mainstream advertisers approach gay media ambivalently, since gayness is ostensibly acknowledged, but not to the extent where it becomes 'offensive' or too foreign to the social ideals of heteronormativity (Bowes 1996:222). It seems that in its attempts to make queer culture 'attractive' to mainstream corporations, the gay press never strays too far from representing gay men in a manner that reduces them to "easily communicated and culturally intelligible" images, which ultimately constrain "the possibilities for diverse subjective performances" (Cover 2004:84). Chasin (2000b:95) concludes that if "the voices of … people of colour are unheard and unseen in gay media, it is not because they and their work do not exist, but because editors fail to solicit such work or cultivate relationships among different constituencies".

The heteronormative project of perpetually re-establishing the superiority of whiteness and patriarchy is enforced by the assimilation of selected queers, who are ideally white and male, into the mainstream through marketing campaigns, media coverage, and consumer products and services (Puar 2006:67). Since the gay press seems to have always centred on asserting white homomasculinity (Chasin 2000b:60), black gay men, despite their belonging to the gay male constituency, have very little impact on the manner in which gay men's lifestyle magazines portray gayness. One of the major repercussions of organising gay men into an 'imaginary community' (O'Dougherty 2003:75) is that the images of gayness perpetuated by gay lifestyle magazines disenfranchise black queers and reinforce the supposed seamlessness between whiteness and homosexuality. The gay press provides society with homogenous, easily digestible, but inaccurate representations of gay men's raced, gendered and classed identities, which

ultimately create *singular*, *hegemonic* queer identities and norms (Nast 2002:881).

This study employs the South African gay men's lifestyle magazine *Gay Pages*, established in 1994, as a purposive example of the way in which the gay press operates. In other words, it appears that this magazine is produced in such a manner that many of the concerns surrounding the hegemony present in the gay press can be explored with regard to its various ideological underpinnings and its visual character. Firstly, the magazine's editorial committee almost exclusively comprises white men, with the exception of one white woman. In other words, to presume that the content, design and choices regarding advertising are uninflected by the magazine's notable 'white' influence is a major oversight.

Furthermore, the gist of *Gay Pages*' cultural vocabulary can seemingly be described as primarily consumerist, because it provides a template of exactly which luxury cars, holiday resorts and *haute cuisine* restaurants most appropriately embody the gay 'lifestyle'. Sonja Laden (2003:194) argues that magazines such as *Gay Pages* function as so-called 'meta-commodities', since they are "commodities in themselves *and* vehicles for the dissemination of a range of other cultural commodities, practices, and beliefs" [emphasis added]. In fact, of the magazine's standard 112 pages, roughly 26 are dedicated solely to provide advertisers with a way of reaching its readers through a so-called 'business directory'.

The economic discrepancies that exist amongst South African gay men are therefore not accounted for and suggests that the magazine actively pursues, and thereby perpetuates the myth of upwardly mobile gay men. Another telling aspect of the manner in which this magazine attempts to appease market forces, is to be found in the way that it maintains the divisions of acceptable/unacceptable, asexual/hypersexual, normative/deviant, and several other dichotomies that can be inferred, of which white/black is

especially vexing.[5] The most vital characteristic of *Gay Pages* with regard to this investigation, however, lies in that it appears to celebrate white, gay male aesthetics and norms. A content analysis of the magazine clearly illustrates that images representing white men are abundant and noticeably outweigh the anomalous appearance of black subjects: of the total 180 images of men that appear in the Autumn 2008 edition of *Gay Pages*, which include the cover, advertisements and editorial content, only 17 feature black men.

This data is consistent with regard to the remaining five issues of *Gay Pages* discussed in the dissertation: the Autumn 2007 issue features 179 images of white men and only 10 of black men; the Winter 2007 issue features 152 images of white men and 18 of black men; the Spring 2007 issue features 171 images of white men and less than 18 of black men; the Summer 2007 issue features more than 120 images of white men, but only 9 of black men; and the Winter 2008 issue features a total of 141 images of men of which only 9 images feature black men. Thus, in each of the six issues of *Gay Pages* isolated for the purposes of the dissertation, *at least* 90% of the images depicting men are marked by 'whiteness'. The notion of an exclusive, race-biased gay press is, in fact, nowhere as present as in the white bodies that represent the ideal of gay masculinity, which is worth possessing, and aspiring toward (Baker 2003:243).

According to the magazine's official website, *Gay Pages* is the dominant and most visible and popular gay publication in South Africa (Gay Pages SA 2007:[sp]). In fact, *Gay Pages* is only rivalled by *Wrapped*, another locally published gay men's lifestyle magazine. Although several international gay publications are available in the country, a detailed focus on a queer cultural text produced by, and supposedly for, South Africans seems necessary. The rationale for isolating *Gay Pages* is also motivated by its status, with regard to

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[5] The official *Gay Pages* website, for example, claims that the magazine sets out to "promote business" and has therefore "stayed 'clean'", presumably so as to not alienate advertisers (Gay Pages SA 2007:[sp]). Thus, by seemingly averting politics, and overtly sexual material, the magazine manages to attract mainstream marketers, but simultaneously distorts society's perception of gay masculinity. Ultimately, wealth, health, propriety and whiteness are apparently seamlessly interconnected when it is profit, and not social equality, that is at stake.

its considerable circulation,[6] as well as by the need to investigate the current state of *local* gay publications; a venture that is seemingly under-theorised and neglected. Croucher (2002) and Kovak (2003), despite addressing the exclusive, homogenous character of early local gay organisations, neglect to explore the repercussions of normative white dominance in the media sphere and queer visual culture. Similarly, Davidson and Nerio (1994) offer a brief history of the gay press in South Africa, and shed some light on the racist underpinnings of gay publishing, but provide very little insight with regard to the problematic issue of visual representation in gay print media.

A notable exception is Vasu Reddy (1998:68), who has highlighted his concern for the making of a dominant homomasculinity in the South African gay press, which supposedly "ensures (and secures) the needs of white gay male desire". The visible absence of black bodies in magazines like *Gay Pages*, for example, is identified by Reddy (1998:68) as indicative of the manner in which the local gay press seeks to create and propagate 'cloned', culturally stereotypical images of attractive white men, thereby reasserting their dominance. Thus, the notion that the gay press is exclusive, biased and centred on whiteness appears apparent at this stage, but detailing the manner in which these power relations manifest *visually*, in following Reddy, is the main project of this study.

In other words, following the inclusion of sexual orientation in anti-discrimination legislation (Croucher 2002:315), South African gay men are experiencing what Reddy (1998:65) refers to as a second 'birth': the right to identify *as* gay men, is now more of a reality than it had ever been in this country. Where gay identity and visual culture meet, however, is in the media, and it seems that gay masculinity in contemporary South Africa is primarily "renegotiated in a context in which there is increased visibility" or a more significant emphasis on visual culture (Reddy 1998:65). This study's focus on *Gay Pages* is therefore mainly concerned with the addressing the increasingly

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[6] As noted in the first chapter, *Gay Pages* has 45 000 readers in South Africa and a print run of 12 000 copies per issue (Van Niekerk 2008). By comparison, *Wrapped* has only 2 500 readers and a print run of 8 000 copies per issue, according its sales executive Chad Simoes (2008).

important issue of the manner in which visual representation is achieved in 'cultural spaces' (Freitas et al. 1996:89) like gay lifestyle magazines.

3.3 Advertising images, the gay stereotype and the 'heterosexualisation' of queer visual representation

This section of the chapter is specifically concerned with the role that advertising and the visual representations that relate to publicity play in the construction of gay identity and gay group affiliation. This study's exploration of the manner in which gay masculinity is created, re-created and often contrived in visual culture is mainly executed with regard to advertising images, but not limited to them. In other words, with *Gay Pages* serving as a medium from which to draw images that are seemingly in need of critique and analysis, the majority of the representations that are discussed here function as advertisements. Images that accompany articles and the cover of the magazine are, however, also important features of *Gay Pages*' visual composition, and are therefore approached as being similarly significant with regard to revealing social and political issues pertaining to the class and race-inflected nature of gay masculinity in South African visual culture. In fact, the correspondence between the magazine's cover, 'journalistic' photography, and the stylised advertising images that populate its pages, speaks of a grand visual language that seemingly rarely strays from an established, commodified and exclusive notion of gay masculine identity and 'lifestyle'.

The tone of *Gay Pages* is indicative of the manner in which editorial agendas, advertising, marketing and the visual and textual content of lifestyle magazines are "mutually dependent, mutually defining and overlapping" (Benwell 2003:23, 24). Each issue of *Gay Pages*, for example, features at least four so-called 'car tests', which assess the performance levels and aesthetic qualities of particular vehicles, thereby ensuring continuity between the magazine's many automobile advertisements and its editorial content. Moreover, feature articles on travel destinations are abundant and serve to coincide with the magazine's regular reviews of lavish restaurants and hotels, which also form a major part of its advertising repertoire. Book and film reviews, as well as features on fashion and home décor are also included in

each issue. Although such articles coincide with *Gay Pages'* advertising to a lesser degree, they nevertheless reinforce the magazine's emphases on 'lifestyle', which are primarily articulated in a consumerist register. Therefore, the 'lifestyle' propagated by *Gay Pages*, seems to correspond with Tim Edwards' (2003:142) notion that:

> Lifestyle in its original sense referred simply to an individual's or group's way of living and was concerned primarily with social practices such as work, interests, or leisure pursuits … the term [however] rapidly started to imply more strongly issues of aesthetics and image or style in the sense of visual culture, which was also simultaneously increasingly commodified and centred upon products such as cars, interior furnishings and indeed fashion.

The Honda advertisement (Figure 26) illustrates the consistency of Edwards' (2003:142) notions of what the 'lifestyles' propagated by contemporary men's magazines hinge on. The headline of the advertisement, for example, appears to elevate the status of the Honda Civic by equating it with a *'designer label'*, thereby placing the vehicle on a continuum with other brand-conscious expressions of the commodified gay lifestyle, such as *haute couture* (Figure 28). Moreover, the advertisement appeals to the supposed aspirations of *Gay Pages'* readers to possess *'the most stylish, elegant and desirable'* commodities, which symbolically operate to project similar attributes to the gay consumer (Baudrillard 2001:49) who is continually defined in and through his so-called 'habitus' (Bourdieu 1984:171, 172). In other words, since the vehicle apparently allows one to *'escape the ordinary'*, the advertisement suggests that it offers gay consumers a certain degree of 'distinctiveness' (Bocock 1993:18) – not only from heteronormativity but also from 'less chic', and therefore 'less gay', ways of life.

Figure 26: *Honda* advertisement, 2007.
(*Gay Pages* Autumn:11).

Articles and advertisements that define the so-called gay 'lifestyle' in a commodified form, thus noticeably override those dealing with 'gayness' in a political fashion or in terms of social consciousness, sex and sexuality. In other words, *Gay Pages* is not devoid of articles that deal with homophobia and 'coming out'; it covers gay pride marches, profiles prominent gay public figures, addresses legal matters and discusses same-sex relationships, but the incidence of these articles is limited. Discourses on sex are especially marginalised and expurgated in the magazine, which is apparent with regard to the innuendoes used in the occasional articles and images that ostensibly

deal with gay male sexuality, eroticism and sex cultures.[7] Furthermore, politically driven features primarily deal with civil unions and appear to reinforce the conservative, 'heterosexualised' (Chasin 2000b:45) tone of the magazine by inter-textually relating to publicity images representing gay marriage (Figures 32, 35) – similarly to the manner in which the 'car tests' and automobile advertisements buttress each other.

The primacy of advertisements in the analysis of queer visual culture, for the purposes of this dissertation, calls for a brief delineation of what advertising entails, how it operates and why it appears to be so integral to the gay press. In returning to Chasin's (2000b:119) analyses of the gay press and its connections with market forces in the United States, one finds that she also situates advertising as a powerful impetus in the creation of a gay niche market, which precedes and leads to an imaginary, media-generated gay community. Advertising, and the images that lie at the heart of these marketing ploys, therefore act as powerful sources for the commodification of gay identity (Valocchi 1999:220). If one were to assume, as I do, that gay identity predominantly manifests in a commodified form in contemporary Western societies (Sears 2005:104), one cannot ignore the major role that advertising plays in forwarding a hegemonic 'image' of gay male identity.

The commercial, and what also appears to be ideological, relationship that binds the gay press and advertising together, can seemingly be traced to the apparent influx of gay media and the newfound representation of queer subjects and subject matter in Western popular culture during the 1990s (Rohlinger 2002:64, 65). As Chasin (2000b:77) states, whereas the gay press was largely subsidised by private gay-owned, or gay-specific, businesses

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[7] According to Paul Baker (2003:243), one "of the most *significant differences* between magazines that are aimed at heterosexual men and those marketed towards gay men is that the latter are likely to include a section for personal adverts, allowing its readership to engage socially, romantically or *sexually* with each other" [emphasis added]. *Gay Pages*, however, does not include personal adverts, and is seemingly less typical of 'gay' magazines than of mainstream, 'straight' publications. Magazines aimed at heterosexual men and women, such as *FHM* and *Cosmopolitan*, are more sexually explicit than *Gay Pages*, thus reinforcing Peñaloza's (1996:27) assertion that gay magazines appear to have become increasingly desexualised, non-threatening and self-surveying in favour of facilitating the assimilation of queer culture by the hegemony of heteronormativity.

from the 1960s onwards, the 1990s signal a shift toward national, 'mainstream' corporations filling most of these publications' advertising spaces. The contemporary gay press enjoys support from a number of large, established suppliers of consumer products and services, and *Gay Pages* is no exception: luxury automobile companies, including Mercedes-Benz, Jaguar, Land Rover and Daimler Chrysler, and several other power-brands form part of the magazine's regular advertisers (Gay Pages SA 2007:[sp]). Yet, the apparent enthusiasm and tolerance with which mainstream advertisers approach gay media, is not something to be skimmed over uncritically.

The 'sincerity' with which marketers include gay men in their advertising campaigns, as both subjects and targeted consumers, is sometimes received positively in the gay community, presumably because of the increased visibility and social viability that it provides. According to Kates (1999:34), the affirming images of gayness that appear in advertisements and that act as profiles of the gay consumer are, however, based on a stifling stereotype of gay identity that obscures the race and class-based power relations within which it operates. It appears that the romantic notions of inclusion and social equality that are provoked by these publicity campaigns are reserved only for the 'type' of gayness that the advertisement itself represents. The concern of the study is therefore that since gay men belonging to the lower economic classes, as well as black gay men, are visibly absent from the gay press with very few exceptions, the images featured in advertising campaigns are often biased, one-dimensional and unequivocally 'white' and middle-class.

This study aligns itself with Jonathan Schroeder and Detlev Zwick (2004:28), who argue that "representations of iterations derived from essentialist, often racist … [and classist], understandings remain a crucial concern for research into advertising images". One of the major reasons for deconstructing advertisements lies with the need to disclose the various structures of influence and subjugation that inform and shape them. In view of this, John Berger (1972:130) argues that advertising images in contemporary Westernised societies have achieved such immense levels of ubiquity that

they are often taken for granted. The power of advertising is therefore located in its fierce dissemination and seeming diversity (Bignell 1997:31), which serves to almost naturalise its manifestations in society. Since the realm of representation is never neutral or unaffected by social hegemony, one must always be aware of the presence of ideology, and the mechanisms by which the ideas and ideals of dominant social subjects are forwarded at the expense of marginalising 'others' in advertising images.

Michael Herbst (2005:28) argues that advertisements, as cultural forms of expression, can be conceived of as ideological, because they serve to perpetuate the classed, raced and gendered identities of those who are dominant in each of these socially constructed categories. By adhering to, and not challenging, traditional, familiar and hegemonic conceptions of femininity, masculinity or gayness, for example, advertisements aim to conceal their biases by appearing to function within the easily identifiable realm of common sense (Bignell 1997:36). Accordingly, Schroeder and Zwick (2004:24) state that advertisements create and perpetually reiterate social norms, thereby preserving their authority: Rob Cover (2004:83), for example, argues that because the gay press represents white gay men in an omnipresent fashion, a 'fake, public homosexual' is internalised by the collective social consciousness and is subsequently assumed as 'genuinely' representative, or at the apex, of the gay male constituency.

Moreover, considering that this study does not deal with advertising in general, but centres on advertising images that appear in the gay media, represent gay people or target gay consumers, one must bear in mind that 'queer' advertising possesses specific biases and operates by means of particular mechanisms. This can be attributed to the notion that the ideological bases, norms and ideals that underpin advertisements are not the same throughout the spectrum of images that confront society on a daily basis (Berger 1972:129). This study identifies social dilemmas that appear to be symptomatic of advertising that concerns gay men, and although similar issues may appear in publicity elsewhere, they do not operate in the same manner and also do not have the same repercussions that they seemingly

have in a queer context. In fact, an advertisement unambiguously representing or addressing gay men, for example, will differ significantly from any other type of advertisement, whether in terms of subject matter or audience, because the ideologies that inform publicity images are "specific to particular historical periods and to particular cultures" (Bignell 1997:37).

With regard to the historical context within which queer advertisements started appearing, it is important to note, yet again, that images explicitly depicting gayness are fairly recent. Chasin (2000a:162), for example, recalls that a television advertisement for Ikea, aired in the United States in 1990, is reputed to be the very first advertising campaign to feature a gay couple.[8] The advertisement depicts two white men shopping for a dining-room table at the furniture supplier, Ikea, and they are assumed to be gay regarding the fact that they are performing this seemingly familiar domestic activity together (Chasin 2000a:162). What is, however, vexing about this advertisement, is that if one were to consider that it is supposedly groundbreaking, one cannot help but notice that the norms of white, middle-class, straight-acting masculinity are already present at the very moment that queers entered the mainstream media and public consciousness. Thus, since its inception, advertising aimed at, depicting or suggesting allegiance with the gay community has hinged on the model of white, domesticated and sanitised homosexuality (Kates 1999:34) that still defines much of what one sees when observing the images in mainstream and gay media, like *Gay Pages*.

According to Donna Smith (2005:188), queer visibility in South African media, despite being significantly greater than in other African countries, has followed a similar trajectory, with the local queer community experiencing unprecedented media attention since the 1990s. Contemporary queer advertising is, however, also preceded by the gay liberation movement, which has exercised significant influence on the advertising industry with regard to the representation of queer bodies. In view of this, Deana Rohlinger (2002:63) states that the gay liberation movement, accompanied by greater public

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[8] The advertisement is available for viewing at www.youtube.com/watch?v=67_RhiXNk-s

visibility in the form of marches, nightclubs and queer media, for example, 'infused' mainstream media and advertising with gay sentiments. In the process of asserting queerness, these movements set standards for normative male beauty and are therefore seemingly largely responsible for the widespread use of the 'erotic male' (Figure 27) in a variety of contemporary advertising campaigns (Rohlinger 2002:61).[9]

Figure 27: *Boyz* advertisement, 2008.
(*Gay Pages* Autumn:4).

With regard to the development of queer advertising and the milieus within which it came into its own, it appears that publicity images that centre on gayness are unique and therefore require critical approaches that address their exceptional nature. Furthermore, apart from purely historical and contextual issues, queer advertising is also characterised by particular formal qualities and ideological incentives. Firstly, since this investigation is based

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[9] Susan Bordo (1999:23), for example, claims that the homoerotic undertones of world-renowned American fashion designer Calvin Klein's print and television advertisements can be attributed to Klein's immersion in the burgeoning gay nightlife of New York in the 1970s, which has seemingly inspired his artistic vision ever since. Thus, Klein's iconic depiction of ambiguously sexualised, ideally beautiful young men is contingent on the role that gay culture has played in prescribing male aesthetic norms since its efforts at political and social mobilisation started in the urban centres of Western cultures in the tumultuous 1960s and 1970s.

within the study of visual culture, it seems intrinsic to note that with regard to medium and technique, advertisements that are 'queer' mostly manifest photographically. Thus, since queer advertisements seemingly became popular at a much later stage than the actual advent of publicity, it appears to operate by means of what Berger (1972:140) identifies as the most important technological development for modern advertising: colour photography (Chasin 2000b:102). Yet, regarding the socio-political tone with which this study explores queer advertisements, photographic, print advertising is of even greater ideological importance, because it is photography that is most effectively used for the 'visual-stereotypical' representation of gay people (Cover 2004:84).

This study therefore engages with the view that advertising *images* act as the purveyors of stereotypes regarding gay men and are structured in ways that communicate and disseminate particular notions of gay masculinity. Gillian Dyer (1988:115) states that one must bear in mind that the 'meaning' of an advertisement cannot merely be detected at a denotative level, but also depends on the manner in which ideology impacts on its production, circulation and reception. In other words, advertisements are not solely employed to sell commodities, but also create structures of meaning that invite people to "participate in ideological ways of seeing [themselves] and the world" (Bignell 1997:33). Considering that stereotypes are based on simplification and singularity (Pieterse 1992:11), the ideological repercussions of many queer advertisements lie in that they do not accurately depict the gay community, but represent a sole idea of gayness that only reflects a particular segment of gay culture (Herbst 2005:34).

In view of this, Chung (2007:101) argues that stereotypes about gay men that appear in the media, so-called 'mediatypes', are damaging because they represent identity positions that many gay men cannot establish affinity with; resulting in the 'closeted' state that marginalised gay men often find themselves restricted to. Therefore, mediatyping "typically diminishes the depth of human character, and [enforces] conscious definitive boundaries, such as ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, and other human

characteristics, that are the bases of exclusion from the dominant cultural group" (Chung 2007:101). So, in mainstream media, for example, the still marginal representation of gay subjects re-inscribes the dominance of heterosexuality, which also appears in a stereotypical form based on the assumption that everyone, or anyone worth representing, is 'straight' (Levina et al. 2000:742). With regard to queer representation though, homosexuality appears to be at its centre, which implies that qualities beyond sexual orientation, like race, seemingly form the biases that keep the dominant segment of this particular cultural group in power.

If one were to establish exactly what it is about advertising aimed at, or portraying elements of, gay culture that seems to set it apart from publicity concerning different audiences and images, one must turn one's attention to the centrality of sexual orientation in gay advertising. From this vantage point, Bignell's (1997:36) notion that advertising fluctuates from one cultural group to another becomes apparent, because whereas homosexuality represents grounds for discrimination and exclusion in mainstream, 'straight' advertising, it conversely represents a norm in queer advertising. Furthermore, what one should not neglect addressing is that similar to the manner in which heteronormative media exclude some individuals based on their sexualities, media-generated homosexuality harbours certain biases and seemingly seeks to constantly establish exactly which qualities of gayness are supposedly normative. Thus, referring to queerness as a norm in gay advertising images does not imply that simply being homosexual is enough to bring about representation, since it is more often than not *a* homosexuality and not a number of various homosexual*ies* that is embraced by the media.

Considering the material ways in which homosexuality manifests in visual culture, and specifically advertising images, is therefore germane to this study, since it ultimately relates to the widespread use of stereotyping in the representation of gay individuals. In view of this, Richard Dyer (2002:19) emphasises that so-called signs of gayness, whether in terms of fashion, style or demeanour, for example, are "designed to show what the person alone does not show: that he … is gay". Fraser (1999:109, 110) states that race, for

example, is often thought of as a human quality that cannot be concealed, for it is always already visible on the body; conversely, sexuality is not always immediately recognisable, and therefore requires signifiers that include, but go beyond the skin (Cover 2004:86). From a semiotic point of view, the various elements or 'signs' that constitute a queer advertisement, the pose, clothing and gestures of the models, for example, are coded in such a way that it allows one to interpret the subject of the image as queer, based on previous, existing, *culturally embedded* representations of homosexuality or gay visual stereotypes (Bignell 1997:37).

Schroeder and Zwick (2004:27) state that contemporary advertisements depicting (homo)eroticised male beauty can be culturally related to a genealogy (or iconology) of images that include fine art portraiture, male pin-up photography and *carte de visite* portraiture.[10] In fact, the realm of publicity has long realised that by creating pastiches of well-known oil paintings, the status of an advertising image is elevated to that of 'high art', endowing commodities with greater authority, as well as notions of luxury, wealth, success, refinement and good taste (Berger 1972:135). Cultural texts, like advertisements, that seemingly represent gay men are recognisable *as such*, because as spectators and readers of the image "we are drawing on our knowledge of the very notion of homosexuality … and the whole conceptual [and visual] system of sexualities that [gayness] fits into" (Dyer 2002:23). Visual representations are therefore never completely autonomous, but are produced by means of intertextuality, which implies that advertisements, for example, are always in the process of appropriating images, notions and concepts that are already existing in culture (Dyer 1988:129; Dyer 2002:2).

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[10] During the nineteenth century, *carte de visite* (visiting cards), which are small, mass-produced photographic portraits of bourgeois men and women, were immensely popular in Europe and the United States (Schroeder & Zwick 2004:31). These accessible, portable *cartes* were soon exchanged across and within Western countries, with millions buying and selling photographic images of people that were, in effect, strangers (Schroeder & Zwick 2004:31). Accordingly, the cultural implication of the 'trucking and trading' of these cards, was that it created a 'powerful visual discourse the body': primarily representing white, middle-class 'normality', meant that these cards played an important role in producing and disseminating 'ideal' bodies, together with notions of beauty and desirability (Schroeder & Zwick 2004:32).

The advertisement for Brett Goldman Homme Couture (Figure 28), which appeared in the Spring 2007 edition of *Gay Pages*, can superficially be interpreted as being 'queer', or as depicting homosexual men, simply because its framing is a gay publication or because of the manner in which the two men are affectionately positioned in relation to each other, their hands touching.[11] The drapery, antique chair and opulent dress of the two models are reminiscent of a Western iconographical tradition of representing the male body that may or may not have been the inspiration for the advertisement's creation, but certainly stands as a visual cultural reference worth exploring: Thus, for the purposes of this study, as a means of illustrating the interdependence of queer imagery, this advertisement can be conceived of as a modern-day appropriation of dandyism. According to Umberto Eco (2004:333), the dandy, who manifests as a well-groomed gentleman engaged in the "art of dressing … and living … with style", appeared in the first decades of the early nineteenth century and subsequently infiltrated this period's visual culture as an expression of 'Beauty'.

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[11] The image is also reminiscent of the manner in which heterosexual couples are represented, in terms of the traditional gender conventions that are seemingly followed in its composition. In other words, the advertisement illustrates the so-called 'heterosexualisation' of queer culture (Chasin 2000b:45), which divides gay couples into culturally recognisable masculine and feminine counterparts (Foucault 1980:45): The seated man is feminised, in terms of his passivity, perceived coyness and luminescent dress, while the other man appears assertive, protective, dominant, 'darker', and therefore more masculine. In view of this, Goffman (1977:321) states that "since our Western society is … considerably organised in terms of couples, in the sense that the two members are often found in each other's company … it will be that displays by men to women [or other men, for that matter] of physical help [or dominance] … will be widely possible".

Figure 28: *Brett Goldman Homme Couture* advertisement, 2007.
(*Gay Pages* Spring:45).

By comparing a portrait of *Count Robert de Montesquiou-Fézensac* (1897) (Figure 29), which depicts a bona fide dandy, with the Brett Goldman advertisement, several iconographic similarities between the two images can be inferred. Berger (1972:138) states that certain advertising images suggest their connections with fine art by adopting signs that are characteristic of highbrow cultural forms of expression, which comprise materials that indicate luxury and wealth, as well as the poses and gestures of the subjects portrayed, for example. In view of this, one can firstly observe that both the Count and one of the models in the advertisement are in a seated position, the chair itself is a noteworthy similarity, with one hand positioned on the inner thigh and the other curled towards the body. Secondly, apart from the poses of these two subjects being almost identical, the manner in which all three subjects are dressed appears to be equally luxurious, extravagant and stylised. Thus, the advertisement appears to invoke the essence of dandyism,

by equating the Brett Goldman brand's emphasis on style with that of the painstakingly in vogue men of the nineteenth century bourgeoisie.

Figure 29: Giovanni Boldini, *Count Robert de Montesquiou-Fézensac,* 1897.
Oil on canvas, measurements unavailable.
Musée d'Orsay, Paris.
(Eco 2004:335).

Furthermore, in looking beyond the formal composition of the two images, a correspondence that speaks more of an ideological, connotative and iconological relationship, rather than immediately recognisable resemblances, is revealed. More importantly, comparing the two images at the level of their surfaces does not provide adequate reasons as to why the Brett Goldman advertisement is supposedly 'queer', concerning its correlation with dandyism. Therefore, one must bear in mind that sometimes "dandyism manifested itself as opposition to current prejudices and mores, and this is why it is significant that some dandies were homosexual – which was totally unacceptable at the time and regarded as a criminal offence" (Eco 2004:334). Oscar Wilde, who was put on trail and subsequently jailed for homosexuality in 1895 (Saslow 1999:197), for example, is a recognisable figure of dandyism: not only did he

embody the stylised 'look' of the dandies (Figure 30), but some of his literary works, like *The picture of Dorian Gray* (1981 [1891]), speak of an ardent attraction toward the expression of refined male beauty (Paglia 1990:513).

Figure 30: Famously 'dandy': Oscar Wilde, 1880.
(Eco 2004:333).

Moreover, concerning the creation and dissemination of gay visual stereotypes, Boldini's homage to dandyism, as well as the Goldman advertising image that seemingly manifests as a contemporary 'version' of it, appear to speak of the manner in which particular notions of gayness are perpetually reiterated in Western cultures. The connection between homosexuality and dandyism can seemingly be positioned as the origin of popular, modern-day notions that gay men are somehow inherently fashionable and obsessed with their physical appearance. Bordo (1999:21) states that the "gay male's narcissism, in fact, is such a constant trope in [Western visual culture's] depiction of homosexuality that it is startling when it is absent". It is therefore not surprising that a large number of advertisements that appear in *Gay Pages* are centred on the body, providing products and services that are aimed at improving, or preserving, one's 'good looks' (Figure 31).

In view of this, Cover (2004:87) argues that the cultural imperative of creating and maintaining stereotypical, coherent queer identities, does not begin and

end with the sexualised body, but also encapsulates clothing, grooming, accessories and self-presentation as extensions *of* that body.[12] Considering that these advertisements are selling commodities, which are supposedly linked to the expression of gay identity, reaffirms the notion that together with the rise of the commercial gay press and queer advertising, the political bases of the gay movement shifted toward a consumerist ethos (Chasin 2000a:151, 152). As Bocock (1993:3) states, it seems to be the acquisition of 'things' that aids social subjects in the process of becoming 'a certain type of person', or embodying a particular lifestyle. Furthermore, Berger (1972:144) claims that the representation or suggestion of sex, and *sexuality*, is one of the mainstays of modern advertising, and is employed to create continuity between one's ability to consume and one's 'sex-appeal'.

For the purposes of this study, Berger's (1972:144) notion that 'if one can afford a particular product, one will be more desirable', can be conceived of as also suggesting that by consuming particular commodities, one becomes either more or less 'gay'. As stated throughout this chapter, enfranchisement, group affiliation and identity construction in the gay community seemingly occur in and through consumption, the markets and the media, more so than through political, socially conscious endeavours (Sender 2001:95). In view of this, the critique of advertising images with which this study aligns itself, concerns the homogeneity that results from mass media and the representations that claim to embody 'gayness', but merely depict superficial stereotypes that particularise male homosexuality (Chasin 2000a:148; Hennessy 1994:65).

The Medisalon clinic advertisement (Figure 31) can therefore be read in terms of adhering to the culturally typified ideals of homomasculine beauty, discussed with regard to gay 'colonial' representations in the previous

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[12] The supposed ubiquity of the chic, well-preserved and fashion-obsessed gay man, therefore comes into being as a result of what Cover (2004:87) refers to as the "requirements of narrative flow in [visual media, which depend] on the speed and encapsulation of stereotypic data … particularly in recent television such as *Will and Grace* … and perhaps most notably in the … reality television show *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* with its strong emphasis on grooming and clothing".

chapter, which not only hinge on perfect musculature, but presumably also on 'whiteness' (Mirzoeff 1995:2, 3; Dyer 1997:146, 147, 151): The 'built' white body featured in the advertisement effortlessly reflects the norms of ideological and aesthetic contingencies such as Western art history, which revere the white male physique at the expense of denying Other, black men their claims to authentic homomasculinity (Mercer 1991:192). Investigating queer images that are typically 'white' is important to the study exactly because they reveal that images of 'blackness' appear anomalously in gay visual culture. In other words, the study employs the advertisement not as a means of reiterating the primacy of 'whiteness' in queer representation, but to illustrate the manner in which stereotypes about gay masculinity are structures of degree, which typecast white men as exclusively representative of ideal, normative or 'narcissistic' gayness (Dyer 2002:15).
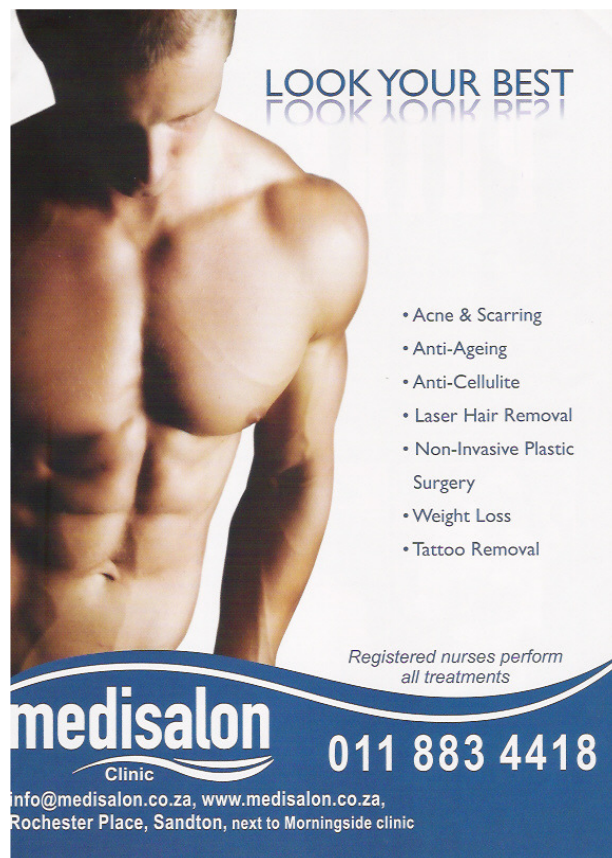
Figure 31: *Medisalon Clinic* advertisement, 2008.
(*Gay Pages* Autumn:53).

Still, it is also important that one does not lose sight of the fact that this 'homogeneity', created by markets, media and various advertising campaigns, seemingly occurs on two levels. In other words, diminishing the distinctions between differently raced and classed gay men, for example, firstly creates a stereotypical, culturally recognisable image of 'good' homosexuality (Cover 2004:84), but some advertising images are seemingly concerned with equating 'gay' and 'straight', thereby, secondly, eradicating or at least minimising the rigidness of the homosexual/heterosexual dichotomy (Chasin 2000b:110). With regard to the first level, at which homogeneity is established *amongst* gay men, the role that advertising images play in 'unifying' gay masculine identity cannot be ignored. This can be attributed to the manner in which the realm of advertising seeks to simplify, and ultimately homogenise, complex social constituencies by "[imposing] a false standard of what is and what is not desirable" (Berger 1972:154). This notion is also propagated by Bocock (1993:54), who, in his analyses of the relationship between culture and consumption, states that people are essentially 'socialised' into desiring.

Evidently, gay men are not exclusively white and middle-class, for example; yet, advertising images rarely stray from this stereotypical view of gay masculinity and therefore constantly position white gay masculinity as that which is ideally desirable. Also, since gay identity has seemingly become something that is increasingly achieved through consumption (Sears 2005:104), one must not neglect to acknowledge that the commodities advertised in queer magazines, like *Gay Pages*, function as signifiers of the ideal gay man's way of life. Although it is absurd to suggest that each and every gay man desires, or possesses, the exact same body, race, class or lifestyle, the gay press and other forms of queer visual culture ultimately erase the complexities of gay societies and tend to revere a single, homogenised notion of gay masculinity.[13] Moreover, the social implications of primarily

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[13] According to Michael Herbst (2005:20), advertising functions by means of creating an ideal – an ideal that is achieved by means of selective discrimination and exclusion. This is, for example, evident with regard to advertising targeting or depicting gay men, which seemingly discriminates not against 'gayness' in general, but rather seeks to exclude forms of queer life that are conceived of as deviant, or too far removed from the norm of 'good' homosexuality. Yet, what is also important is that one realises that although gay consumers are internally diverse and do not necessarily desire the same commodities, they are expected to react in

representing gay men in a commodified form are characteristically damaging. Consider, for example, that since many gay men cannot consume as fervently as the privileged few, nor do they always fit the mould of white aesthetic beauty, they seemingly tend to embody 'gayness' to a lesser degree and are alienated from the gay community.

With regard to the second instance of homogenisation, supposedly produced in and through advertising, the focus of the study shifts from exploring the manner in which the gay male constituency is reduced to a singular, monolithic identity inflected by classism and racism, to investigating the ways in which heteronormativity seeks to curb the threat of queerness by 'heterosexualising' (Chasin 2000b:45) gay men and images of them. The role that the advertising industry plays in the creation, and maintenance, of the gay press may appear evident at this time, but the power that it exercises over the content of these publications is of even greater significance: as alluded to previously, one must bear in mind that gay publications, like *Gay Pages*, do not exclusively provide space for gay-identified companies, but also deal with mainstream, essentially non-queer advertisers that need to be constantly appeased by the gay press (O'Dougherty 2000:76). What is, however, of major concern to the study at this point, is exploring the manner in which homosexuality is neutralised, and reconciled with heterosexuality in a selected number of advertising images that appear to straighten out 'gayness'.

Heteronormativity and heterosexism can be conceived of as ideological systems that deny *particular* non-heterosexual individuals their claims to identity, community or culture (Levina et al. 2000:739). Therefore, it is important to realise that it is a certain type of queerness that is shunned by heteronormativity, while other, more 'acceptable' forms of gay masculinity, for example, are allowed visibility, representation and participation in socio-cultural spheres. Puar's (2006:71) statement that to think of heteronormativity as solely discriminatory with regard to sexual orientation neglects to address

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the *same way* to the *same images*: the ideal of gayness is therefore perpetuated at the expense of discrimination, and appears to create feelings of inadequacy for many black gay men, for example (Herbst 2005:20). Ultimately, one can conclude that "not everyone benefits from the identity possibilities opened up by advertising" (Herbst 2005:34).

this ideology's racist and classist agendas, is especially true with regard to the images of 'straight gayness' that permeate gay media. In accordance with this, Hennessy (1994:36) states that heteronormativity exists as a powerful social force that organises more than *just* sexuality; in fact, it hierarchically positions class, race and gender in relation to heterosexuality, so that a straight, white, middle-class man, for example, represents the epitome of humanity.

In view of this, one can comprehend why white, gay, middle-class men, and the images that accompany their cultural construction, are significantly more abundant than representations of gay, black, and possibly economically disempowered, men: the former deviate from heteronormativity solely with regard to sexual orientation, while the latter represent deviance at several levels, including queerness. In other words, Dyer (2002:15) states that gay visual stereotypes function in terms of degrees of queerness. Thus, within gay culture, for example, masculinity holds an esteemed position, while blackness is primarily marginalised, which implies that black masculinity therefore abides by normative queerness in terms of gender, but not with regard to gender *and* race, in the way that white homomasculinity does. Simply being 'gay' seemingly does not always embody the cultural norm of queerness to such an extent, or degree, that it legitimates representation in mainstream, as well as queer visual cultures.

As Kates (1999:33) argues, the stereotypical representation of gay men in advertising images is always conditional and depends on the subject's adherence to heteronormative notions of what homosexual men 'look' like, consume or desire. Considering the notion that sexual orientation is supposedly an element of identity that is, or can be, obscured (Fraser 1999:109), provides some insight as to why heteronormativity requires 'visual proof' of homosexuality, which "[depends on] the adoption of visual norms in order to fulfil the contemporary cultural imperative of coherent identity" (Cover 2004:86, 87). The stereotypical representation of gay men, as impacted upon by heteronormativity, is seemingly guided by conventions that restrict and shape exactly what is allowed to be 'shown' about a particular cultural group

(Dyer 2002:2). In other words, one must account for the fact that the so-called 'visual proof' of homosexuality that manifests in advertising images, for example, is not an objective or neutral view of gay masculinity, but operates by means of excluding certain attributes of this identity position in order to strengthen heteronormative ideals.

Thus, excluding blackness from the socio-cultural view of homosexuality serves to reinscribe the supremacy of whiteness, and heteronormative ideology therefore benefits from having one of its 'norms' reiterated, despite having to make space for the 'deviance' of queerness. Moreover, this illustrates that one can conceive of heteronormativity as an organising principle that seeks to hierarchically structure society in order to maintain and perpetuate its already established cultural privileges (Ingraham 1994:204). Hennessy (1994:51) is, however, concerned that the relationship between commodification and sexuality, which seemingly melds in queer advertising images, is often not part of the larger project of disclosing heteronormativity. This can be attributed to the fact that the proliferation of queer imagery in mainstream as well as gay media, is sometimes interpreted as a positive social development (Cover 2004:33), since it lends unprecedented visibility and cultural viability to queers. Yet, such positivist attitudes are seemingly oblivious to the manner in which some queer advertising images, for example, in no way challenge heteronormativity, but are ultimately produced in a heterosexist vocabulary (Battles & Hilton-Morrow 2002:101).

Kates (1999:29) states that heteronormativity characteristically seeks to assert its supposed dominance at every possible front, and the media, markets and advertising campaigns are no exceptions. One can therefore argue that heteronormativity "naturalises heterosexuality and conceals its constructedness in the illusion of universality" by perpetually viewing, and representing, the social world through a 'straight' lens that marginalises queerness (Ingraham 1994:204). In other words, a major part of the heteronormative agenda in cultural and social spheres is based on the need of heterosexuality to be constantly positioned as the 'original', 'pure' identity; or, the benchmark of humanity (Hennessy 1994:46). In turn, homosexuality is

positioned in 'addition' to heterosexuality, or as a supplement to it (Spargo 1999:46), but not without fulfilling the important function of being that which heterosexuality supposedly defines itself in opposition to (Corber & Valocchi 2003:4).

A significant part of queer theory's investigation of the manner in which heteronormativity functions to maintain power relations, centres on making transparent the fact that if homosexuality is constructed, then similar claims can be made with regard to heterosexuality, despite its supposed pre-existence (Spargo 1999:45). By conceiving of sexuality as something that is constituted in and through social and cultural institutions, histories and discourses, enables queer critiques of heteronormativity to disclose that heterosexuality is, in fact, not as natural as it professes to be. In other words, the concept of sexual orientation *developed* through the proliferation of sexual discourses (Foucault 1980:17, 36), which implies that neither homosexuality nor heterosexuality 'existed' before their classification as distinct social or cultural groupings (Namaste 1994:221, 222).[14] Ultimately, heterosexuality can seemingly only achieve self-definition by *constructing* itself in relation to homosexuality, but draws its power from refuting that it is, or ever was, subject to categorisation and the socio-cultural forces that shape sexual identity.

By positioning itself as an 'original', essential form of sexual orientation, heterosexuality, and the ideological impact of heteronormativity, has effectively created a 'social sexual hierarchy' that has transformed the sexual landscape into a cultural site of struggle over power (Seidman 1994:166; Foucault 1980:45). Homosexuality is attributed an inferior status, because heterosexuality seemingly represents the norm against which all other forms of sexuality are measured (Foucault 1980:38), but constantly struggles to claim legitimacy, representation and cultural viability, which has, for example,

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[14] In other words, Foucault (1980:36) states that "it would be a mistake to see in this proliferation of discourses [that had its advent in eighteenth and nineteenth century Western cultures] merely a qualitative phenomenon, something like a pure increase, as if what was said in them were immaterial, as if the fact of speaking about sex were of itself more important than the forms of imperatives [such as definitions and classifications] that were imposed on it by speaking about it".

manifested in terms of the gay liberation movements and the ongoing battle against homophobia. Yet, coming 'out', proudly claiming a homosexual identity and subsequently acquiring some cultural visibility, and with it the right to participate in society as a whole, is seemingly not sufficient to completely overcome the supremacy of heterosexuality. In view of this, Tamsin Spargo (1999:47) states that the impediment facing queer culture with regard to its attempts of achieving an equal position with heterosexuality, can accordingly be attributed to the notion that it "is impossible to move entirely outside [of] heterosexuality".

Following from Spargo's (1999:47) notion that heteronormativity has apparently become so entrenched in contemporary cultural values that it encapsulates, controls and defines most of society, Ki Namaste (1994:224) states that in the wake of queer activism and media representations of 'gayness', homosexuality has seemingly appeared and vanished at the same time. 'Outing' oneself is seemingly yet another "declaration of the centrality of heterosexuality", because seeking acknowledgement as homosexual, ultimately leads to the affirmation of one's 'outsideness' or 'otherness' (Spargo 1994:47). In other words, the predicament facing queer culture is founded upon the notion that coming 'out', claiming a gay identity, inevitably suggests entering the sphere of the culturally dominant or living 'inside' of heteronormativity, together with its norms and standards: apparently, in order to be 'out', one must be 'inside' first (Namaste 1994:224). Therefore, it seems that as soon as homosexuality gains some cultural gravity and becomes 'visible', it also disappears *within* the immenseness of heteronormativity and, importantly, on its terms.

One must be constantly aware of the fact that queer visual representation, and the social liberties it supposedly suggests, does not always operate 'outside' of, or as a challenge to heteronormativity, but sometimes serves the purpose of propagating and reinvigorating heterosexist supremacy (Hennessy 1994:53; Puar 2006:67). Chasin (2000b:45), for example, states that the rise of the gay niche market, the gay press and queer advertising, has simultaneously heterosexualised gay culture, and queered 'straight' culture,

ultimately leading to what she refers to as "the most dramatic cultural assimilation of our time". It is, however, of great importance to bear in mind that the queering of mainstream culture does not necessarily imply that the inclusion of 'gayness' should be interpreted as somehow changing the internal structures of heteronormativity, or as confronting its prejudices: for the purposes of this study, it is therefore significant to note that with regard to certain advertising images, the inclusion of queers is indicative of heteronormativity's attempts to empty homosexuality of its characteristics in favour of representing 'gayness' in a 'straight' vernacular (Rushbrook 2002:194, 196).

The advertisement for the Sheraton Hotel in Pretoria (Figure 32), which appears in the Autumn 2007 edition of *Gay Pages*, illustrates the manner in which heteronormativity seemingly does not always define itself in stark contrast to queerness, but rather aims to assimilate it, thereby perpetuating its own normative structures. In other words, the stereotype of white, affluent, 'normal' gay men, seemingly embodied by the embracing male couple in this advertising image, ultimately does not *only* serve to 'describe' gayness or 'otherness', but somehow functions as a reiteration of the cultural images that are internalised by heteronormative subjects in the process of creating 'straight' identities (Chung 2007:99). Thus, despite appearing in a bona fide gay publication, this advertisement is effectively not as 'queer' or disruptive of heteronormativity as one might assume, but merely shows that "the project of heterosexual identity is propelled into an endless repetition of itself", and that even with regard to what appears as a queer advertisement, heteronormative ideals are still firmly in place (Butler 1991:21).
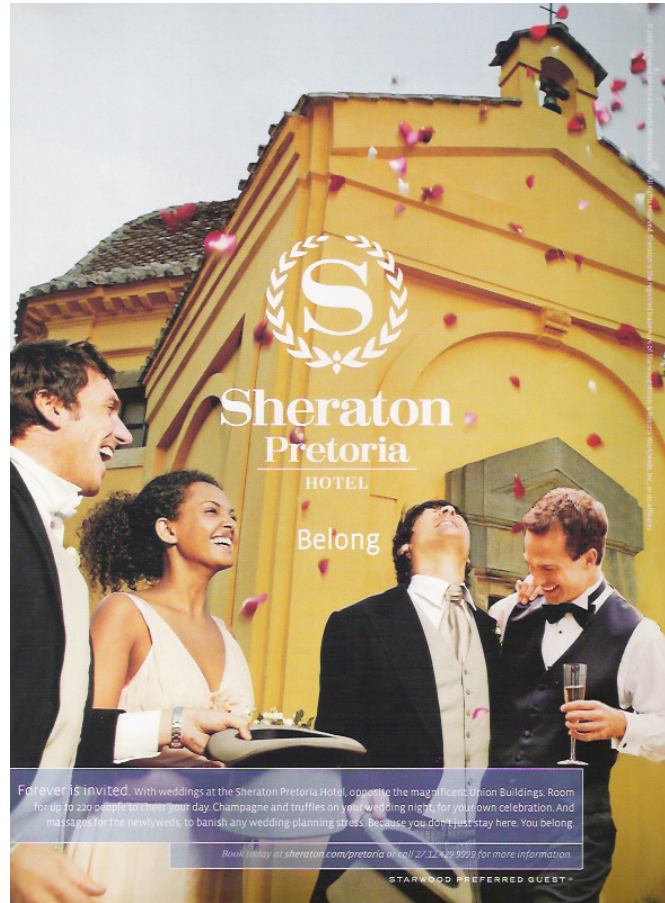
Figure 32: *Sheraton Hotel* advertisement, 2007.
(*Gay Pages* Autumn:[sp]).

In view of this, Kates (1999:30) argues that the reconciliation of queerness and heteronormativity, which is apparently employed not to legitimate gay culture, but to make heterosexuality appear even more ubiquitous, occurs when both cultural groupings recognise an element of themselves or their lifestyles represented in the same image. The Sheraton Hotel is therefore marketed in this advertisement as a suitable venue for a wedding or a cultural tradition previously reserved for heterosexual couples, but that recently became available to same-sex couples in South Africa under the Civil Union Bill, which allows anyone, gay or 'straight', to get married (Patrick 2007:32, 33). This advertisement is, however, an adequate example of the manner in which the institutions and structures of heteronormativity, like marriage, are not always challenged, modified or critiqued by a queer presence, but rather rearticulated and further empowered.

The fact that marriage is an institution historically known for excluding gay individuals, something which is still a reality in many countries beyond South Africa, is erased, and the power relations that control queer bodies is veiled by the apparent tolerance with which the gay men represented in this advertisement have gained entry to mainstream, heterosexual culture.[15] Green (2002:531, 532) states that one must bear in mind that 'gay' is not always 'queer' in a political sense, and therefore does not always imply rebellion or opposition: often, as in this advertisement, the distance between heterosexual and homosexual collapses and the notion of 'gayness' as being always already transgressive is refuted. Consequently, this advertisement represents a certain type of 'gayness', meaning male, white and presumably middle-class, as a social identity that does not defy heteronormativity, but mirrors it. In other words, the notion that queers are 'just like' heterosexual individuals is propagated in a way that appears to be aimed at cultural inclusion, but actually functions to 'heterosexualise' queerness as a means of expanding the dominance of heteronormativity (Chasin 2000a:164).

This study's critique of heteronormativity and the manner in which it ideologically exercises power over and through culture, of which the visual realm comprises a considerable part, is encapsulated by Kates (1999:33) who states that "representations of normative heterosexuality (white, married, procreative, [monogamous], healthy, sexually conservative in practice) pervade advertising and other cultural institutions – *even the gay ones*". A number of selected advertising images from *Gay Pages* appear to reveal Kates' (1999:33) claim that heteronormative ideals manifest in images that expressly appear in gay publications or that position 'queerness' as its subject matter: the advertisement for Indian Ocean Holidays (Figure 33), for example,

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[15] From a semiotic point of view, it is significant to note that with regard to the assimilation of gay men by heteronormative culture, which the Sheraton Hotel advertisement seemingly represents, the word *'Belong'* is used to anchor, or strengthen, the message of incorporation and inclusion that this image communicates. According to Fiske et al (1994:13), linguistic signs supplement visual images, in a process referred to as 'anchorage', and serve to reduce the number of meanings that can be inferred with regard to an advertisement, for example. Therefore, regarding the advertisement for this wedding venue, the notion that operating within heteronormative institutions subsequently opens up space for queers amongst the culturally dominant, is rationalised and motivated by the word *'Belong'*, which implies a 'fitting in' or 'acceptance' regardless of sexual orientation.

is utterly reminiscent of notions and representations of romantic, heterosexual love, and can in fact be interpreted as depicting two gay men participating in the normal, and normative, heterosexual practice of enjoying a honeymoon together.
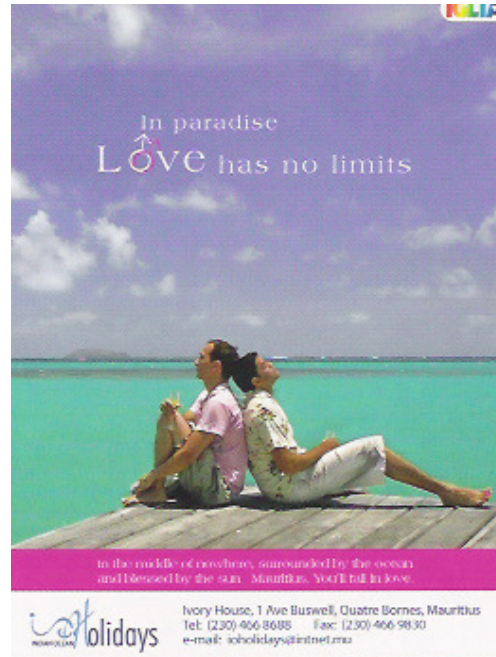

Figure 33: *Indian Ocean Holidays* advertisement, 2007.
(*Gay Pages* Spring:101).

The advertisement is, however, also indicative of the manner in which colonial sentiments of white superiority and black inferiority are seemingly rearticulated in selected images from queer visual culture. This can be attributed to the notion that white, gay men occupy positions of dominance and reverence within these systems of representation, while black, gay men are marginalised and primarily cast as less representative of or at odds with ideal gay masculinity (Han 2006:22, 23). Moreover, the 'exotic' location depicted in the advertisement significantly relates to the notion that contemporary tourism and colonialism are synonymous, since both articulate the process of moving beyond 'licit', Western spaces in favour of exploiting and consuming the 'illicit' and sexually uninhibited spaces of 'otherness' (Mackie 1998:[sp]; Boone 1995:96; Auerbach 2002:9).

The licit/illicit dichotomy suggests that the queer men in the advertisement have travelled from the 'conservative' and possibly heteronormative spaces of their work-environments and family lives (Puar 2002:939) to visit "zones of deviance and excess [in order to] transgress social norms" (Rushbrook 2002:185). In other words, the liberal foreign space that the advertisement represents, imposes *'no limits'* on the white, gay couple's sexual desire for one another – or 'Others'. Yet, the fact that the image's gay travellers are unequivocally white, reproduces traditional colonial power relations by implying that the 'Others' subjected to and subjugated by the queer tourist gaze are 'black' (colonised) and, by dissociation, not gay and white (coloniser) (Boone 1995:100).[16] The image that appears in conjunction with a travel feature on the island of Réunion (Figure 34), for example, effectively illustrates the manner in which the conditional and stereotypical representation of black men in queer visual culture is commonly produced in a colonial vernacular.

The image (Figure 34) forms part of the exceedingly limited visual representations in *Gay Pages* that feature black men, but is significant specifically because of the contexts of tourism, colonialism and 'gay paradise' within which it is framed. The fact that Réunion was colonised by France in the seventeenth century, when it was supposedly "a still virgin, uninhabited island" (Van Niekerk 2007:82), appears to ideologically inform the inclusion of the black man in the image. In other words, the anomalous visual representation of black men in *Gay Pages* is therefore predicated on the colonial sentiment of 'fixing' blacks in stereotypical positions (Hall 1995b:21), such as embodiments of 'exotic otherness' (Auerbach 2002:2; Pacteau 1999:90). Furthermore, Rushbrook (2002:185) argues that "the spatialisation of difference or deviation in mutually exclusive, oppositional zones in a hierarchy of places [licit/illicit, self/other, West/East, dominant/subordinate,

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[16] Boone (1995:90) argues that "[the] number of gay and bisexual male writers and artists [such as EM Foster and André Gide] that travelled through [foreign, colonised spaces] in pursuit of sexual gratification [and liberation] is legion as well as legend". Therefore, one must not neglect to acknowledge the role that male, homosexual tourists play in fostering Western, patriarchal control of 'other' spaces and its inhabitants; a process that simultaneously involves the reiteration of 'whiteness' as akin to 'gayness' (Boone 1995:90).

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white/black, straight/queer] *reinforces the production of queerness as white*"
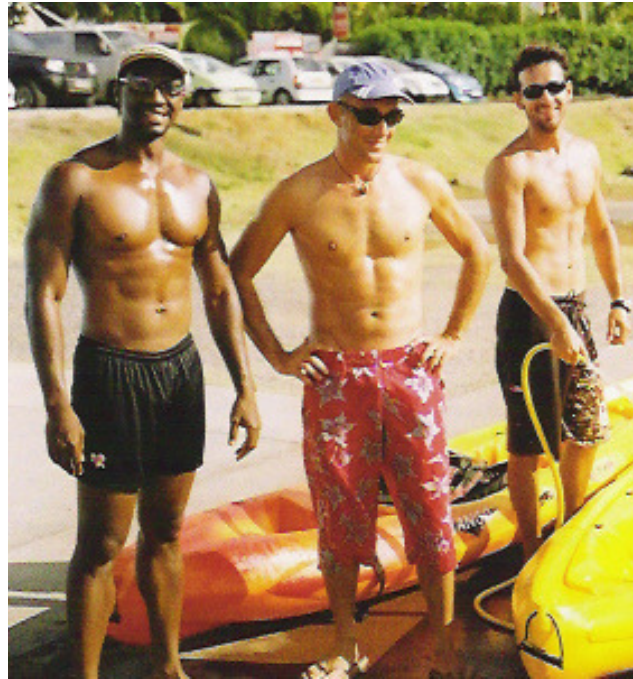[emphasis added].

Figure 34: The conditional appearance of black men as exotic 'Others' in gay
visual culture, 2007.
(*Gay Pages* Autumn:80).

Other advertising images in *Gay Pages*, like those for Best Men (Figure 35)
and Garden World (Figure 36), for example, are similarly representative of
what one can conceive of as estimable heteronormative lifestyle choices
being appropriated in queer imagery, which, in turn, suggests the
assimilationist manner in which certain gay men are 'accepted' by the
heterosexual hegemony. This pair of advertisements represents gay couples,
or manifestations of the non-threatening, culturally tolerated 'gay family'
(Chasin 2000b:47), that seemingly adhere to that which is revered by
heteronormativity. In both cases, the norms of whiteness, marriage,
monogamy and 'controlled' sexuality appear to be intact. Moreover, these
images are seemingly also indicative of the manner in which "modern
[Western] society has attempted to reduce sexuality to the couple – the
heterosexual [or heterosexualised] and, insofar as possible, legitimate couple"
(Foucault 1980:45).

Figure 35: *Best Men* advertisement, 2007.
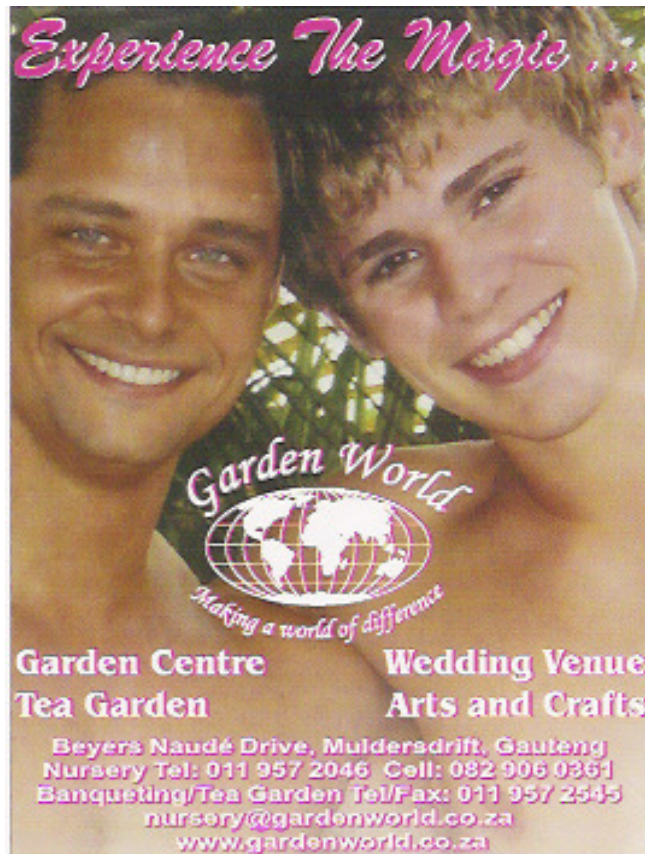(*Gay Pages* Summer:117).

Figure 36: *Garden World* advertisement, 2007.
(*Gay Pages* Winter:106).

Therefore, these advertisements seemingly "work as a form of ideological control to signal membership in relations of ruling as well as to signify that the bride and groom [or groom and groom] are normal … family-centred, good citizens" (Ingraham 1994:212). Moreover, in conjunction with these images, which seemingly represent "a familiar heterosexual wholesomeness", Kates (1999:30) states that advertisements depicting gay men as animal lovers (Figure 37), just as effectively suggest a 'shared humanity' with heterosexual individuals.[17] It is, however, important to note that with regard to the assimilation of queerness by heteronormativity, that black gay men are rarely affirmatively represented in the way that white men have seemingly entered

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[17] The advertisements featured in this chapter present many possible social and cultural issues regarding gay visual representation that are in need of analysis. It is, however, not of central concern to my study to, for example, discuss manifestations of pederasty (Figure 36) or misogyny and sexual innuendo (Figure 37) in queer advertising images. Instead, the study is inclined towards elements of the advertisements that reveal the ideological underpinnings of the interrelationship between race, male homosexuality and heteronormativity.

the dominant cultural, visual sphere of heterosexualised representation (Nast 2002:895).
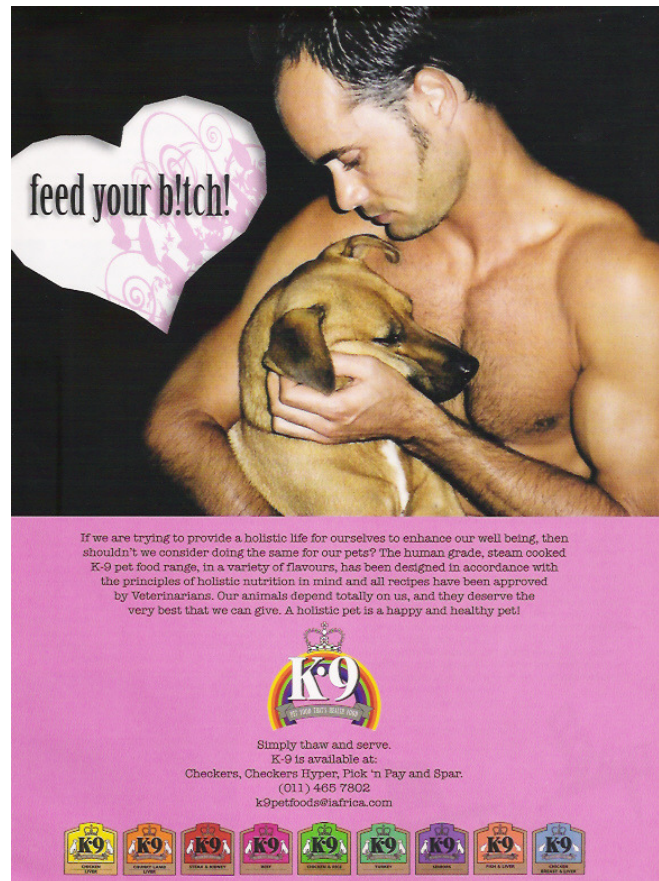

Figure 37: *K9* advertisement, 2007.
(*Gay Pages* Winter:33).

The fact that not a single black man appears in the advertising images discussed throughout this section of the chapter, is not an observation that should be disregarded. Accordingly, Chasin (2000b:48) states that by making salient a single element of gay identity, namely sexual orientation, the heteronormative project of superficially and conditionally including and accepting gay men effectively excludes gay black men from its notions of normative humanity. The following section of this chapter therefore explores the manner in which 'whiteness' functions as a norm across cultural landscapes, such as gay visual culture, and ultimately propagates its ideological notions of normative, ideal homosexual masculinity.

3.4 'Whiteness', 'blackness' and the visual character of *Gay Pages*

With regard to the advertising images discussed in the previous section of the chapter, it must be apparent at this stage that since it is "strewn with White, middle-class, male identities, the gay press [seemingly strives to reduce] differences with heterosexuals" (O'Dougherty 2003:76). It is, however, the endeavour of this segment of the study to explore the ideological workings of 'whiteness', which supposedly predicates the manner in which white men are over-represented in the gay press, and specifically *Gay Pages*, while the inverse is a socio-cultural reality for black male subjects. This investigation of 'whiteness' and 'blackness', as well as its respective ubiquity and absence in *Gay* Pages, aligns itself with Nikki Sullivan's (2003:66) contention that anti-racist theory is especially important with regard to queer studies, because ascribing primacy to sexual orientation serves to reinvigorate the cultural synonymy of white masculinity and homosexuality. In fact, white masculinity is exactly that which the divisions and tensions present in much of queer culture, like the press, is founded upon (Reddy 1998:67, 68), since white patriarchy and racism ultimately exclude black gay men from culturally dominant, media-generated notions of gayness (McBride 1998:363).

Concerning the dominance of white gay masculinity in *Gay Pages*, Benwell (2003:18) states, for example, that the pervasiveness of white gay aesthetics and ideals present in publications such as this "operates to delineate the limits of magazine masculinity, to [reject] its '*other*'; a process of identity work whereby identities are partially defined by that which *they* lack". In other words, by limiting the representation of black men, casting them as less representative of gayness or not representing them at all, gay publications effectively reinscribe white, gay hegemony, which thrives in the near absence of its 'dark other'. What is, however, also significant is that even in the presence of black masculinity, gay white masculinity retains its dominance by assuming or working within the stereotype of the primal, hypersexual, 'less' gay, more animal-like black man (Reddy 1998:68; Mercer 1991:188). In view of this, Han (2007:53) states that with regard to queer visual media, 'black' and 'gay' are positioned as inevitably separate, distinct categories, with black

men mostly appearing as sexual commodities to be consumed by the white, gay gaze.

Because of this, on the rare occasions that black men appear in gay media, it is significant to note that these images are employed to suggest the supposed inferiority of black men, in terms of supposedly embodying 'gayness' to a lesser degree than white men. Black men seemingly possess very little agency with regard to the gay press (Levina et al. 2000:741), since they are often represented more as commodities or abstract visual 'things' (Mercer 1991:186), instead of being legitimated as bona fide gay consumers, similarly to the manner in which white men are. It is, for example, extremely atypical of gay publications to represent black men *as* gay, and finding images depicting black men as a gay couple, in the same manner that white subjects are represented (Figures 35, 36), proves to be a futile project. In other words, it seems that interpreting 'gayness' in visual culture, or recognising an image's queerness, depends on the presence of the supposed epitome of the gay ideal: white homomasculinity.

The image from *Gay Pages* (Figure 38), for example, is seemingly culturally legible as 'gay', because of the fact that the image is not entirely 'black' in orientation or because its queerness is emphasised by the pairing of the image of the black man, which is supposedly non-gay on its own, with the recognisable and normative image of white gayness. Moreover, the irregularity of the image is accented by its total lack of context, since it does not appear as an advertisement or in conjunction with any part of the magazine's editorial content. The image does not feature in the main body of *Gay Pages*, but is relegated to a small section of 'useful contact details', which separates editorial content from the magazine's business directory. In fact, the double-page spread of 'useful contact details' features one other image, which depicts two white lesbians. This illustrates the manner in which *Gay Pages'* ideological union of patriarchy and 'whiteness' excludes women *and* blacks from the cultural construction of ideal, mainstream 'gayness', which manifests in terms of white, male and middle-class normativity

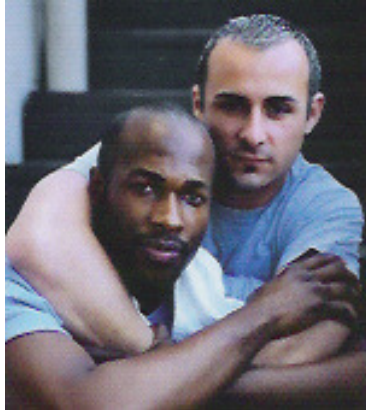throughout the magazine's key sites, such as covers, feature articles and advertising.

Figure 38: 'Whitening' the visual representation of black 'gayness', 2007. (*Gay Pages* Winter:86).

When an image, despite appearing in an expressly gay publication, solely features a black man (Figure 39), it appears that its translation into 'gayness' is far less likely to occur as 'naturally' as with regard to images that solely feature white men or the combination of black and white men. In accordance with this, Dyer (1997:233) states that "even on the rare occasions when [black individuals are represented in a queer media], it is virtually never with the suggestion that they belong to a network or community of other lesbians and gay men of colour and they nearly always have a white lover – the world of homosexuality remains a white one". The advertisements for Daihatsu (Figure 39) and FlexBender (Figure 40) are therefore indicative of the manner in which black men are hardly ever positioned as bona fide gay subjects in queer publications. Instead, they are objectified, disembodied and hypersexualised, but not necessarily queered, in order to sell products to 'real', white homosexual men whose interests are piqued by their presence (Mercer 1991:186; Han 2007:53).

The Daihatsu advertisement (Figure 39) apparently tempts its queer readers with a 'fling'. Yet, with regard to the black man's inviting gaze, one can conceive of the promise of a fleeting, enticing encounter as simultaneously referring to the car and the anonymous black man's perceived hypersexuality. The image appears to offer the black male body for consumption, thereby

reinforcing the notion that black bodies appear in gay visual culture for the pleasure of white, gay men. It is, however, important to note that having a 'fling' is apparently not as estimable as maintaining a long-term relationship: the advertisement reduces the black man to his eroticism, and suggests that a brief sexual encounter is favourable, but insubstantial and superficial.

The image can also be interpreted as invoking the colonial stereotype of black men as 'entertainers' (Hall 1995b:21). The 'frivolous' demeanour of the black man represented in the advertisement, seemingly resonates with the genealogy of colonial images depicting black men as innately amusing and humorous (Pieterse 1992:132). This stereotypical iconology, however, also lends an air of 'triviality' to the image, thereby buttressing the supposed ephemeral qualities of the 'fling' suggested by the advertisement. In other words, the hierarchical dominance of white homomasculinity is reinforced by the advertisement's claim that black men are sexually provocative, but unbefitting of legitimate gay relationships, which *ideally* comprise white partners only (Han 2007:60).

Figure 39: *Daihatsu* advertisement, 2007.
(*Gay Pages* Winter:91).

The FlexBender advertisement (Figure 40) illustrates the manner in which black men in gay visual culture are often posed as 'sexualised sculptures' (Meyer 2001:306), which divest 'blackness' of all its features, save physique, masculinity and sex-appeal. The FlexBender bottle, for example, is purposely positioned as a phallic symbol in relation to the black man's body, thereby eroticising the image and recycling the Western, colonial stereotypes of black men's grotesque genitalia and uncontrollable appetites for sex (Pieterse 1992:175). The advertisement is therefore instrumental in the re-production of colonial ideology in gay visual culture (Auerbach 2002:1, 4). In other words, the image significantly relates to the manner in which black men are frequently hypersexualised and hypermasculinised in gay, white representative practises (Pacteau 1999:101; Han 2007:53).

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With regard to the inverse, colonial images that 'feminise' and emasculate black men, popular black self-representations appear to eschew black male homosexuality in order to 'reclaim' the masculine attributes that black men were denied under colonial rule (hooks 1995a:209). The FlexBender advertisement similarly disconnects 'blackness' from male homosexuality: By situating the black body as 'other' to white homomasculinity in terms of race *and* "the stereotypical hypermasculinisation of black men [that renders] black homosexuality unthinkable", the image perpetuates the naturalness with which 'whiteness' and gayness appear as features that are inextricably linked (Chasin 2000b:88).

In view of this, the image seemingly incites its readers to identify with a dominant, white, gay male subject-position that objectifies and subjugates the black body within the visual politics of 'seeing' (subject) and 'being seen' (object) (Mercer 1991:186). Thus, the image propagates a queer colonial gaze that reaffirms the prerogative of white gay men to commodify and fetishise black male bodies (Han 2007:53), but negates the possibility of black gay men as agents of the 'othering' gaze – since they are always already 'Other' as well. The text that accompanies the advertisement also emphasises the anomalous presence and sexually desirable 'otherness' of this black man who, as a personification of the product, appears *'unexpectedly'*, is *'outrageously different'* and *'doesn't mix in the usual circles'*.

In other words, by presupposing a white spectator, whom the black man is 'Other' to, the advertisement asserts that the pursuit of homoerotic fantasy is an endeavour reserved for gay men who adhere to the model of ideal homomasculinity, which is primarily defined in terms of 'whiteness' (Dyer 1997:233). Moreover, the advertisement illustrates the extent to which black gay men are excluded from *Gay Pages'* 'imagined' and white-centred construction of the gay community (O'Dougherty 2003:75), since a normative, white reader is apparently positioned as the prime target of the image. The segregation of 'blackness' and 'gayness', which is supposedly predicated on black homophobia, heterosexism, machismo and the manifestation of these

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attributes in normative black self-representation (Doy 2000:160, 163), is thus ingrained by the image's apparent denial of black, male homosexual desire.
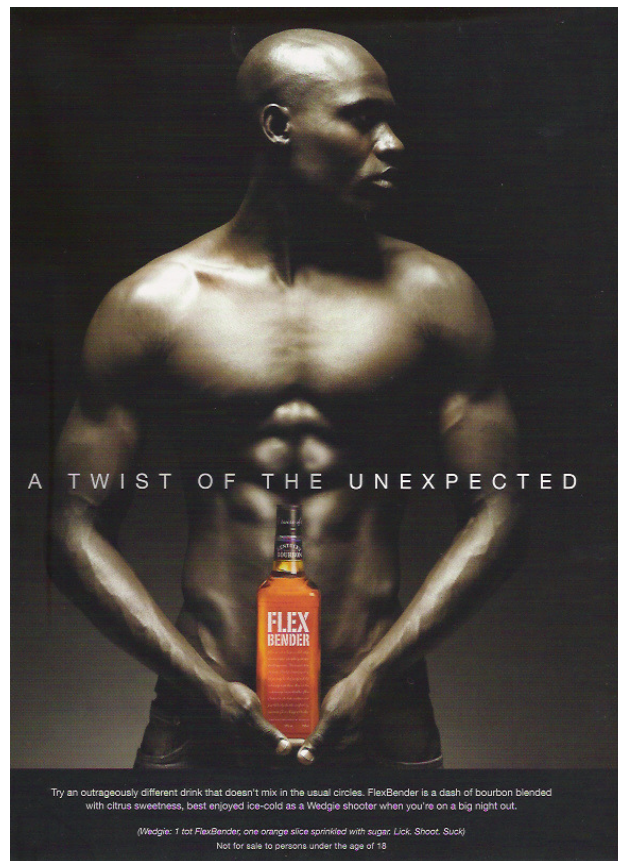

Figure 40: *FlexBender* advertisement, 2008.
(*Gay Pages* Winter:17).

In fact, as early as the 1950s, black men were incorporated in physique magazines, which can be viewed as prototypes of later queer publications, in order to remove these print media from the 'taint' of explicit homoeroticism by lending a degree of 'straightness' to the more sexually ambiguous images of white men (Chasin 2000b:88). There is, however, no legitimate reason to believe that gay culture is actually, physically raced as 'white', since cultures are "social inventions, not biological inevitabilities" (Irvine 1994:243), but the *media* and other forms of *visual culture* constantly reassert the dominance of white men with regard to homosexuality. Whereas black men appear almost anomalously in queer publications like *Gay Pages*, visual representations of white men grace nearly every advertising image, cover and feature article:

> The vast majority of gay … people [therefore] end up with no representation of their lives in [queer] media. Instead we are bombarded by the A-list, white, male, buff, and wealthy stereotype [of 'gayness'] that becomes the image in [society's] mind of the average [and ideal] gay person (Chasin 2000b:239).

This study aligns itself with Levina et al. (2000:740, 741) who attribute the supposed synonymy of 'whiteness' and homosexuality in the mass media, and gay niche press, to the so-called 'spiral of silence' and the process of 'symbolic annihilation'. With regard to the 'spiral of silence', Levina et al. (2000:740) argue that since images of white men in visual culture appear *ubiquitously*, are *complementary* and therefore *accumulate* and constantly repeat themselves, representations of white homomasculinity are perceived as the primary embodiment of gayness (Dyer 1997:219; Keating 1995:905). The seeming reluctance to challenge this dominant viewpoint of homosexuality, as well as the powerlessness and under-representation of black queers, for example, is then assumed as the absence of opposition and the images of exclusive, ideal, white homosexuality continue to manifest (Levina et al. 2000:740). Moreover, for the purposes of this study, it is significant to note that since its inception, *Gay Pages* has to date not featured a black man on its cover, and therefore seemingly perpetually equates 'whiteness' and homosexuality (Figures 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46).
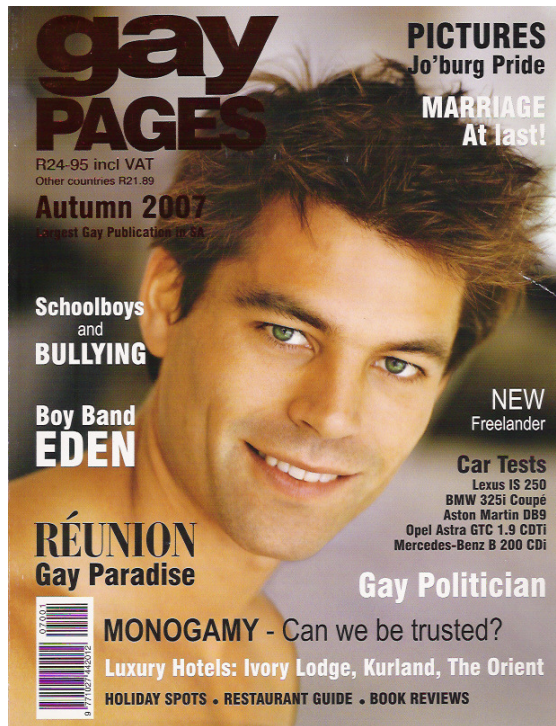
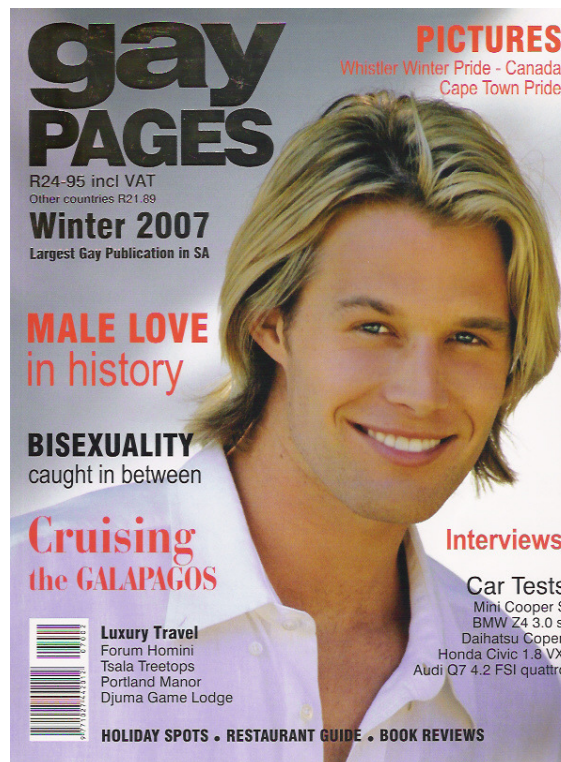Figure 41: Autumn 2007 cover of *Gay Pages*.

Figure 42: Winter 2007 cover of *Gay Pages*.

Figure 43: Spring 2007 cover of *Gay Pages*.

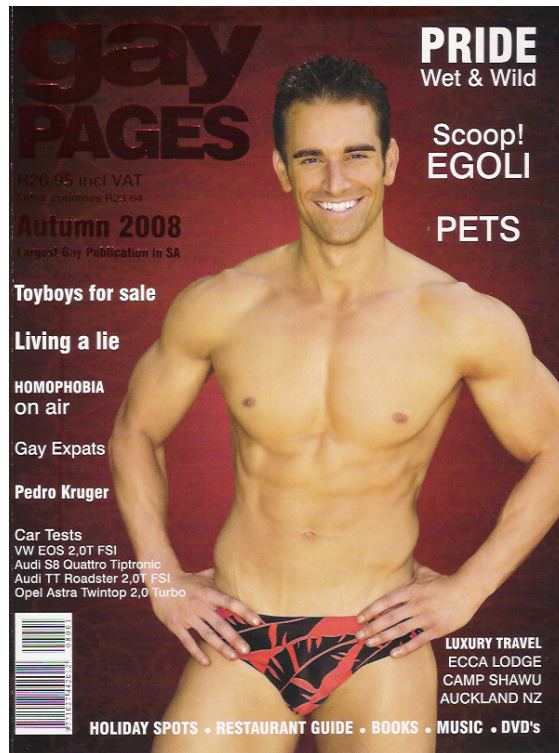Figure 44: Summer 2007 cover of *Gay Pages*.

Figure 45: Autumn 2008 cover of *Gay Pages*

Figure 46: Winter 2008 cover of *Gay Pages*.

As a result, the reiteration of 'whiteness' that appears to manifest on the cover of each issue of *Gay Pages*, past and present, ultimately 'silences' South African black men by refusing them representation, as well as complete participation in gay culture through queer media and consumption. Dyer (1997:148) states that this a phenomenon that should not be neglected when addressing the primacy of 'whiteness' in contemporary Western media cultures, because despite the fact that black men are, however marginally, represented 'inside' gay publications, a magazine's cover still exists as one of its most important features: "a cover fixes an image of the world evoked by a magazine, even for those who don't buy it – the covers [of gay publications therefore] tend to define [queer bodies] as white" (Dyer 1997:148). This relates to Benwell's (2003:17) notion that magazines, gay or 'straight', effectively strive to create a clear, unified, and possibly stereotypical and easily 'digestible' image of the subject position with which it is identified or the audience it is attempting to reach, entice or represent.

Secondly, with regard to what Levina et al. (2000:741) refer to as 'symbolic annihilation', the fixed, stable and cyclical manner in which 'whiteness' appears in gay media ultimately operates in terms of particular power relations. In other words, from an ideological point of view, *Gay Pages*, for example, can be conceived of as attempting to present itself as a medium that reflects social reality, or a segment thereof, namely South African gay culture. It is, however, characteristic of any form of representation to function subjectively (Lacey 1998:143), and the images encountered throughout this magazine do not reveal the cultural identities of gay men in an unprejudiced fashion, but merely highlight and exclusively represent a particular version of gay masculinity, which ultimately hinges on 'whiteness'. By not representing black gay men, *Gay Pages*, and other white-dominated gay visual cultures, maintains the immobilised state within which these marginalised social subjects find themselves in by rendering them 'invisible', unrepresented, and ultimately *annihilated* from the cultural view of homosexuality.

In following Martin Berger's (2005:1) assertion that living in a predominantly *visual* contemporary culture has led to the privileging of 'sight', the

investigation of representations of race has seemingly become progressively important, because these images do not sell us "racial systems we do not already own, [but] the visual field powerfully confirms previously internalised beliefs". One must therefore bear in mind that by negating 'blackness', "'whiteness' has played a central role in maintaining and naturalising a hierarchical social system and a dominant/subordinate worldview" of race (Keating 1995:902). With regard to this study's investigation of the manner in which 'whiteness' hegemonically controls the gay press, it is of great significance to bear in mind that the "point of looking at whiteness is to dislodge it from its centrality and authority, not to reinstate it" (Dyer 1997:10). Thus, the fundamental premise on which the disclosure of 'whiteness' is based, hinges on the need to remove this construct from its position as the norm of humanity; if not, it will continue to manifest 'naturally', dominantly and as the ultimate expression of human civilisation (Low 1996:196; Van der Watt 2005:120, 121).

In other words, the 'spiral of silence' (Levina et al. 2000:740) is indicative of the manner in which 'whiteness' is powerful exactly because one encounters it constantly – "it is everywhere, but nowhere in particular" (Han 2007:52, 53), and therefore simply 'normal', taken for granted and ultimately unchallenged, unless it is exposed as operating, and retaining power, from its supposed 'ordinariness' (Keating 1995:902). In fact, the power of white representation lies in that it "passes itself of as embodied in the normal as opposed to the superior", and therefore seemingly possesses no peculiarities, 'strangeness' or 'otherness'; these are reserved for non-whites (Dyer 2002:127, 129; Van der Watt 2005:120, 121). It is, however, especially significant for the purposes of this exploration of 'whiteness' and the visual language of *Gay Pages*, as a purposive sample of the apparent white-dominated nature of gay visual culture in its entirety, to realise that through a combination of heterosexualisation and 'whitening', images of *white* gay men are ultimately positioned as *normatively* homosexual.

According to Dyer (1997:11, 219), the seamlessness between homosexuality and the visual representation of white men can, in fact, be attributed to the

CHAPTER FOUR
CONCLUSION

4.1 Summary of chapters

The first of the two central chapters of the study, *'Blackness', queerness, masculinity, and representation*, organised itself around several types of visual representation that articulate the intersections of race and male homosexuality in visual culture. At the outset of the chapter, the critique of colonial representations of 'blackness' set the tone for exploring the manner in which the invasion of foreign spaces by Western cultural powers left a series of stereotypical, debasing images of black men in its wake. Before exploring several visual examples that seemingly express the inferior position that black masculinity occupies vis-à-vis white, imperialist manhood, however, colonial ideology was re-articulated in order to illustrate that the patriarchal drive of conquer and exploration sought to dominate not only women, but also Other men (McClintock 1995:14).

In other words, the study explored the dichotomies of West/East, masculine/feminine, culture/nature, time/space, work/play and powerful/weak, which define much of colonial ideology's androcentric and racist cultural agendas, as not only casting women as inferior to white masculinity, but also black men. The study suggested that the subjugation of black men under colonial rule resulted from the processes, such as visual representation, by which black masculinity was undermined by equating it with normative femininity, as it appears in the vocabulary of patriarchy. Physical similarities were imagined as existing between black men and the female sex, for example, but the feminisation, and subsequent emasculation of black men, was just as effectively based on the colonial sentiment that black men possessed faculties traditionally associated with 'the feminine' (Pacteau 1999:89, 90).

A number of images, such as 'the entertainer', 'the servant' and 'the child',

which illustrate the manner in which black men are subjected to stereotypical, unequivocally inferior positions in colonial representations of 'blackness', were conceived of in this chapter as hinging on effectively removing black men from hegemonic notions of masculinity by feminising them. The representation of the black, male 'entertainer', for example, functions to fuse black masculinity and femininity, owing to the fact that performance and spectacle are fixed as qualities primarily associated with women in patriarchal, colonial ideology. The processes of 'Othering', by which white, colonial masculinity constantly seeks to assert its supremacy by defining its antitheses (women and blacks) as somehow 'lacking', were investigated in this chapter as visually and psychologically castrating black men (Pieterse 1992:128). Colonial representations of 'blackness' simultaneously curbed the supposed 'threat' of black hypersexuality *and* hierarchically positioned black masculinity as inferior in comparison with white masculinity.

The second repertoire of images discussed in this chapter were what I have termed gay 'colonial' representations. These visual representations were explored as a means of delineating the manner in which the apparent cultural synonymy of male homosexuality and 'whiteness', which marginalises *black* gay men, is buttressed by the re-appropriation of traditional images of frontier masculinity in a gay vernacular. The image of the queer cowboy, which seemingly pervades popular gay visual culture, was analysed as somehow re-writing or 'queering' the colonial narrative of romantic, male, possibly homoerotic, camaraderie. The critique of the images, however, was concerned with challenging the possibly racist undertones that cast blacks as hopelessly distant from the ideals of desirable and admirable homomasculine beauty as manifest in the images of gay frontiersmanship (Clarkson 2006:205).

Chapter Two also investigated a selected number of images, including the works of Delmas Howe, Tom of Finland and Robert Mapplethorpe, in order to illuminate the way in which gay aesthetic sensibilities seemingly position white, 'straight-acting, straight-looking' gay men as the ultimate expression of

normative homomasculinity. The conditional and rare appearance of black gay men in gay visual culture was therefore explored with regard to the re-articulation of the coloniser/colonised dichotomy in gay 'colonial' representations, which appears to propel the marginalisation and subjugation of 'blackness' in terms of its total absence, fetishisation or apparent hierarchical inferiority to 'whiteness' (Mercer 1991:187). Furthermore, the race-biased nature of representing the ideal male body in Western art, and the respective feminisation and hypersexualisation of gay Asian men and gay black men in gay visual culture were also critiqued in light of the queer construction of white homomasculine bodies as supposedly 'perfect'.

With regard to black self-representation, the study engaged with the notion that contemporary visual images of normative black manhood seemingly centre on machismo, which manifests in the detached, tough 'coolness' that characterises a number of black male bodies in popular culture (hooks 1995a:209). This section of the chapter discussed the possible reasons as to why the black male body appears in such a form, but simultaneously set out to critique such constructions of black masculinity as essentialist and ultimately damaging to the identities of black gay men. Thus, the explicit 'manliness' that emanates from the images of black male rappers and athletes, for example, was situated in this study as the result of black masculinity being in the process of reclaiming its 'dignity', which was and still is seemingly negated in the structures of white cultural hegemony.

In other words, the processes of castration, emasculation and feminisation, which define many of the images comprising colonial representations of 'blackness', along with the notion of homosexuality as 'un-African', have seemingly created the contemporary phenomena of 'Cool Poses' (Saint-Aubin 1994:1057), which construct black male bodies as unequivocally masculine *and* heterosexual. In view of this, the study's critique of normative black self-representation therefore dealt with the manner in which the dominance of such 'cool' images seemingly restrict the creation and affirmation of 'alternative' black male identities, especially black male 'gayness'. The fact

that many contemporary images that represent hegemonic black masculinity adhere to the ideals of heteropatriarchy, effectively excludes black gay men from the concept of essential male 'blackness'.

The critiques pertaining to colonial representations of 'blackness', gay 'colonial' representations and black self-representation, discussed throughout Chapter Two, all address the main premise of this dissertation, which hinges on the notion that black gay men seemingly face exclusion, marginalisation and hostility in black *and* gay visual cultures. Gay black self-representation was therefore discussed in this chapter as a means of illustrating that the stifling, exclusive categories of both hegemonic 'blackness' and 'gayness' are sometimes disputed and reshaped in particular images (Doy 2000:181). Artworks by Nicholas Hlobo, Rotimi Fani-Kayodé and Lyle Ashton Harris were briefly discussed in the final section of the chapter in order to reveal that some forms of self-representation seemingly aim to fuse black and homosexual identities, thereby refuting that they are somehow contradictory and impossibly distant from one another.

The second major chapter of this dissertation, *Markets, media, and the gay press: the marginalisation of black queer men in contemporary gay visual cultures*, explored the social, political and cultural relationships that seemingly exist between the ideology of consumerism, the gay niche market and the gay press. Yet, the chapter did not lose sight of the main critical vein that flows throughout the dissertation, and therefore investigated the manner in which classist and racist prejudices appear to impact on market-based gay identity construction, group affiliation and visual representation. Initially, the chapter engaged with the postmodern theory that the processes of creating and negotiating identity primarily occur in and through visual media and patterns of consumption (Kellner 1995:231, 233). The study aligns itself with the notion that contemporary 'gayness' manifests primarily in a commodified form that connects gay male subjectivities to particular commodities, fashions and other expressions of 'lifestyle'.

'Belonging' to the gay community and displaying one's queer citizenship and benefiting from gay media, markets and visual representation are seemingly placed on a continuum with one's ability to consume the social signifiers of 'gayness' (Altman 1996:80). This chapter's critique of the conflation of consumption and gay identity   dealt with the repercussions of having a singular, exclusive image of 'the gay consumer', who is ideally white, male and middle-class, propagated at the expense of other race and class inflected constituencies of the gay community. In other words, the critique concerned itself with the vexing issue of black gay men apparently existing outside of the perimeters of acceptable, tolerated and commercial forms of male homosexuality, which pervade media and marketing, but only represent and show interest in a particularised fraction of gay men.

With regard to its investigation of the rise of the gay niche market, this study critiqued the commodification of queer culture as somehow fostering a dual cultural homogeneity. Firstly, the internal differences of the gay male community, specifically race, ethnicity and social class, are apparently negated by the ubiquity of the image of the white and middle-class, 'model' gay consumer. The distances between queer and 'straight' are, however, simultaneously diminished, owing to the fact that this notion of the 'good homosexual' seemingly aligns itself with the social, economic and cultural ideals of heteronormativity (Battles & Hilton-Morrow 2002:89). Furthermore, the manner in which media and markets target, represent and ultimately assimilate certain gay men, was exposed as not necessarily reflecting that contemporary society is somehow more tolerant of queer culture, but that gay men are positioned more as 'ideal consumers' than bona fide social subjects deserving of equality.

Following the investigation of the gay niche market, the study turned its attention to the gay press and subsequently offered several critiques regarding the manner in which gay print media are managed. The shift in control over the gay press, from state repression to market-based economies, was situated in this chapter as explicitly excluding black and economically

disadvantaged gay men from queer media. Moreover, the study argued that this can be attributed to the notion that gay media constantly seek to appease market forces by representing white, affluent queers who apparently 'fit' the type of male homosexuality that advertisers and other, conditionally homophobic, capitalist role-players approve of. The depoliticised and desexualised character of contemporary gay media thus appears to reflect the mechanisms by which the gay press propagate a non-threatening 'version' of gay masculinity that does not present an affront to the hegemony of heteronormativity (Bowes 1996:222).

This section of the chapter also dealt with the notion that since its inception, the gay press has always organised itself around the ideological and cultural interests of white gay men, which is seemingly most evident with regard to the fact that popular gay media, such as *Gay Pages*, are almost exclusively run by white editorial boards. Contemporary gay print media appear to continually reassert the cultural and economic dominance of 'whiteness' in queer culture, and thereby restrict the number of possible gay masculinities that manifest in gay visual culture. The gay press was critiqued in this study as fostering an 'imaginary' gay community that does not accurately reflect the various races, classes and ethnicities of gay men (O'Dougherty 2000:75), but rather the bourgeois, white ideals that are appealing to the market and tolerated by heteronormativity.

For the purposes of the study, it was, however, also significant to explore the manner in which the image of white and affluent, normative male homosexuality manifests in gay visual culture. The third section of Chapter Three isolated a selected number of advertising images, aimed at depicting and ultimately stereotyping gay men, which appear prominently in the South African gay men's lifestyle magazine *Gay Pages*. As a vantage point, the study discussed the ideological workings of advertising, and therefore emphasised the importance of taking into account that publicity images are not neutral and objective depictions of social reality, but operate to sustain cultural hegemonies, such as the prominence of white homomasculinity in

queer culture (Schroeder & Zwick 2004:24; Cover 2004:83).

Gay advertising images were conceived of as being ideologically conditioned into almost exclusively representing white men, thereby situating white homomasculinity as the most culturally recognisable, stereotypical form of contemporary, commercial 'gayness'. The unique critical issue that queer advertising presents, in comparison with 'mainstream' publicity, was identified in the study as pertaining to the fact that by making *sexuality* the most prominent signifier of essential 'gayness', gay advertising images neglect to address or represent differently *raced* gay men. Yet, the study also illustrated that at the anomalous times that black men are represented, they are frequently fixed in colonialist stereotypes of 'Otherness', exoticism and hypersexualisation. The overrepresentation of white men in gay advertising images was critiqued in this study as offering stereotypical subject positions of 'gayness' to the queer community that ultimately exclude black gay men from *dominant* cultural forms of male homosexuality, thereby negatively impacting on their construction and negotiation of sexual identity (Chung 2007:101).

Moreover, the study critiqued the manner in which heteronormativity seemingly impacts on the construction of gay advertising images, and therefore explored the notion that some visual cultural expressions of 'gayness' resonate with heterosexual ideals, norms and identity-positions. Advertising images representing the so-called 'gay family' (Chasin 2000b:47), which reiterates the heteronormative ideals of wholesomeness, monogamy, 'whiteness', health and wealth, for example, were investigated in order to argue that the majority of contemporary images depicting gay masculinity have seemingly failed to challenge heterosexual hegemony. Furthermore, the study concluded that the project of heteronormativity is conditionally homophobic and exclusively assimilates particular, evidently white and middle-class, gay men, thereby further removing black gay men from possible participation and representation in the commercial gay community.

Operating *within* heteronormativity instead of transgressing its borders, has

seemingly lead to the so-called 'heterosexualisation' of queer culture – a process that has effectively cast gay black men as too extremely 'Other' to be incorporated by mainstream, media-generated definitions and visual representations of male 'gayness' (Puar 2006:67). The final section of Chapter Three dealt with the ideological power with which 'whiteness' continually asserts itself as the norm or absolute ideal of humanity by means of its ubiquity and supposedly uncontested 'naturality' (Van der Watt 2005:120, 121). With *Gay Pages* serving as a purposive sample, the intersections of race, gay masculinity and gay visual culture were thus explored in order to disclose the hegemony of 'whiteness' as seemingly pervading mainstream and queer cultures alike.

The study attributed the cultural synonymy of white men and 'gayness' to the various processes, such as 'the spiral of silence' and 'symbolic annihilation' (Levina et al. 2000:740, 741) by which 'whiteness' subsumes normative homosexuality, thereby further empowering itself, while simultaneously excluding black gay men from cultural constructions of ideal gay masculinity (Dyer 1997:11, 219). The purpose of exploring this notion was to critique 'whiteness' as infiltrating gay visual culture to such an extent that it has, as elsewhere in culture, become undetectable by means of perpetually manifesting as 'normal' or, at least, 'normally' queer. Ultimately, I concluded that black gay men are subjected to a dual process of 'othering' that marginalises them on queer terms, with regard to race, *and* heteronormative terms, with regard to sexual orientation.

4.2 Contribution of study

The contribution of the study is based in its establishing of South African visual culture within a broader set of subjects, areas and approaches of study. Throughout the research conducted for the dissertation, local studies of gay black masculinity in visual culture appeared to be exceedingly limited. The study has therefore aided the expansion of South African queer theory, media studies and visual studies, in terms of lending a local perspective to the

apparent crisis of race-biased representation in gay visual culture.

I also developed definitions and critiques of the so-called 'other' Other in queer culture, coined gay 'colonial' representations and provided a detailed account of the manner in which gay *and* black stereotypes are fostered in cultures past and present. Ultimately, the study offered several significant critiques of gay visual culture and explored the manner in which stereotypical 'imaginings' of black men, and gay black men, impact on the construction, dissemination and ideological bases of visual representations of contemporary gay masculinity.

4.3 Limitations of study

Despite its various academic contributions, the study is, however, also somewhat limited, owing to the fact that its scope cannot adequately account for every queer identity that appears in the many visual cultures that pervade contemporary Western cultures. Moreover, the study focused on *only six* issues of *Gay Pages*, published over a period of two years, thereby employing these editions of the magazine as purposely selected examples that seemingly demonstrate the study's assumption that black men are marginalised in gay visual cultures.

It is important to bear in mind that a multiplicity of subjectivities constitute society's queer constituency, and although this study isolated gay men, it by no means assumes that they are the sole purveyors of cultures that are seemingly at odds with heteronormativity. In other words, by narrowing its focus to gay masculinity, the study has effectively excluded investigations of the manner in which black lesbian, transsexual and bisexual identities are performed, negotiated and distorted in contemporary gay visual media: I suspect that similar, yet distinct, media such as *Gay Pages* exist, which may articulate unique sexist, racist and classist impediments that face queer constituencies that do not identify as merely homosexual, masculine or 'black'.

4.4 Suggestions for further research

Based on the research conducted with regard to *Invisible queers: investigating the 'other' Other in gay visual cultures*, a number of complementary studies can be carried out, whether in terms of different visual cultures, theoretical discourses or queer identities. In light of the limitations of the study, an investigation of media pertaining to contemporary representations of lesbian identities will seemingly provide some perspective on the manner in which normative femininity, 'blackness' and female homosexuality intersect in visual culture. Yet, such an academic endeavour somehow also predicates that feminist discourses and critiques on the supposed exclusivity of queer culture will play a more significant role that it has in this study.

Shifting the focus of one's research from gay print media to virtual culture, for example, may supplement the critique of the 'invisibility' of black queers in gay visual cultures by investigating the manner in which homomasculinity, or femininity, manifests on the World Wide Web. Moreover, studies that compare *Gay Pages* with international publications such as *Attitude* and *The Advocate*, may be instrumental in articulating, or refuting, the manner in which Western queer visual cultures seemingly represent an ideal of white male 'gayness'. The significance of exploring South African gay visual culture cannot be underestimated, since studies explicitly dealing with queer issues in the local visual sphere are exceedingly limited and appear to be in need of greater and more dedicated scholarly attention. This study has played a role in fortifying the limited body of academic research focused on queer visual culture in South Africa, but will inevitably benefit from similar, if not more extensive, research endeavours.

notion that in some instances, 'whiteness' seemingly lends its normality to 'queerness':

> Whiteness generally colonises the stereotypical definition of all social categories other than those of race [since 'white' is simply positioned as 'human'; or, as the embodiment of 'humanness' against which the 'real' races are measured] … To be normal, even to be *normally deviant* [gay, for example], is to be white … [Therefore,] homosexuality remains obstinately white in popular representations, partly because … whiteness colonises even the representation of *ordinary deviance* [emphasis added].

Therefore, it appears that black gay men are twice removed from the 'standard of humanity', since they are ultimately marked, or identifiable, as 'black' *and* 'gay'. Alternatively, white gay men are 'invisible' with regard to race, owing to the fact that 'whiteness' "draws its ideological power from its proclaimed transparency, from its self-elevation over the very category of 'race'" (Low 1996:196). 'Whiteness' is effectively positioned as an element that does not require any form of scrutiny, because historically, and contemporarily, 'white' has accrued a variety of meanings and ideological motivations that have positioned it as customary and in accord with dominant cultural strains of normativity.[18] The combination of 'whiteness' and 'queerness' may suggest deviance with regard to white heterosexuality at a single level, namely homosexuality, but in terms of normative gayness, there are seemingly no incongruities. Black gay men are, however, 'lacking' with regard to normative heterosexuality, as well as normative homosexuality: with regard to the former, their 'gayness' exists as an impediment, whereas the latter leaves very little space for the affirmation of 'blackness'.

This study's view that black gay men exist as other 'Others' within gay visual cultures is predicated on the notion that these social subjects are not *only*

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[18] Since classical antiquity, for example, 'whiteness' has epitomised the ideal of humanity, especially in terms of beauty and aesthetics (Mercer 1991:192). Similarly, the colonial era, and the power that white Europeans exercised over 'others', can be conceived of as the context in which 'whiteness' initially positioned itself at the apex of civilisation by defining the social world from a white, racially prejudiced perspective (Pieterse 1992:9). It is, however, through colonial ideology, as well as Western discourses on 'beauty', that 'whiteness' has become akin to 'light', 'divinity', 'goodness' and 'normality', while 'blackness' ultimately manifests in terms of 'darkness', 'heresy', 'badness', 'otherness' and 'deviance' (Dyer 2002:127).

excluded from or 'other' to the larger cultural hegemony of heteronormativity (in terms of *'gayness'*), but are also subject to exclusion from gay cultures, which cast them as 'other' in terms of *'blackness'*. The gay, African-American writer Joseph Beam states that "it is possible to read [a gay magazine] … and never encounter in words or images Black gay men … [Black gay men] ain't family. Very clearly, gay male means: white, middle-class … and probably butch, there is no room for Black gay men within the confines of this gay pentagon" (quoted in Han 2007:55). Therefore, the many critiques of the gay niche market, the gay press, and specifically *Gay Pages*, which have permeated this chapter, were employed in order to address the vexing issue of the marginalisation of black queers within and beyond gay visual cultures.

The commodification of gay culture, and the economic and racial divides within this constituency, was discussed in order to reveal the manner in which the gay press, its advertisers, editors and images seemingly create the cultural stereotype of white, affluent homosexuality. Furthermore, visual representations of the so-called 'good homosexual' (Smith 1994:64) were discussed with regard to a selected number of advertising images and covers of *Gay Pages* that seemingly not only heterosexualise and stereotype gay men, but also propagate the cultural assumption that 'whiteness' is akin to 'gayness'. The final chapter of the dissertation provides comprehensive summaries of the preceding chapters, highlights the contributions, as well as limitations, of the study, and suggests topics for further research.

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