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This article discusses the ways in which racialised femininities are differently presented as hyper(hetero)sexual in three South African magazines targeting female readers – Femina, Fair Lady and True Love – between 2003 and 2006. I argue that the bodily work women are expected to perform is determined by constructs of race, where women are advised to regulate and control their physical bodies as a means of maintaining (hetero)sexual desirability or becoming (hetero)sexually desirable. I discuss how the racist portrayal of black womanhood in magazine advertisements that target white female readers of Femina and Fair Lady are sexualised in ways that define the black female body as alluring and exotic. My discussion reveals that the privileging of white heterofemininity in all three magazines as normative and ideal, simultaneously defines black women as the embodiment of a racialised (hetero)sexuality – at times mediated by essentialist ideas of Africa – which echoes racist colonial discourse and defines black women as essentially different.

Keywords: femininities; hypersexuality; race; South African women’s magazines

This article explores the ways in which femininities, mediated by race, (hetero)sexuality, and ideas of Africa, are represented in three contemporary South African women’s magazines – Fair Lady, Femina and True Love. I specifically explore advertisements, even though I do refer to some editorial content in the magazines where necessary. The central facet of the argument in this article is that there are racial differences in the ways that femininities are hyper(hetero)sexualised in the magazine contents. In keeping with the overwhelming heteronormative tone of the magazines, heterosexuality is mostly unnamed but set up as natural and ideal. In a different article, I explain that the term ‘hypersexual’ serves as a description of representations of both black and white female sexuality (Sanger 2008b). However, it is black bodies (mostly female, in magazines with large numbers of white female readers) which are more exposed and set up as alluringly excessive and abundant in ways that white female bodies are not. Within a normative heteropatriarchal system, the inclusion of the term ‘hetero’ within ‘hyper(hetero)sexual’ ‘attempts to visibilise and draw attention to the ways that representations of women as hypersexual are not neutral, but deliberately positioned as such for an audience’ – often ‘a male audience who is unnamed, but central, in defining female sexuality, or a white female audience.

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which consumes the black female body in ways that reinforce and maintain patriarchy’ (Sanger 2008b, p. 277).

The first part of the article reflects on the racialised ways in which particular parts of the feminine body are consistently located as in need of policing, regulation and ‘fixing’ to conform to a specific but unnamed and unmarked norm. For black women, this norm appears to be white heteronormativity. I argue that through racist discourses, women are advised to perform hyper(hetero)femininity in ways maintaining, reinforcing and reconstructing heteropatriarchy which operates as mostly unchallenged in South Africa’s democracy.

The second part of the article discusses how ideas of black femininity, hyper(hetero)sexuality and essentialist constructions of Africa attempt to depict an ostensible divergence from the colonial, racist and patriarchal past in terms of women’s sexual rights and bodily integrity, but in fact confirm and reinforce racist heteropatriarchy. These representations are produced in Fair Lady, Femina and True Love magazines as the new norm in ‘democratic’ South Africa, constraining the potential ways in which young black women (and men) can construct their subjectivities.

Most international literature on women in the media has been documented by white feminists, writing about representations of white femininities. In many ways, this body of feminist work tends to help normalise whiteness – and the notion of white femininities as the ideal representation of beauty – by rarely exploring the racialised and (hetero)sexualised construction of black femininities. This article attempts to contribute to the debates around (hetero)sexualised representations of black women in popular South African magazines. I explore how a few recent advertisements in Fair Lady, Femina and True Love magazines produce racist and sexist scripts which reinforce heteropatriarchy within a ‘new’ South Africa, premised on ideas of ‘freedom’ and ‘equality’. Notwithstanding what might be considered more blatantly racist and hyper(hetero)sexualised representations of women in popular culture – such as R&B music videos or ‘gangster rap’ – my interest in this article is to draw attention to the ways that magazines conceal and naturalise racist hyper(hetero)sexual symbols. As McRobbie (1999, p. 48) argues, it is precisely the work of magazines to ‘naturalise and universalize meanings and values which are in fact socially constructed’ (my emphasis).

The framework for this article is informed by the work of Harding and Norberg (2005, p. 2009) who see the study of influential institutions, such as the media, best framed within a feminist methodology able to ‘identify the conceptual practices of power and how they shape daily social relations’. The authors insist that it is important to understand:

how our lives are governed not primarily by individuals but more powerfully by institutions, conceptual schemes, and their ‘texts’, which are seemingly far removed from our everyday lives, [but are] crucial for designing effective projects of social transformation.
(Harding and Norberg 2005, p. 2009)

This article takes the view that magazines operate as influential agents of socialisation, privileging and normalising particular types of discourses about gender, sexuality and race. Allen (2003, pp. 217–218) argues, for instance, that a particular version of heterosexuality – the active male and passive female dichotomy – has been ‘deeply embedded within’ and ‘historically shaped by’ media discourses. In South African magazines, such as Femina, Fair Lady and True Love, the particular types of discourses about race, gender and sexuality, continue to privilege white heteropatriarchy, as I discuss in this article.
The period 2003–2006 was chosen as a significant period of time to explore the magazines because of my focus on representations after the legal dismantling of apartheid. This period also highlights the contemporary context in which I wish to locate my exploration of the magazines. My choice of *Fair Lady*, *Femina* and *True Love* is based on the racial background of the large numbers of female readers of these magazines between 2003 and 2007, even though my analysis ends at 2006. As recently as 2007, All Media Products Survey (AMPS) statistics reveal that black Africans constituted 92% of *True Love*’s total readership, while *Femina*’s readers appeared to be a bit more diverse – in 2007, white readers constituted 48%, with black African readers following at 29%. For *Fair Lady*, the statistics for 2007 are even more interesting, with 75% of the total number of readers being black (which includes 50% black African, 18% ‘coloured’ and 5% Indian) and only 27% white. I also refer to *Blink*, a magazine which ceased publication after 2006, and which targeted black African men, although this magazine is not the focus of my article. If the 2007 AMPS statistics are used, it is quite shocking, considering the dominant black readership (75%) for *Fair Lady* magazine in 2007 (with 71% of the total number of readers being women), and the large 29% black readership for *Femina* (with 86% of the total number of readers being women), to note how rarely black people are represented in these magazines as well as the ways in which they are represented.

In particular, it is the advertising content in *Fair Lady*, *Femina* and *True Love* magazines that most clearly reflects South Africa’s recent racialised apartheid history. Mostly white models or celebrities from the West are used in *Fair Lady* and *Femina*, while mostly black African local models and celebrities are used in *True Love*. Despite these differences in the racialised profiles of models, all three magazines present ideal (hetero)femininities in mostly very particular and limiting ways: female models are slim, with long, straight or straightened hair. In *True Love*, female models seem to be a fairer shade of black – that is, as documented by Mama (1995), Patton (2006) and Tate (2007), lighter-skinned black women are often presented as preferred presentations of feminine beauty. Across the magazines, there are instances where darker-skinned, darker-haired and sometimes physically bigger models are featured, but this is the exception rather than the norm.

### The female body as battleground: embodied race and (hetero)sexuality

In the mid-1970s in Britain, feminists argued that glossy women’s magazines exemplified oppression by convincing women of their bodily inadequacies and drawing them into consumerism through promises that bodily satisfaction and healthy self-esteem could be bought (McRobbie 1999). In 1996, Jackson added that these magazine ideologies are sexist, promoting heterosexuality as normative through pressurising women to buy particular products as a means of being desirable to men (cited in McRobbie 1999). In 2002, Wesely pointed out that ‘women learn that they are valued for their (hetero)sexual bodies, but even as they devote energies to perfecting them, the ideal remains largely unattainable’ (p. 1183). The notion of regulating, policing and perfecting the female body remains relevant in women’s magazines where specific body parts are chosen as sites in need of work across the South African versions of *Fair Lady*, *Femina* and *True Love*. This work, however, is racialised, with white women being advised, through discourses of science, to look youthful, and black women, through racist discourses, being told that they need even more excessive work to tame and discipline their unappealing hair. The latter ‘work’ for black women, it
appears, is central to the imperative of conforming to ideals of white heterofemininity in order to remain or become desirable within a heteronormative society. It is this racialised and (hetero)sexualised ‘work’ that appears to contradict the ostensible commitment to women’s sexual and bodily freedoms espoused within the current ‘democratic’ context in South Africa.

Youthful-looking white women and tight vaginas

Feminist analysts have, over decades, documented how whiteness functions as the unmarked, uncritiqued norm (see Hermes 1995, Erasmus 2000, Helcké 2002, Patton 2006). Many feminist theorists – both internationally and locally – have recognised the role of youth in media constructions of beauty for women (see, e.g., Ahmad 1995, Dines and Humez 1995, Macdonald 1995, Overland 2002). The argument that these theorists pose is that, together with thinness, in order to be considered socially desirable, women also have to be, or look, young. My findings suggest that the significance of preserving and maintaining a youthful appearance seems to be a Western construct, limited to white women. In *Fair Lady* and *Femina*, advertisements instruct white women that (hetero)sexual desirability is synonymous with youthfulness and that it is white women’s task to manage and mask the inevitable signs of ageing. The pages of *Femina* and *Fair Lady* are littered with advertisements presenting biological ageing as (hetero)sexually undesirable. The language used is often synonymous with battle – strong terms such as ‘defending’ and ‘fighting’ help construct the natural ageing process as repulsive, to be almost violently eliminated through skincare products. But appearing youthful does not appear to be a requirement for men in magazines such as *Men’s Health*, *Blink* and *FHM*, or for black women in *True Love* magazine (Sanger 2008a). In terms of men’s magazines, which I discuss elsewhere, ideal black and white (hetero)masculinities are valued in terms of (hetero)sexual prowess, abilities and successful careers. This pressure for white women to portray youth, as noted by Jackson in 1996 (cited in McRobbie 1999), serves to locate them as worthy of competing within the heterosexual market; advertisers suggest that if women want to remain marketable within the heterosexual matrix, they must look youthful.

One example of how white women are advised to remain youthful is through a focus on biological changes such as facial skin texture, changes which the advertisers construct as deeply problematic, but fixable through the consumption of various beauty products. Employing metaphors of battle and the authority of science, accompanied by images of white international models/celebrities whose apparently ‘youthful’, unwrinkled and unlined faces serve to attest to the fight won against ageing, one advert is scripted thus: ‘Science confirms – the skin-care tablets that minimize any lines you have now, as well as defending against new signs of ageing’ (*Fair Lady*, December 2004, p. 157). Youthfulness is consistently presented as (hetero)sexually desirable through the many pseudo-scientific discourses authoritatively claiming to help women achieve eternal youth in the pages of *Fair Lady* and *Femina*: ‘Anti-wrinkle effectiveness within 15 days: 77%’ (*Fair Lady*, March 2005, p. 5); ‘the ageless future. Perfectionist correcting serum for lines/wrinkles’ (*Fair Lady*, September 2004, p. 1); or ‘Age redefining treatment lifting – firming – anti-wrinkle: Skin is as if redefined as if from within [sic]. Facial contours are more defined: 72%, skin is firmer: 80%, skin is tighter as if lifted: 80%’ (*Femina*, May 2005, p. 9).

These pseudo-scientific discourses promise youthfulness and claim to ‘reduce’ signs of ageing such as wrinkles and lines: ‘In the fight against time, never slack off’
‘Fight the 3 major signs of ageing – 1. wrinkles; 2. uneven skin texture; 3. dull tone’ (Fair Lady, May 2003, p. 71); and ‘Now you can change the destiny of your skin … Future Perfect Anti-Wrinkle Radiance Moisturisers – helps re-ignite skin’s natural age-fighting ability … the look of lines and wrinkles is significantly reduced’ (Fair Lady, March 2005, p. 1). Other adverts even promise to provide an alternative to more dramatic measures of defying ageing such as surgery (which the advert mentions lightly, as if surgery is an appropriate possibility for some in the quest for youth): ‘Let surgery wait! The 1st 24/7 anti-creasing programme with BOSWEOX™ to visibly correct wrinkles’ (Fair Lady, December 2004, back-page advertisement); or ‘Dramatic skin improvement need not require drastic measures: If you’re thinking of a chemical peel, laser surgery or Botox® (and even if you’re not), we think you should know about this new approach’ (Femina, November 2005, p. 39).

While it is advertising content that plays a primary and powerful role in producing and reinforcing particular ideas of desirable (hetero)femininities, an editorial feature in Femina magazine links the imperative for youthfulness in white women to the notion of the ideal woman as ‘childlike and virginal, with an unused vagina’ (Braun and Kitzinger 2001, p. 272). Similar to the ways that women’s various body parts are targeted as problematic but fixable, so the idea of the ‘problematic vagina’, as perfectible, and therefore ‘a site for beautification and normalisation’ (Braun and Kitzinger 2001, p. 264) has been espoused by Femina magazine. An article titled ‘Designer vagina’ in the February 2006 edition of the magazine discusses the various surgical options for women wanting to change the appearance, or tighten the muscles of, their vaginas. Two options, called labiaplasty, for cosmetic alteration, and vaginoplasty, which the article states, is performed for ‘sexual’ reasons, is what I will discuss here. Labiaplasty involves the ‘trimming’ of either the minor or major labia. The rationale behind this surgery, the article notes through reference to a male plastic and reconstructive surgeon, is ‘revealing gym clothes’, modern women being ‘upfront about their sexuality’; ‘irritation during exercise’; discomfort when ‘wearing tight jeans’, or, lastly, ‘pressure from a partner’ (February 2006, p. 66). The procedure can be performed through laser surgery or with a scalpel, the latter which, the article describes, doctors prefer because ‘only a scalpel can give you the more natural, less-even effect’ (February 2006, p. 66).

The cultural imperative of the ‘tight vagina’ has been discussed by feminist analysts in the West as well as those in the South. These analysts have linked the ideal of the ‘tight’ vagina to the control and regulation of women’s sexuality (Brown et al. 1993, Braun and Kitzinger 2001). The February 2006 edition of Femina magazine defines vaginoplasty, the tightening of the vagina, as ‘a common procedure’ to fix ‘loose, weak vaginal muscles’ (2006, p. 66). It is claimed in the article, again with reference to a male plastic and reconstructive surgeon, that vaginoplasty ‘which can be carried out at the same time as labiaplasty, tones vaginal muscle, giving a woman greater contraction strength and control – and more sensation during sex’ (2006, p. 66). Post-procedure risks include infection, painful intercourse, overtightening of the vagina, or a loss of sensation if badly scarred. Except for noting that ‘some women have discovered they are not happy with what nature has provided’ (2006, p. 66), the article makes no reference to the cultural imperative for ‘tight’ vaginas, and how this is linked to the patriarchal control and regulation of women’s sexuality. Instead, it is cited that the decision by women to have a neater or tighter vagina is a purely personal choice, separate from the socio-cultural context often defined by normative patriarchal discourses on women’s bodies and sexuality. The article also chooses not to see the parallels of these ‘voluntary genital mutilations’ (Braun and Kitzinger 2001, pp. 265–266) with the
violent practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) or female circumcision, most of which happens in Africa. FGM includes the cutting off of the clitoris, the labia minora, and/or stitching together the two sides of the vulva, ‘leaving only a small opening for the passing of urine or menstrual blood of the vagina’ (Motsei 2007, p. 44). There is no indication in the article that the violent practice of FGM for girls and women is common in Africa, or that, as Braun and Kitzinger (2001, p. 273) found in relation to their interviews about vaginal size with women in the USA, ‘heterosexual women’s bodies are defined in relation to heterosexual male pleasure, rather than their own pleasure’. In other words, the ideal of the ‘tight’ vagina for heterosexual women is relative to the ideal of the ‘big’ penis for heterosexual men in heterosex, which also has a racialised history (see Without walls: I want your sex, 1991). There is a silence about this context in the Femina article.

While not all female readers would aspire to the ideal of the ‘tight’ vagina, and not all women have the financial resources to undergo the surgery, the tone and content of the article in Femina magazine – particularly the lack of context in relation to how women’s sexuality is often defined by male-centred discourses – suggests that vaginal cutting and tightening is a normative option for women. The message for (mostly white) young heterosexual women is not to develop a ‘healthy’ sexuality through understanding how their bodies work, and how to define their sexual needs separate from the dominant patriarchal imperative around women’s bodies. Instead, the message is that a ‘problematic’ vagina, whatever it may be, can be fixed through surgery, an option serving to regulate and control women’s bodies and sexuality, which is central to the maintenance and reinforcement of heteropatriarchy.

In contrast to the focus on age-defying options for white women, where scientific discourse mediates the ways in which white women’s bodies can be controlled, these kinds of adverts barely exist in True Love magazine, which has a dominant black African female readership. While white women are advised to fix their faces and vaginas, the latter in dramatic ways, True Love focuses on advising black women on ways to discipline unruly and uncontrollable hair through hair-straightening advertisements. I discuss the ways in which the imperative for black women in True Love to have straight hair is underscored by two underlying assumptions. The first assumption is that black women are essentially wild and hyper(hetero)sexual – more so than white women – and therefore need to be controlled through the regulation of their (hetero)sexuality. The second assumption, linked to the first, is that black women aspire to white heterofemininity, hence the focus on controlling black women’s ‘unruly’ hair through straightening helps to produce white heterofemininity as both the ideal and normative embodiment of womanhood.

**Straight hair and black femininity**

True Love magazine features a substantial amount of hair-straightening advertisements which contrast with the editorial content in the magazine, where images of black African women (and sometimes ‘coloured’ African women) are shown wearing a variety of hairstyles, including afros, dreadlocks, curls and weaves. This is quite the contrary to the ways black African men were presented in the early days of Drum magazine as targets for hair straighteners (Clowes 2004). Advertising copy in True Love magazine, such as ‘[S]leek, sultry tresses – For soft, silky, healthy-looking hair, rely on Soft & Beautiful!’ (March 2004, p. 187) and ‘Soft & Beautiful promises you soft, silky, healthy hair – the way it was meant to be!’ (October 2004, p. 151) are common in the magazine.
Many feminist analysts have discussed how notions of beauty and desirability have excluded black women. While Mercer has noted that ‘black people’s hair has been historically devalued as the most visible stigmata of blackness, second only to skin’ (1994, cited in Erasmus 2000, p. 381), Mama has argued that the desire for ‘long, flowing hair, lighter skin and aquiline features’ amongst black girls in Britain reflects the ways in which British society defined ‘attractiveness’ (1995, p. 150). Similarly, Tate’s (2007) recent research in Britain reveals that racist representations of skin colour, facial features and hair texture continue to shape the experiences of black women. While some might argue that straightened hair for black women could be understood as one hairstyle within a myriad of hairstyles for black women (see, e.g. Erasmus 2000), Tate (2007, p. 303) relates that part of the ‘negative black aesthetic’ is the ‘presumption that long straight hair is a necessary component of black women’s beauty’. Other analysts disagree, arguing instead:

Not every woman who decides to straighten her hair or change the colour of her eyes by wearing contacts believes that beauty is synonymous with whiteness. Trying on a new look, even one associated with Europeans, does not automatically imply self-hatred. (Jones and Shorter-Gooden 2003, cited in Patton 2006, p. 29)

The overwhelming number of adverts in True Love magazine, however, suggests that in many ways, the construction of desirability in black women should include the toning down and controlling of unmanageable hair, as the following advert reads: ‘Sleek, sultry tresses – for soft, silky, healthy hair … no-lye conditioning relaxer that helps smooth and straighten the hair without any discomfort’ (March 2004, p. 187). Promising to ‘control frizziness’ and ‘nourish dry hair’ (2004, p. 187), this advert tells black women that it is Western science that can control unruly curly and/or frizzy hair for a (hetero)sexually desirable look. This is similar to a different advert in the October 2004 edition of True Love where a black woman with short straightened hair stares confidently at the camera. Here the text reads, ‘Discover the beauty of your hair’ (October 2004, p. 79). The message in both adverts is that a chemical hair straightener can control black women’s ‘wild’ and ‘unruly’ hair, help them look more attractive and desirable – like (most) white women who have naturally straight hair. Both adverts tell black women that their hair is unsightly, and needs Western science in order to become beautiful.

The racist imperative to aspire to white heterofemininity is not limited to adult women. It seems that little black girls are similarly expected to regulate and control their unruly hair, as an advertisement in the October 2004 edition of True Love, accompanied by an image of a young black girl with straightened hair, illustrates: ‘Stop damage before it starts – with love and Sofn’Free n’ Pretty [sic]. We all know how hard and painful it can be to manage coarse hair’ (October 2004, p. 273). The words ‘damage’, ‘hard’, ‘painful’ and ‘coarse’ in the advertisement text have negative connotations, suggesting the need to tame, monitor and control, under the guise of ‘healthy hair’. Little black girls, according to True Love, must be taught from an early age how to be (hetero)sexually desirable through regulating (by means of straightening) the state of their hair. The racist message being sent to black girls and women is that their unsightly hair is unnecessary and unappealing, and in need of discipline. The racist Western construct of straight hair as beautiful is presented as aspirational for black African women readers, and echoes literature like that of Tate’s (2007), that historically Western constructions of straight hair as beautiful have simultaneously defined black African hair as unattractive (also see Ahmad 1995, Ribane 2006).
contrast, black African women’s skins have not been – and continue not to be – set up as aspirational for white women readers in Femina and Fair Lady, despite the biological fact that dark skin pigmentation has been scientifically proven to be better protected by melanin from the sun and other skin ailments, and therefore does not age or get damaged in the same way as pale skins (see Mackintosh 2001 and Manning et al. 2003). In the world of True Love, and as argued by Mercer (1994), Mama (1995) and Tate (2007), black women’s natural hair is constructed as distasteful. It is straight hair, synonymous with white women, which connotes beauty, and which black women, and young black girls, should aspire to. But even though black women are told to excessively control their hair in order to conform to the norm of white heterofemininity, they are simultaneously depicted as alluringly hyper(hetero)sexual, in ways that conform to racist colonial obsession with (both male and female) black bodies. It is particularly magazines such as Femina and Fair Lady that explicitly draw on the contradictory stereotypes of black female bodies as both exotically appealing, but excessive and unrestrained. I now turn to three advertisements which highlight these contradictions.

Hyper(hetero)sexuality, race and African essentialism

Lewis notes that:

[i]n the 20th-century context of a burgeoning print technology, popular culture and a modern sex industry, visual pornography exoticised black women to perpetuate the colonial emphasis on their hyperdeveloped sexuality, and their status as sex objects for others’ gratification and use. (2005, p. 13)

Elsewhere, I have argued that the kinds of racist hyper(hetero)sexualisation of black women in Femina and Fair Lady magazines set up white female readers as the colonisers and consumers of the vulnerable and passive black female body (Sanger 2008b). These kinds of representations are strongly reminiscent of masculinist colonial obsession with black bodies while they simultaneously employ current scripts of African essentialism. As examples, I discuss three images and their accompanying text – two from Femina and one from a men’s magazine called Blink – where ideas of black hypersexuality are mediated by essentialist African scripts.

An advertisement in the February 2005 edition of Femina magazine promotes a product called JôJô Africa body products and is titled ‘My African Dream’ (2005, p. 55). The image is one of a naked black woman against a backdrop of various shades of brown mountain and land. Her body is a glistening brown in colour, which forms part of the background to which she is central, suggesting inseparability between her body and the African mountains, land and soil – she is Africa. Her face is turned towards the camera; she appears calm and relaxed in ways illustrating the subtlety and serenity of the sounds and colours of the African landscape described in the advert. In an attempt to reflect an affirmative image of black womanhood, it relies on particular stereotypes based on essentialist notions of Africa and black femininity. Phrases such as ‘rare and distinctive’, ‘pure’ and ‘indigenous’ (February 2005, p. 55) are laden with markers of both Africa and exoticised black heterofemininity. In comparison to the overwhelming amount of adverts focused on ‘fixing’ white women’s skins in Femina and Fair Lady, this implication to the differentness – the excessiveness and abundance – of both Africa and black womanhood implies that black femininity is located within discourses of Africa in ways that white women are not.
The mediation of black hypersexuality by particular scripts of Africa is not limited to black femininities. A similar example can be found in the April 2005 edition of Blink, a South African magazine which ceased to be published in 2006, targeting black African men. Conflating black masculinity with ideas of African sexuality, the advertisement includes text such as ‘made with only African ingredients for a powerful African energy’ and ‘there is no energy like African energy’ (April 2005, p. 54), accompanied by an image of a muscular black man, naked top torso. He appears to be shouting, eyes closed, in a strained, energetic, and almost aggressive way. Similar to the previous advert discussed, ‘My African Dream’ in Femina magazine, this advert sets up Africa and black masculinity in very essentialist ways. Both the image and text imply that black masculinity, like Africa, is marked as different from an unnamed (white) norm; it is abundant, plentiful and excessive, as reflected in the colonial imagination. In many ways, the advert echoes Osha’s (2004, p. 92) argument that blackness is associated with ideas of ‘excess, unrestrained carnality, irrationality and violence’. However, the ‘Energy for Africa’ advertisement in Blink connotes ideas of hypersexual masculinity with a ‘powerful’ Africa, in contrast to the kinds of linkages made between black hypersexual femininity and Africa in the ‘My African Dream’ in Femina. While black hypermasculinity is associated with power and authority, with ‘energy’, black hyperfemininity is reflected as subdued, calmer and aligned with the serene African landscape. Comparing the two adverts, then, it becomes clear that particular binaries around black masculinity and femininity are employed in imagining Africa.

A different advertisement which appears in the November 2005 edition of Femina magazine promotes Amarula Cream Liqueur. In this advert, ideas of multiculturalism, heterosex and racialised femininity and masculinity are mediated by essentialist African scripts, denoted by the title ‘Taste the spirit of Africa’ (Femina, November 2005, p. 107). Similar to the ‘My African Dream’ advertisement in terms of shade and colour – various woody brown tones – the aura set up is one of intimacy and warmth to locate the central image of a black woman and a white man sharing a bottle of the advertised liqueur. Phrases and words, such as ‘marriage tree’, ‘tribal weddings’, ‘heart’, ‘perfect blend’, ‘tenderly blended’ and ‘labour of love’ (2005, p. 107), create a romantic context for the couple in the advertisement. This ‘perfect blend’ is undercut by a reference to (hetero)sex, sexuality and Africa in the copy, ‘The exotic fruit is prized as an aphrodisiac and plays a unique role in African fertility rites’ (Femina, 2005, p. 107). The allusion to ‘African fertility rites’, above all, suggests an essentialist notion of Africa – similar to both the ‘My African Dream’ and ‘Energy for Africa’ advertisements – in its evocation to excessiveness, abundance and (hetero)sexuality. Furthermore, terms such as ‘exotic’ and ‘alluring’ ‘in many ways reveal the ways in which black hyperfemininity continues to be set up as different and interesting, as argued by many feminist theorists on the postcolonial subject and sexuality’ (Mama 1995, Abrahams 2000, Hobson 2005, Tate 2007). The ‘deeply entrenched social codes that inform representations of black women and sexuality’, which Lewis (2005, p. 11) discusses, are made clear in the advertisement text that reads ‘savour the exotic flavour of Amarula Cream Liqueur’ and ‘Explore the untamed plains of the African savannah’ (Femina, 2005, p. 107). Both phrases hint at consuming the black woman, signifying Africa, in the advertisement. In contrast to the ways that ideal black heterofemininity is embodied through straightened hair in True Love magazine, this advertisement depicts the black woman with short, ‘natural’, unstraightened hair. This kind of deliberate inscription of ‘untamed’, ‘wild’ and ‘unrestricted’ hair is critical to the advertisement’s essentialist notions of Africa as excessive and abundant, and therefore
suitable for colonial consumption. However, the black model’s fair skin and slim body helps to construct her as appealing and alluring (see Mama 1995, Patton 2006, Tate 2007); worthy of white male colonial desire.

The depiction of an ‘interracial’ couple with references to ‘African fertility rites’ and notions of ‘exoticism’ and ‘allure’ calls to mind Western constructions of African hypersexuality being consumed by colonial obsessive desire. This is depicted comprehensively in Badoe’s documentary titled *Without walls: I want your sex* (1991), which explores myths about black sexuality in Western culture. Reflecting the ways in which the bodies of both black women and men become objects of fascination and desire of white male colonials, this documentary remains relevant in readings of contemporary popular culture in Africa, and globally. Colonial obsessive desire of the black body is also articulated by Mercer, who explains how the hypersexual imaginings of black bodies ‘tell us more about the repressed fear and fantasies of European civilization than they do about black people’s experiences of sexual intimacy’ (1994, p. 149). The advert ‘Taste the spirit of Africa’ in many ways echoes colonial discourse which imagines Africa – read in this instance as the black woman – as consumable; to be taken in by the white male subject.

Story (2007, p. 236, cited in Haupt 2008, pp. 169–170) notes how the ‘conceptualisation of the Black female body as an inherently sexualised body has historically and contemporarily affected perceptions of women of African descent in both local and global media’. The notion of agency is, however, critical in identifying the possibilities for resisting racist heteropatriarchal scripts. It is, as Renold and Ringrose (2008, p. 7) argue, fundamental to ‘map disruptions and locate instabilities in the heterosexual matrix’. Haupt (2008) demonstrates some of these disruptions to heteronormativity in his discussion of ‘conscious’ hip-hop both globally and locally. In the South African context, it is an all-female crew called Godessa who present a challenge to capitalist heteropatriarchy through critiquing ‘the ways in which stereotyped images of women are sold via advertising, music videos and other media texts’ (2008, p. 171). Contesting the ways in which ‘black women have been participants in setting the problematic ideals of female sexuality and subjectivity’ (2008, p. 170), Godessa’s work presents one disturbance of globalised heteropatriarchal representations of black women.

Racist and (hetero)sexist messages, however, continue to resonate from the pages of magazines such as *Fair Lady*, *Femina* and *True Love*, leaving very little space for disruption. While white women are told that they can use science to become youthful and thus heterosexually desirable, black women are told that they need to work excessively to subdue their wild, unattractive hair through hair straightening in order to conform to normative white heterofemininity. Although black women are rarely presented in magazines constituting large percentages of black readers, when they are, they are often exoticised and hypersexualised. Simultaneously, these representations are mediated by essentialist constructions of Africa. The advertisements discussed above suggest that it is black women who are presented as essentially African, emblematic of ‘ethnicity’ and ‘culture’ while white (hetero)femininity remains the unmarked, ‘cultureless’ norm. The constructions of hyper(hetero)femininity in *Femina*, *Fair Lady* and *True Love* magazines suggest that the divergence from policing and regulating the bodies and sexualities of women in South Africa’s ‘democracy’ is superficial. In a postcolonial Africa, where as Moffett (2006, p. 1) argues, ‘sexual violence against women has become a socially endorsed punitive project for maintaining patriarchal order’, the kinds of scripts produced as normative in South African
magazine advertisements targeting women suggest that bodily freedom and integrity have been reconstructed in ways that serve a patriarchy unperturbed by democratic principles.

Notes
1. This article is premised on an understanding of race, gender, sexuality and other social markers in the South African climate as constructed.
3. There are many problems with the definitions of these racial terms. In this article, I use the construct ‘black’ as all encompassing of racial categories not categorised as ‘white’ in the South African context such as ‘coloured’ and ‘Indian’. I will use terms such as ‘black African’ and ‘coloured African’ to differentiate where necessary, as these differences do exist as meaningful in magazine representations. Magazines, such as True Love, for instance, are specifically targeted at black African women.

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