THE USE AND USEFULNESS OF THE RACIAL OTHER

The Strategic Deployment of Racial Tropes in Print Advertising and Branding Campaigns
Within the Context of Globalisation

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
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DECLARATION

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Linda Fu

18 March 2012
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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines print advertisements and branding materials to analyse the use and usefulness of imageries of the racial Other in historical and contemporary advertising and branding campaigns. At its core, the research seeks to delineate both the continuities and changes in what is termed the ‘colonial racial script’ within advertising representations. The origins of that script are traced back to the 18th century and key moments in its genealogical production are identified. The thesis poses the question as to whether the concept of the ‘racial Other’ deployed in print advertising and branding campaigns has changed within the context of contemporary globalisation and, if so, in what ways?

Using a combination of critical media analysis that draws strongly upon semiotic interpretation and Foucauldian-inspired genealogical approach, the research interrogates a wide range of advertising data to examine the uses and usefulness of imageries of the racial Other. It offers a detailed analytical snapshot of an important dimension of everyday and popular culture in order to assess whether – as some have claimed – that the world has moved on to a ‘colour-blind’ era where the concept of ‘race’ ceases its relevance or, conversely, whether racial politics continue to be a pervasive dimension of current advertising media representations.

The research discovers that the strategic use of imageries of the racial Other in a range of public interest and commercial campaigns confirm the currency of race as a commodity-sign in the age of globalisation and the value that the racial Other possesses continues to hold and in some instances grow. The thesis evidences this through its identification of a number of thematically organised types of reworking of the existing colonial notions and visions of the racial Other within global media culture.

While, at a cursory level, the representation of the racial Other in the materials examined, which date from the 1980s onward, does to some extent differ from earlier ads it does so more in terms of variation than outright change. The analysis reveals more similarities than differences in terms of colonial and existing racial representations. Significant residual traces of the colonial racial script are in evidence – the legacy of stereotypes continues and mutates through recycling and remodeling. At the same time, racial stereotypes being coded in contemporary advertising language are found to be more fluid and vulnerable to manipulation.
Race-centred issues have been considered central to a wide variety of social struggles and cataclysmic events over the past century and beyond. In 1903, the prominent African-American intellectual and political activist W.E.B Du Bois had the foresight to recognise that, as he famously put it, “[t]he problem of the Twentieth Century” would be “the problem of the color-line” (Du Bois, 2007: 24). At the end of that century, we can find numerous affirmations of this claim and considerations of its continuing consequences. Given that the accelerated process of globalisation from the 1980s onwards appears to have altered many political, cultural and social dynamics, are race politics still in play in the 21st century, or has the concept of race lost its currency and ceased its relevance? Are we in an age of colourblindness, as some claim, or is it the case, as leading sociologist Howard Winant asserts, that “the quandary of race, the theme that claimed so much attention so long ago, stubbornly refuses to disappear” (Winant, 2007: 571)?

While only one player in those wider modern discourses on race, the advertising industry has arguably been critical in giving commercial and public expression to ideas about race and relaying them to diverse audiences. The crucial role of advertising and its imageries in modern society and culture have been widely acknowledged in scholarly discussions since Raymond Williams’ 1961 groundbreaking book, *The Long Revolution* (most notably: Williamson, 1978; Williams, 1980; Sherry, 1987; Jhally, 1990; Twitchell, 1996; Cross, 1996; Frith, 1997; Malefyt & Moeran, 2003; Nixon, 2003). Twitchell goes so far as to suggest that the modern American institution of advertising is comparable in scope and magnitude to the Roman Catholic Church of the early Renaissance (Twitchell, 1996: 229). Hilton goes one step further to claim an iconic status of advertisement in our time, writing:
The advertisement became the icon of the twentieth century, the most persistent element in the visual culture of the vast majority of the population. It utilized imagery and copy that tried to bring all, or as many consumers as possible, under the umbrella of the commodity. In this sense, the advertisement served as the visible emblem of modernity just as much as did the aesthetic creation or the political ensign (2001: 46).

In addition to these claims, scholars have considered advertising as ‘a cultural system’ (Sherry, 1987; Jhally, 1990), ‘a cultural industry’ (Sinclair, 1987; Lash & Urry, 1994), a ‘sphere of ideology’ (Williamson, 1978; Goldman, 1992) and ‘the official art of capitalism’ (Harvey, 1990). These affirmations of the central positioning of advertising in modern capitalist economies and societies support the notion that advertising provides a rich source of insights into the dominant Western concepts and worldviews at different historical moments.

Core among the concepts are those of racial identity. Advertising and branding materials offer a wealth of cultural documents through which we can develop a deeper understanding of the ways in which the concept of the ‘racial Other’ is presented and apprehended in this system of a late world capitalist culture, also known as global commodity culture. Since the age of colonialism, racial identity and its representation have been in motion. “The job facing the cultural intellectuals”, as Edward Said has rightly reminded us is “not to accept the politics of identity as given, but to show how all representations are constructed, for what purpose, by whom, and with what components” (Said, 1993: 314).

This thesis examines cultural artefacts such as print advertisements and branding materials to analyse the use and usefulness of imageries of the racial Other in historical and contemporary advertising and branding campaigns. At its core, the research seeks to delineate both the changes and continuities in what is termed the ‘colonial racial script’ within advertising media representations – tracing the origins of that script back to the 18th century and identifying key genealogical moments in its production in the current age of globalisation. It is argued that this colonial racial script has been a crucial underlying narrative defining and confining the racial Other within the visual culture of advertising ever since its inception as a key modern industry and cultural form. However, what are the dynamics of that script, which took shape under quite different historical conditions, in contemporary advertising and branding discourses operating within the ‘new’ historical context of globalisation?
One factor complicating any examination of contemporary representations of race in advertising imagery is the clear emergence in the industry, and its stakeholders, of an increased consciousness of the role of media representation in the cultural politics of race. Media observers, for example, have noted the emergence of an increasing presence of non-White imageries in advertisements. One writes: “Marketers who have long painted portraits of consumers in shades of white are adding colors to their palettes” (Elliott, 1996). The last two decades of the 20th century witnessed an unprecedented popularity in the use of images of the racial Other in the work of Western advertising agencies. Tropes of the racial Other were widely used in a range of campaigns with diverse political, cultural and commercial objectives. This increased consumption of the racial Other in advertising continues in the current century; for example, a study jointly conducted by Britain’s Institute of Practitioners in Advertising and Extreme Media reported that ethnic minorities featuring in television and print advertisements in the United Kingdom (UK) had tripled in 2003 (BrandRepublic, 2004). In the United States (US), a similar phenomenon had been earlier observed and dubbed ‘rainbow advertising’ or ‘mosaic advertising’ by some media (e.g. The New York Times, 19 April 1996). While such hype can be easily be taken as a ‘natural’ progression in a globalising and relatively more racially tolerant milieu, it needs to be pointed out that the phenomenon is far from natural or given. Instead we might start with the assumption that colours have not simply been ‘added’ without motivation but have been strategically ‘deployed’ for different purposes and with different rhetorical strategies in mind. These strategies and contexts require investigation and analysis.

**RESEARCH QUESTION**

Through examining the multifaceted deployment of racial tropes in advertising and branding campaigns, this thesis explores the key similarities and differences between the contemporary uses of imageries of the racial Other in advertising and their colonial moments of inception. Taking a genealogical approach, the thesis poses the following research questions:

*Has the concept of the ‘racial Other’ deployed in print advertising and branding campaigns changed its colonial script within the context of contemporary globalisation? And if so, how?*
THEORETICAL APPROACH AND FRAMEWORKS

Since the groundbreaking works *Mythologies* (Barthes, 1972) and *Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising* (Williamson, 1988), semiotics – a “science that studies the life of signs within society” (Saussure 1969: 16) – has become a highly influential methodology for a huge numbers of advertising studies (including my own, *Visual Communication Across Cultures: A Semiotic Study of the Interpretation of Western Brand Images in China* (Fu, 2000). The two major recent in-depth studies of the visual representation of the racial Other in advertising – *Culture and the Ad: Exploring Otherness in the World of Advertising* (O’Barr, 1994) and *Imperial Persuaders: Images of Africa and Asia in British Advertising* (Ramamurthy, 2003) – both employ a declared semiotic approach.

Berger has observed (1998: 4) that Semiotic analysis has “spread all over the globe”, proving its value in enabling systematic understanding of visual representations. The value of analysing advertising texts to understand the strategies employed by advertisers to persuade audiences about goods has been well acknowledged. Leiss and colleagues, for example, have suggested that: “Advertising texts document the strategies employed by advertisers to negotiate the meaning of goods with audiences, and in this respect, they represent a very important part of the discourse of consumption” (Leiss et al, 2005: 161). Yet like any theoretical approaches, semiotic analysis is not without its limitations, as a number of critiques have outlined. Within the field of advertising studies McFall, for example, questions the tendency to place too great an emphasis on meaning: “while debates about the nature of meaning provide a fertile and fascinating philosophical challenge, in the end they reveal little about advertising” (McFall, 2004: 10). Claiming that a narrow focus on the meaning of texts can lead to a loss of sight of the recurrence of past practices in contemporary advertising, she calls for a more genealogically-oriented study of advertising – one that investigates “the piecemeal fabrication of forms” as “an alternative approach to study advertising from the endless semiotic pursuit of meaning”. For her such an approach embraces “the patchwork of historical conditions and accidents” (ibid: 33) that is the modern institution of advertising. I share McFall’s concerns and consider the Foucauldian genealogy (Foucault, 1977) offers a useful framework through which to structure my study, analyse my data and address my research problem.
Although the research question entails a historical perspective, and I have used four-centuries worth of data in my study, I would like to make it very clear that this thesis is *not* a study of advertising history about the deployment of imageries of the racial Other. Instead, it is a study of the strategic deployment of imageries of the racial Other in advertising through the lens of what Foucault calls “the moment of arising” (Foucault, 1977: 148). In other words, I do not approach the subject matter as a linear historical evolution progressing from one stage to the next to find out, for example, if it simply has improved from brutal to sensitive in manner, or from trivial to sophisticated in rhetoric. Rather, while these aspects were parts of the consideration, I take a Foucauldian genealogical approach to my research data in a manner that is “sensitive to their recurrence, not in order to trace the gradual curve of their evolution, but to isolate the different scenes where they engaged in different roles” (ibid: 140).

With this principle in mind, my analyses were performed according to thematic discourses in which imageries of the racial Other were used to fill those different roles in each campaigns within different arenas – without being confined to their industry or product origins as being commonly adopted in existing literature. It is through the lens of a genealogical approach that I framed my analyses and captured some unique scenes where racial politics were in play. It allowed me to engage the conditions, practices and articulations, and to register the typical needs, motivations, dilemmas and strategies for deploying imageries of the racial Other in advertising.

The dynamics between use and usefulness guide the interrogation of visual data in this thesis, as it examines how unevenly – some appear so familiar, some seem quite strange – the concept of the racial Other has been taken advantage of and shaped into racialised advertising imagery to serve various campaign objectives. Of these dynamics, the discursive formation of racial ideology, its interplay with the visual representation of the racial Other, and the historical continuity and discontinuity of the phenomenon in question are the key concerns. As such, I have framed my analysis along cultural rather than technical lines, political rather than aesthetic, value-driven rather than style-driven – albeit I have touched some aspects of the other as the need has arisen, drawing on my professional background when necessary. By critically reading visual texts alongside the discursive contextual factors influencing the ads, I have made the recurrence and variation of colonial racial scripts visible to help address the research question.
One dimension of the genealogical approach to this study is a consideration of the contested and historically contingent nature of some of the key terms it is oriented around. While the key terms noted here will be discussed in-depth in this thesis, some initial elaboration is useful to outline some of the intellectual assumptions that the study begins with.

RACE

As a concept, ‘race’ is arguably biologically illegitimate yet socially real. While being endorsed by leading Western statesmen, philosophers and scientists as truth since the 18th century, its scientific credibility collapsed in the 1960s. Nowadays, contemporary thinking and scholarly positions commonly hold that, as concluded in the American Anthropological Association’s Statement on “Race”:

“[P]resent-day inequalities between so-called ‘racial’ groups are not consequences of their biological inheritance but products of historical and contemporary social, economic, educational, and political circumstances” (AAA, 1998). In addition, I recognise that ‘race’ is a shifting signifier. As a social invention involving the interplay of social dynamics within particular contexts, its meanings and currencies are more fluid than fixed. ‘Race’ does not have a fixed referent but for centuries, this social category has typically been made visible by skin colour. Within different cultural systems, race has been associated with various social divides such as (not necessarily in a linear order and, more than often, not in singularity) species, religion, class, nation, citizenship and culture. If race is a marker of the time, then the concept of ‘race’ itself is also shaped and marked by the specific social and cultural dynamics of its time.

The dilemma I face here is that on one hand, inquiries into the research question hinge on the concept of ‘race’ and the term (as problematic as it is), and related ‘colour’ terms that have been (and still are) the markers of race, need to be uttered – even though I do not agree with them. On the other hand, the term ‘race’ and its related markers such as ‘black’, ‘white’, (and ‘red’, ‘yellow’ and ‘brown’ for that matter), as Gates has argued, are arbitrarily constructed “rhetorical figures of race, to make them natural, absolute, essential” by Western writers (Gates, 1985: 6). Using these terms, therefore, risking being interpreted as generalising essential differences. For these reasons, and to indicate my disagreement, I ask the reader to assume scare quotes around my use of the terms ‘race’, and ‘people of colour’ throughout this
thesis. For the same reasons, I have also capitalised the first letter of the terms: Black; White; Red; Yellow and Brown.

RACIAL OTHER

With its currency across various academic fields such as philosophy, psychoanalysis and communication, ‘the Other’ is understandably a multifaceted concept. In the domain of cultural studies and media studies, ethnicity together with class and gender, as ‘the Other’ of the White-male dominated culture, attracts much of the emphasis (e.g. During, 1993; Fitzgerald, 1992; Wright, 1985). In the fields of Development Communication and International Communication, in line with postcolonialism, the ‘Third World’ or the previously colonised nations are often referred as ‘the Other’ by Western scholars (e.g. Burns, 1975; Bernstein, 1997; Weatherby, 1994). As O’Shaughnessy suggests: “The term ‘other’ highlights the fact that which falls into the category of ‘other’ has historically been seen as deviant, unusual and strange because it exists outside the boundaries of what the West deems normal” (O’Shaughnessy, 1999: 225).

In visual terms, Stephen Spencer suggested that the Otherness of the racial Other can be recognised by visibly different skin colour, clothing, location and cultural practices from an ‘Identikit’, while recognising that the differences “are not only physical and geographical but also social, economic and cultural” (Spencer, 2006: 8). Sharing the views of O’Shaughnessy and Spencer, the term ‘the racial Other’ in this thesis denotes the ‘non-White people’, the ‘coloured people’, the ‘Oriental’, the ‘Third-World people’, the ‘underdeveloped people’ and the ‘visibly different minorities’. For the same reason as the note on ‘race’, I ask the reader to assume scare quotes around my own use of the term ‘racial Other’, and the above-mentioned terms throughout this thesis.

THE WEST

‘The West’ (and ‘Western world’ or ‘Occident’, by extension) in the context of this thesis refers to the countries of western and central Europe and its past settler colonies in the Americas and Oceania – namely the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.
This is the common usage of the term in contemporary discourses. However, it needs to be pointed out that like ‘race’, the term ‘the West’ is also problematic. Although it apparently entails geographic distinctions, it includes Australia which lies outside the Western Hemisphere, whereas a large number of nations inside its boundaries (such as Western Africa and some Pacific nations) are excluded. While claiming shared culture and beliefs, it excludes Latin America which is not only geographically located in the west, but also has shared linguistic and religious roots with nations of ‘the West’. Therefore, I consider this usage as grounded in a geopolitical divide, one closely associated with the history of colonialism.

‘The West’ is often used as a marker in contrast with its ‘Other’: in geographic and cultural senses, opposite to ‘the East’ or ‘the Orient’; in a geopolitical sense, opposite to ‘the Rest’ or ‘the South’. In addition, in dominant discourse within Western nations, ‘the West’ is also commonly a synonym for ‘the First World’ and connotes an ‘advanced’, ‘rich’, ‘democratic’, ‘scientific’, ‘technological’ and ‘free’ world – in contrast to ‘the Third World’ which is perceived as a ‘backward’, ‘poor’, ‘less-democratic’/‘autocratic’, ‘natural’, ‘traditional’ and ‘oppressed’ world.

Furthermore, because the population of the geographic West and the majority of settlers in colonies outside Europe were of European descent under the colonial regime, people of ‘the West’ are also denoted as the so-called ‘White race’, in contrast to the ‘non-White races’ or ‘people of colour’. Paradoxically, Whiteness has been normalised and rendered irrelevant to ‘colour’ in racial terms – no colour, no abnormal features, ‘just people’ – a rhetoric that is “historically, socially, politically and culturally produced and ... linked to ... relations of domination” (Weis, Proweller, & Centrie, 1997: 22).

GLOBALISATION

My use of the term ‘globalisation’ in this thesis is in line with Robertson’s perspective of the concept as referring to “both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole” (Robertson, 1992: 8). In other words, it is a phenomenon as well as a process. It also needs to be noted that, apart from being used to denote a phenomenon and a process, the term ‘globalisation’ is also perceived and expressed in this thesis as a ‘paradigm’ (Dirlik, 2000), and a ‘domain of knowledge’ (Mittelman, 2000) about race and racial ideology.
Contrary to common misconceptions, and despite the term only coming into popular use in the 1980s, globalisation as we call it now is not new. Depending on their chosen perspective, some scholars identify the starting point as early as the 15th century (e.g. Robertson, 1992; Wallerstein, 1974), while some attribute it to the 17th century (e.g. Meyer, 1980). Likewise, the number of stages of globalisation are also not agreed. The late 19th century, as marked by the turn of High Imperialism, however, is generally recognised by these theorists as a critical transitional moment. A more streamlined understanding of the process and phenomenon of globalisation offered by the World Bank identifies three stages of globalisation: the first being from 1870 to 1914; the second being from 1950 to about 1980; and the third and current stage starting from 1980. (WorldBank, 2002). This largely reflects the milestones established by Meyer, albeit with his 17th-century ‘Medieval Christendom’ moment left out. An appreciation of these earlier historical junctures, established while conceptualising this research, is reflected in the construction of this thesis. It examines advertising data within four historical moments: 18th-century Transatlantic Slave Trading; the 18th to 19th century Colonialism and High Imperialism; the Post-World War II, Post-colonial and Civil Rights movements in Part One; and the current phase of globalisation from 1980s to the present in Part Two.

Thus, the designated use of the term ‘globalisation’ to denote the current historical moment in this thesis should not be taken as disregarding or excluding of earlier developments in the course of globalisation. Rather, this should be seen as a matter of expression. Instead of either naming the earlier phases numerically or sequentially, or from a pool of diverse, but not yet agreed, markers, I feel the different historical moments are more clearly and meaningfully identified by the historical significance that marked their characters. Therefore, except to denote the concept itself, when appropriate, I qualify the term with ‘contemporary’ or ‘current phase’, although sometimes I avoid repetition and use the term as is.
EXISTING STUDIES

The research problem addresses concerns across a range of disciplines. The problem as to whether the concept of the ‘racial Other’ deployed in print advertising and branding campaigns changed its colonial script within the context of contemporary globalisation cannot be fully addressed if the formation and transformation of the colonial concept of ‘race’, the cultural production of the Orient by the Occident after the demise of the Empire, and the politics of multiculturalism and the colour-blindness ideology within a global commodity culture that condition the construction of the visual discourses of racial Other in advertising are not considered. As McPhail put it, there is no single discipline which can possibly understand and solve the complexity of contemporary communication problems (McPhail, 1989: 61). It has been suggested that, for example, in the current configuration of postcolonial studies “the field is pulled between questions of ethnicity and those of globalisation, though they may well be two sides to the same coin” (Sharpe, 2000). For the above reasons, while located in the field of advertising study, this thesis ventures into a multidisciplinary approach, utilising the bodies of knowledge from related disciplines, most typically race, postcolonial and globalisation studies.

The thesis draws on three key areas of scholarly publication on advertising and its broader cultural and social contexts.

Firstly, a number of studies have addressed the visual representation of the racial Other. For example, the image of a Black soldier saluting the French national flag, on the front cover of a 1955 issue of Paris Match, prompted Barthes’ pioneering critique of the mythical racial relationships in popular culture (Barthes, 1972, first published in 1957). It was not until the 1990s, however, that critical studies of this topic in advertising began to proliferate. Often such studies were part of the broader work of historians and cultural critics (e.g. hooks, 1992; Kern-Foxworth, 1994; McClintock, 1995; Frith, 1997; Biagi & Kern-Foxworth, 1997; Stern, 1999; Cronin, 2000; Wilson, Gutiérrez, & Chao, 2003; Harris, 2003; Mooij, 2005; Cortese, 2008; Johnson, 2008).

O’Barr’s 1994 book Culture and the Ad: Exploring Otherness in the World of Advertising and Ramamurthy’s 2003 book Imperial Persuaders: Images of Africa and Asia in British Advertising are perhaps the most significant reference points for this research. Both
of these studies of the representation of the racial Other in print advertisements were to different degrees based on, or inspired by, related exhibitions, namely, *African Americans in American Advertising: A Twentieth-Century Retrospective* for O’Barr, and *Black Markets: Images of Black People in British Advertising and Packaging from 1880 to 1990* for Ramamurthy. While the latter focuses solely on depictions of Africans and Asians, the former takes a broad definition of ‘the Other’, which includes “anyone other than the white American mainstream – African Americans, women, Native Americans, tourists of many nationalities”. As such, strictly speaking, O’Barr’s work on the visual representation of Otherness considers signifiers of gender and nationality as well as race.

Drawing on collections of advertisements mainly from US newspapers and magazines, O’Barr takes a Marxist and semiotic-influenced approach that includes an anthropological and historical perspective. With a humbly declared ambition to offer ‘tools’ and ‘encouragements’ to help his readership of ‘everyone’ to learn to read and decode advertisements, and empower them to find the social meanings of advertisements, O’Barr not only accomplishes his goal brilliantly but also makes a compelling case that the depiction of the Other by the advertising industry in the US should be read as statements about American ideals and ideologies. I share O’Barr’s opinion that the phenomenon is more a matter of economic necessity than of cultural goodwill, and recognise that his method of categorising and studying advertising data according to their industry divide was one model being applied widely. That being said, the book is strangely reticent in terms of actually ‘calling out’ race as a key category through which processes of Othering are realised and perpetuated.

*Imperial Persuaders* concentrates on the visual representation of Africans and Asians in British advertising between 1880 and 1960. Ramamurthy made a conscious decision to use the term ‘black’ to denote people of colour who were directly or indirectly subjected to an oppressive colonial relationship with Britain so the definition was “in keeping with the political use of this term by anti-racist groups in Britain from the 1970s onwards” (Ramamurthy, 2003: 3). Ramamurthy makes a compelling argument for a direct link between representations of the racial Other in advertising and the underlying historical ideology of imperial power as well as the modernisation theory. Like O’Barr, her analysis uses a combined Marxist and semiotic approach. Visual representations of black people in advertising are categorised and studied primarily according to product or industry. While O’Barr divides his Other into categories of the Other in travel advertisements, the Other
in product endorsements and the Other in international business advertisements, Ramamurthy studies the racial Other within boundaries such as soap advertising, cocoa advertising, tea advertising, tobacco advertising and corporate advertising. Although this method of organisation serves these authors’ research purposes, it arguably detracts from a more in-depth consideration of how racial signifiers play out more broadly across sectoral or product boundaries. This thesis attempts to redress this problem through the way in which data is organised and analysed.

Ramamurthy’s work insightfully demonstrates the ways in which the economic interests of leading British companies impacted on the images of black people in British advertising during the periods of colonisation and decolonisation. Her argument that examining stereotypes of racial Others in the advertising of these periods could reveal how they were “employed to serve specific colonial ideologies – that is, to service specific power interests” (ibid: 9), is particularly relevant to this thesis.

While *Imperial Persuaders* obviously has a different temporal and spatial scope to this thesis, it nevertheless remains a valuable reference point. The context of contemporary globalisation concerning this thesis, however, raises fresh questions about what happens to those power relations enabled by colonial ideologies and sedimented in popular cultural forms. A range of multiple positions, identities, discourses and sites of struggles have emerged, and arguably a more complex mode of advertising discourse has developed to serve the interests of the global commodity culture. The range of images of the racial Other which advertising discourse presents are significantly more diverse, multifaceted and contradictory. In other words, while the critical lens of historical political economy is proper and effective for Ramamurthy’s study, it has its limitations in contemporary contexts, as she notes:

> It is hard to contextualise contemporary advertisements in quite the same way as I have done here, since advertisers exploit diverse kinds of imagery to increase their market share, and the mystification of production and the fetishisation of commodity have increased beyond what Marx could ever have imagined. (2003: 219).

For the reasons outlined under the previous section Theoretical Approach and Frameworks, I used the strengths of semiotics and genealogy to analyse advertising data and interrogate the fluid textual and contextual factors operating within contemporary globalisation in the hope that this combined approach might shed more light on the research question.
The second body of work I have drawn on are those criticising advertising’s ideological impact through reading the ‘texts’ to search for how advertising language persuades, or manipulates its audiences in social, cultural and/or economic terms. Goldman and Papson’s 1996 book, Sign Wars: The Cluttered Landscape of Advertising, which examines TV commercials from the mid 1980s to the early 1990s, exemplifies this body of literature. Their critique of commodity signs is performed through semiotic deconstruction, focusing on the beer, sneaker, credit card and soft drink image wars. From this ‘cluttered landscape’, the authors trace the advertisers’ search for the new image with which to compel the viewer, and its effect on the value of visual signs. This well-researched book raises several issues such as the politics of sign values and Otherness as signs of authenticity and it, together with Baudrillard’s notion of the political economy of sign value (Baudrillard, 1981) have influenced the design of this study. are inferential to the conception of this study. Works from other perspectives and traditions have also informed my research. They include, for example, those utilising psychology (Cronin, 2000; Scott & Batra, 2003), anthropology (Moeran, 2003), sociology (Sinclair, 1987; Nixon, 2003), history (Marchand, 1985; McFall, 2004), concerning the culture of consumption and transformation to a consumer society (e.g. Norris, 1990; Ewen, 1976; Ewen, 1988; Cronin, 2004), and studies of how global advertising and global consumer culture operate (Frith, 2003; Mooij, 2005).

The third and final broad domain of publications that this thesis draws on for secondary commentary and materials is the general study of the visual discourse of advertising (including commercial arts and visual communication). Much of the work within this domain takes the form of advertising handbooks and manuals, design awards and collection books, industry icon stories, books on technique and textbooks. In a practice-oriented and results-driven profession, pictorial books that showcase competition and winning designs are highly popular in university and professional/personal libraries. Established creative professionals are regularly invited to contribute to such works. While lacking a critical edge, advertising and branding ‘picture books’ or ‘source books’ can nonetheless be utilised as visual evidence of trends within the industry they service. A number of my contemporary primary materials, as well as some additional examples, are reproduced within these types of publications.

Overall, this publishing domain shows a strong imbalance in terms of an oversupply of ‘showcase’ books compared with those that engage critically in theoretical debates about advertising as a key cultural form. Critical writings by those who also
have a practitioner’s eye and interest within the discipline are particularly rare. This thesis is partly motivated by a desire to contribute to knowledge in the field from a combined critical-practitioner perspective.

**METHODOLOGY**

**RESEARCH SCOPE AND DATA**

A broad selection of print advertisements and branding materials featuring racialised imageries have been collected in researching this thesis. They range from magazine ads, press ads and outdoor posters to branding materials such as logos, mascots, packaging, magazine covers, corporate literature (e.g. brochures, leaflets) and postage stamps.

For my genealogy of the deployment of imageries of the racial Other in early advertising (Chapters One, Two and Three), when the colonial script is being formed, the temporal scope of the data is from the 18th century to the 1970s. For my globalisation case studies in Chapters Five and Six, the temporal scope of the data is between 1980 and 2010.

All the primary materials selected for the second part of the thesis are characteristically mainstream and ‘global’. They are either produced by government agencies, international non-government organisations (NGOs), or international non-profit organisations (NPOs) under the category of public interest campaigns, or by multinational brands or inspiring newcomers to the global market under the category of commercial campaigns. In addition, the advertising agencies producing these campaigns are mainly multinational agency networks themselves, many with their headquarters and ultimate centres of decision-making located in New York, London or Paris. Given the profile of the advertisers and agencies involved, the selected advertisements and branding materials are not only undisputedly mainstream, but also enjoy a high degree of global exposure – either by circulation (such as the placement of ads and products) or by reputation (such as through international awards and being selected for professional publications).
While I have tried to ensure some national diversity in terms of the origins of the primary sources, the visual texts tend to be largely American-centric (though to a lesser extent in Part Two). This is due to the general dominance of advertising and branding materials originating from the US. This inseparable relationship between US cultural politics and the ideology of race has been widely recognised. Leading American historian Barbara Fields, for example, insists such a relationship “would be absurd and frivolously provocative to deny” (Fields, 1982: 145), as she argues: “Elsewhere, classes may have struggled over power and privilege, over oppression and exploitation, over competing senses of justice and right; but in the United States, these were secondary to the great, overarching theme of race” (ibid: 144). The US experience has also had great significance for the wider world – a key historical period examined in this thesis is indeed the ‘American Century’, which as Harvey points out “the power conferred was global and universal rather than territorially specific” (Harvey, 2003: 50). I would argue here that as a result of the political, economic, military and cultural dominance of the US, its treatment and representation of the racial Other are not only a territorial legacy confined within national boundaries, but also a symbolic legacy that stands for “the West”, and which has a disproportionately significant global influence.

Advertising has been seen as one of the most characteristic and most vigorous of American institutions – a point initially made by Boorstin (1973) and endorsed by Marchand (1985) and Twitchell (1996). In addition, the interest in advertising displayed within a wide range of disciplines may be interpreted as evidence that advertising is appreciated as one of the central institutions of American society (Berger, 2004: 26). As Joseph and Lewis put it, ads “play a vital role in the economic and political machinery of American values. Advertisements are as essential to American society as life is to death” (1986: 151). The pervasive role that advertising has played as an everyday cultural resource for the formation of racial ideology cannot be overstated. As Kern-Foxworth observes:

From the turn of the century to the mid-1960s negative advertising images of blacks were pervasive throughout America. Some became American icons and permanent staples in most homes. It was difficult to prepare a meal without using food products featuring a stereotypical pickaninny, black mammy, or black Sambo. (1994: 40).

By penetrating the everyday life and space of US households, the stereotypical representation of the racial Other contributes greatly to the formation and relaying
of racial ideology. As one Black advertising executive, for example, observed during the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s: “The advertising industry did not create discrimination, but is one of the most powerful influences for continuing it” (quoted in Chambers, 2009: 122).

In the spirit of a Foucauldian genealogy, I have tried to capture historical moments from the best vantage point. The US often provides such a vantage point as a major battleground around racial ideology and representation in advertising. The extraordinary challenge to racist doctrines and practices brought about by the Civil Rights movement – and the advertising industry’s responses to resist, defuse or endure such challenge – were both intense and tactical. Hence the US data which dominates Chapter Three provides a telling foretaste and context for changes to come as the world entered the phase of contemporary globalisation.

The origin of advertising data is significantly more diverse in Part Two. Chapters Five and Six scrutinise advertising and branding materials deploying imageries of the racial Other designed in the US, the UK, France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Spain and Australia. The few ads designed by agencies outside of Western countries qualify because either the advertising/branding material was designed by the regional branch of a multinational advertising network with headquarters in the West (e.g. JWT Thailand; BBDO South Africa), or was designed for an international corporation or organisation with headquarters in the West (e.g. Colgate-Palmolive’s Darkie rebranding; ARPA of UN’s ‘Their extinction is ours as well’ campaign), or both. Not only do they qualify by association, but most importantly the nature of the association dictates that it is the ‘lead office’ that originates the communication messages, sets the communication strategy and gate-keeps the creative outcomes.

The advertising data referenced in this study was sourced from a mixture of official archival resources and my own private collection. The archives include the University of Virginia Collections and Databases; Duke University Libraries Digital Collections; the Library of Congress Rare Book and Special Collections; University of Oxford John Johnson Collection; the British Library; the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library of Yale University; and the 1950-1970 collection of Ebony magazine. I began building the personal clippings collection when I was a design student in Hong Kong. For personal and professional interests, I have been collecting and receiving a great majority of these ads either in their original forms such as the actual brochure, packaging and agency/designer portfolios, or as my scrapbook of
advertisements and my photo albums of posters and billboards. The rest of ads in my collection are holiday snapshots of ‘interesting’ posters and logos, promotional items and magazine cut-outs given to me as ‘gifts’ from friends and families who are well aware of my all-consuming passion in collecting what some call ‘advertising junk’. The archival sources of advertisements are referenced in text, while those from my personal clippings collection are referenced in terms of their respective advertisers and agencies, and with the year of publication.

Although some of the image examples (e.g. Pictures 6.16, 6.29, 6.31) used in this thesis can also be seen in a number of existing publications either as part of an advertising showcase, or an example for discussion, I have used original ads from my private collection not only because the superior quality of these pieces are better suited for reproduction, but also because these original ads were collected earlier (at the time of their market circulation), rather than the time when they were included in the other books (the inclusions that came years after their circulation). In the event that visual data are sourced from the secondary literature, these are cited with respective publication references within the text.

DESIGN OF THE THESIS

Advertising is not produced in a vacuum, and there is no ‘degree zero’ in the language of advertising (Barthes, 1967). The same can also be said about the concept of race. As Clarke and colleagues put it “context is everything, and historical specificity is crucial” to understand the contemporary process of racial transformation (Clarke & Thomas, 2006: 32). To gain a deeper understanding of the research problem and to address the research question, each of the two parts in this thesis is designed to link and examine the contextual factors of specific historical moments that shaped the concepts of race with textual discourses of race in advertising.

In the three chapters under Part One, I establish a genealogy of the trope of racial Other and their manifestations in early advertising. Following Nietzsche and Foucault, prominent American philosopher Cornel West (2003) has effectively mapped a genealogy of modern racism. I share West’s interest in “the emergence (Entstehung) or the ‘moment of arising’ of the idea of white supremacy within the modern discourse in the West” (ibid: 299), albeit with a more specific interest on the other side of the coin – the trope of the racial Other within the modern
discourse in the West. How has the concept of the racial Other been established and developed in key historical moments within the social and cultural contexts of Transatlantic Slave Trading, the colonisation campaigns and the post-World War II and post-colonial racial struggles? And how have such aggregated concepts managed to operate as a colonialist racial script within advertising discourses? In Part One, I trace the ethos and developments of knowledge, ideology and discourses of race during three key historical moments, as evidenced through proto- and early advertisements.

Part Two contains the bulk of my contemporary case studies. The research is organised into three independent yet closely related chapters. The first outlines the relevant context in which the imageries of the racial Other are deployed, while the following two critically analyse a range of public interest and commercial campaigns. My motivation for examining public interest advertising campaigns as a category in my case studies in Part Two is in recognition of the important part these campaigns play in contemporary advertising discourse. It also reflects a need to expand our understanding of the strategic negotiation of the meaning of goods, in a commonly addressed and more articulated commercial sense, to include the strategic negotiation of the meaning of institutions, policies and beliefs in a less-attended social sense.

The six chapters contained within Parts One and Two cover the following material:

PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE traces the very root of the deployment of imageries of the racial Other in advertising within the historical moment of Transatlantic Slave Trading. It identifies a moment when the attitude towards Africans changed as a result of colonial conquests and the slave trade, and when the concept of race was reinvented to define a master/slave relationship. Taking into account the political economy and cultural practices of the slavery system, and examining advertising data from 18th-century slave trading ads and runaway slave ads in terms of their common tropes, this chapter unveils advertising’s earliest realisation of the potential commodity value of racialised visual symbols (Black bodies in this case) and of the need to adopt rhetoric to match the motivation behind the ad. By doing so, this chapter registers advertising’s earliest contribution to the mass communication of the colonial racial ideology, as these ads help to invent a conceptual, mythical and
visual equation between Blacks and slavery.

CHAPTER TWO examines a key moment in which the most intense political, intellectual and visual developments of the concept of ‘race’ are mounted. From the age of Enlightenment to the era of High Imperialism, leading Western statesmen, intellectuals and institutions contributed to the epistemology of race – this was the time when the colonial racial script established its authority, as essentialist racism, scientific racism and commodity racism were widely articulated throughout the colonialist West. This chapter pinpoints the most dominant notions, metaphors and categories about the racial Other in Western discourses. It discusses the ethos of the colonial racial script when racial differences were conceptually and visually coded into advertising languages through the eyes of colonial minds, and in the prints of early advertisements, posters and media materials. These materials, in effect, themselves represent the birth of the modern advertising industry itself.

CHAPTER THREE concerns the moment of arising of racial politics brought about by worldwide post-World War II and post-colonial anti-racism sentiment and the Civil Rights movement in the US. This is not only a moment when the ‘rules of the game’ and the rigid colonial racial script were seriously challenged for the first time, with unprecedented pressure for equal opportunity to present and be represented within a non-discriminatory light in advertising, but also a moment when an increase in Black-owned media and Black consumer power led to the development of new themes targeting this market segment. This chapter captures the strategic response of the advertising industry (particularly in the US) to this unprecedented attack, a response involving a ‘double movement’ where on the one hand imageries of the racial Other were typically rendered invisible in ads in mainstream media, while on the other they were used in ads placed in Black-owned media to lure Black audiences to consumerism.

PART TWO

CHAPTER FOUR locates advertising in the disjunctures produced within the political economy of a global commodity culture while also drawing on critiques of American-centric cultural imperialism. This chapter analyses the discursive factors which contribute to the rise of a global advertising industry, the dominant wisdom and practices within a global market and its contribution to global culture. It identifies the shifting market, identity, rhetoric and paradigm as the crucial axes affecting and complicating the use and usefulness of imageries of the racial Other.
in advertising. By applying the complexity of the conditions and challenges of the global commodity culture to the advertising industry – itself a major contributor to that culture – this chapter provides a broad contextual background for the analyses to come in Chapters 5 and 6.

CHAPTER FIVE analyses the use and usefulness of imageries of the racial Other in public interest campaigns for government and non-government organisations within the context of contemporary globalisation. This chapter scrutinises the imageries of the racial Other strategically deployed in campaigns promoting claims such as multiculturalism and racial equality, as well as initiatives such as foreign aid and environmental protectionism. The emergence in the 1980s of public interest advertising campaigns deploying imageries of the racial Other produced some new themes and strategies in using imageries of the racial Other as persuasive signs to promote political and social propositions and to influence current affairs.

CHAPTER SIX examines commercial campaigns for some of the leading global brands and newcomers within the context of contemporary globalisation. Realising of the commodity-sign value the racial Other possesses since its inception, the advertising industry has exploited and transformed ‘racial Otherness’ into some well-known themes and well-paying commercial icons. However, as the context has become more complex, racial identities have become more fluid, and the deployment and construction of imageries of the racial Other have arguably become more multifaceted. Each case studied in this chapter provides an example through which to consider the continuities and/or discontinuities of the broader colonial racial script.
PART ONE

A GENEALOGY OF THE TROPES OF THE RACIAL OTHER AND THEIR USE IN EARLY ADVERTISING
To understand contemporary processes of racial formation, it is critical to clarify the relationships between older imperial relationships and current configurations of power, to identify the ramifications of these two projects’ motivations for classifying populations, and to clarify their visions of the future. In other words, context is everything, and historical specificity is crucial.

Clarke & Thomas, 2006: 32

The idea of race began to take shape with the rise of a world political economy. The onset of global economic integration, the dawn of seaborne empire, the conquest of the Americas, and the rise of the Atlantic slave trade were all key elements in the genealogy of race.

Winant, 2004: 155

A more focused analysis of the cultural implications of ads is possible if we rethink advertising and commodity-signs in the context of the historical development of capitalist political economy and class relations.

Goldman, 1992: 22

Part One of this thesis constructs a genealogy of the tropes of the racial Other and their deployment in proto- and early advertising between the 16th century and up until the end of the 1970s. Against the backdrop of modernity, the first three chapters selectively chart key justifications and articulations of racial concepts by Western intellectuals and luminaries. These concepts formed the basis of a hegemonic and durable worldview of ‘race’. Despite the ideological biases of these
concepts, they individually and collectively created powerful ripple effects which sweep beyond their original domains of knowledge. For example, Darwin's theory of the preservation of favoured races in life struggles was used in the development of social Darwinism and Nazism; Hoffman's statistics on the insurability of Blacks not only helped stop the progress of anti-discrimination legislation against the insurance sector's racially discriminatory practices, but also helped maintain racial status quo in the wider society; Camper's theory of face angle not only affirmed racialised aesthetics, but was also been used to strengthen the concept of the Great Chain of Being. The West's political history is littered with the exploitations of concepts of race. Thomas Jefferson used specific concepts of race to justify the Jim Crow laws to maintain the slavery system in 18th century America; Benjamin Disraeli made race an obsession of 19th century Victorian Britain; while the notions behind Adolf Hitler's fanatical anti-Semitism led to the Holocaust during World War II.

Historical succession is, as Foucault suggests, a matter of contests and struggles between forces (1977: 151). In this regard, intellectual involvements in the battle over the meaning of race have unfolded over the course of the history of the West. The battle against racism and the struggle over racial identity and equality gained serious momentum post-World War II, a period examined in the third and final chapter of Part One. The inclusion of the post-colonial moment provides an appreciation of the reorganisation of power occurring at this time and its impact on the established status quo of racial ideology in cultural discourse.

Like politicians deploying the concept of the racial Other to serve their agendas in historical struggles centred around slavery, conquest, subjugation and ethnic cleansing, advertisers also have a history of using the dominant racial concept for a wide range of purposes in the modern era. What makes the racial discourse in early advertisements interesting are the ways in which it takes up the dominant racial beliefs established through scientific and political discourses and transforms them into culture artefacts and commercial devices. These racialised devices contribute to the political and economic advancements of the West over the Rest, armed with the power of visual persuasion. Even when only used as material evidence of a bigger picture of the development of racial concepts (as they are generally presented under Part One), advertising discourses reveal how a range of intellectual and social conceptions of the racial Other became integrated into earlier forms of commodity capitalism within the context of modernity.
If we approach advertising as a sphere of cultural production and communication through which dominant ideas are relayed, then we can construct a genealogy of how dominant ideas about ‘race’ were articulated and circulated at different historical moments through its discourses. My construction of a genealogy of the tropes of the racial Other and their use in early advertising is designed to travel across three key moments which map dominant notions of race and their embodiment in early advertisements. For the benefit of further contrast and analysis, the intellectual tenets surrounding and deriving from the Enlightenment toward the idea of the racial Other, their interplay with changing socio-economic conditions as expressed in early advertisements, are at the core of my discussion in this first part of the thesis.

Due to the diversity of disciplines involved in the body of knowledge on race, and that the dominant concept of race has never stopped being developed and transformed, its mobility and multiplicity cannot be grasped only through a linear lens. Most notably, complex dynamics are in play, the development of racial concepts are often influenced by the old and challenged by the new, and evidence of substantial overlap is extensive. A genealogical approach allows – indeed encourages – historical conditions and key events to be narrated like a “patchwork” (ibid). To tackle the challenge, when necessary I approach the genealogy in such a patchwork fashion and with an nonlinear way of seeing and narrating. This approach adopts Foucault’s stand in rejecting traditional historical accounts, which are characterised by treating events as uninterrupted continuities and stabilities. Through constructing a genealogy that links significant historical events and discourses with the tropes of the racial Other and their use in early advertising, I intend to reveal the potency and complexity in the articulation of race during the course of history on one hand, and the inscription of historical events on advertising’s use of the tropes of racial Other on the other hand. In so doing, I reveal the plurality, chaos and modification of the colonial concepts of race and the dominant attitudes over time toward the racial Other in the West, with the help of advertising from its earliest inception.
Most European societies were involved in African slavery in one way or another. And, in general, the image that most Europeans had of Africans was that of slaves, of subordinate and powerless people.

Spencer 2006: 61

Many people have probably never thought about the importance of advertising in the preservation of slavery. In fact, slavery – a practice by which human beings are owned by other human beings – would not have been such an effective institution without the vehicle of advertising.

Kern-Foxworth 1994: 3

In the long history of slavery, the Transatlantic Slave Trade – which saw the mass transportation of mainly West African slaves to the Americas – is considered the most widespread and systematic. Over a period of about 450 years from the middle of the 15th century, millions of Africans were forcibly transported overseas as slaves (Eltis, 2000). Spanish traders took the first African slave shipment to America in 1502, and the Portuguese and eventually the Dutch, French and English quickly followed suit (Rout, 1977). By the end of the 18th century Britain had come to dominate the trade, with around 150 slave ships leaving Liverpool, Bristol and London each year. According to the British Empire & Commonwealth Museum in Bristol, between 1698 and 1807 more than two-thirds of the city’s trade was directly
related to slavery (British Empire & Commonwealth Museum, 2007). Arguably, the wealth of the city of Bristol at the time was built on slave trading.

Slave trading developed as a lucrative commercial system. As the shipments of slaves docked in the Americas, traders used all available means of communication at the time, mostly a town crier or a local newspaper, to advertise the arrival and trading of slaves (Hughes, 1983: 14). Consequently, images of Black slaves began to emerge under a slavery theme among the 18th century print media ads. Slave-trading advertisements, according to Smith and Wojtowicz (1989), are among the most permanent historical documents available in terms of describing the people and conditions involved during this period.

As historical documents, slave-trading advertisements provide evidence of the way in which slave traders and speculators took advantage of the power of advertising to promote and support their trading regime. As Phillips (1966: 192) noted, apart from the more conventional ‘auction’ and ‘to be sold’ ads, advertising also promoted some rather left-field methods of slave selling, such as by raffle or by lottery. While slave trading was not totally dependent on advertising, research shows there is little doubt that advertisements served as a useful mechanism for that economy (Kern-Foxworth, 1994: 3).

The 18th century is marked by the broader rise of mass print media. Williams, for example, claims that from the 1700s until our own century, the history of communication is largely ‘the history of the Press’. In particular, he notes the rise of the earliest form of press ad and observes: “Finally comes the material which was in fact to sustain the eighteenth-century newspaper: the body of small commercial advertisements” (Williams, 1961: 204). Consequently, early newspaper advertising became technologically and culturally available to slave traders and owners. The growing pervasiveness of advertisements in newspapers in this period led Dr. Johnson to remark on their abundance and to the formulation of the dictum that ‘Promise, large promise, is the soul of an advertisement’ (The Idler, 20 January 1759). While Johnson’s comments referred to ads promoting consumer products such as razors and beauty lotions in 18th-century British newspapers, historians noted that the same explosion of advertising in US newspapers included a flowering of ads promoting the capture and trading of slaves (e.g. Hughes, 1983; Windley, 1983; Kulikoff, 1986; Smith & Wojtowicz, 1989).
This historical moment can also be considered one of the ‘pictorial turns’ (Mitchell, 2002: 92-94) in Western history, during which mass-produced images were becoming much more commonplace. While the pervasiveness of newspaper advertisements containing images may not seem significant by today’s standards, it had a major impact on the mediascapes of the time given the absence of the competing visual media platforms we have available today. It is within this historical context that I examine two major categories of slavery advertisements – the slave-trading advertisements and the runaway advertisements. My focus is on the continuities and contradictions in the visual discourse on race, and the construction of commodity sign values within the political economy of a slavery system.

The link between race and slavery is neither God-given nor primordial, but a constructed worldview that became a dominant idea in the West at this time. Slavery existed centuries before the concept of race was invented (Spencer, 2006: 57). While slavery has always operated on a power relationship, in its earliest form it was not race-based. In ancient Greece, “[s]laves were generally conquered peoples, but were not identified with any particular somatically defined or cultural group, even though they were often of a different ethnicity than the Greeks” (Blum, 2002: 110), and most slaves at the time, as Blum noted, were of light complexion. This kind of non-racial based slavery system can also be found in ancient Rome, where slaves could be prisoners of any skin colour and nationality caught on the frontiers of the empire (Thompson, 1989). Indeed, in his book Before Color Prejudice: The Ancient View of Blacks, Snowden claims there is no evidence that dark skin colour served as the basis of invidious distinctions anywhere in the ancient world (Snowden, 1983: 101-107).

The concept of race in its earliest modern form also does not necessarily invoke discriminatory connotations. Basil Davidson (1994) draws on a rich range of historical evidence to show that the Europeans’ initial encounter with the Africans did not originally invoke a belief in the link between Black backwardness and inferiority. According to Davidson:

In short, and again with the exception that so vast a subject must allow, the Europeans of the sixteenth century believed that they had found forms of civilization which were often comparable with their own, however differently and variously dressed and mannered. A later age would prefer to forget this, and would
roundly state that Africa knew nothing but a savage and indeed hopeless barbarism. [ibid: 43]

The above passage summarises the change in European attitudes toward Blacks from the initial encounter. The ‘later age’ Davidson refers to marks a shift of opinion towards race, as a result of European colonialism. In defining this key moment, Blum suggests:

Ideas of superiority and inferiority of entire peoples were largely a product of the encounter of Europeans with Africans and the indigenous peoples in the Americas, through conquest, colonization, and, later, the Atlantic slave trade. Contact with these groups prior to a full commitment to colonization and expansion by no means resulted in primarily negative image of them. (2002: 111. Original emphasis)

Despite popular assumptions, histories of first contacts reveal that the encounter with the racial Other did not necessarily evoke racism, but the wider apparatus of colonisation and key parts of it, such as the slave trade, did.

Hence, slave-trading ads reveal more than simply a commercial operation in action. They also offer insights into the visual articulation of racial stereotypes and commerce in its original and protean form. For example, Kern-Foxworth (1994) notes that the skillfulness of individual slaves was often emphasised in these advertisements. On the other side of the scale, however, those most vulnerable in a slavery system – women and children – were treated remarkably differently. Smith and Wojtowicz, for example, found that many ads described the Black female slaves on offer as being sold “for no fault but breeding” (Smith & Wojtowicz, 1989: 8). The cycles of childbearing for Black women and the hard labour demanded by the masters made women undesirable slaves (Cody, 1996). This unwanted status was even more obvious in the case of Black babies – they were regarded as burdens and, at times, even advertised as giveaways. Bradley (1987) draws on a number of Black baby ‘to be given away’ ads from the Boston Gazette and The Boston News Letter between 1770 and 1774 to exemplify this particular phenomenon which was found in Boston during this period, and to provide historical accounts of the conditions Black women and children suffered under the oppressive patriarchal culture and the dehumanising slavery system (c.f. Gaspar & Hine, 1996).

Although historians have relied on the analysis of archival advertisements to piece together an account of the social status and life of Blacks during that historical
period, their collective focus was on written language. As rightly identified by Kern-Foxworth (1994), in the field of advertising studies, the importance of slavery related ads was generally not realised. While Kern-Foxworth’s study remains the most in-depth analysis of slavery related advertisements to date, consistent with her treatment of advertising data in other periods, she does not take into account visual aspects. Published discussions of the strategies behind the visual depiction of the slaves in these ads also cannot be found. While representations of the racial Other at the time were still strongly dependent on the power of written language, many slavery related ads used the power of visual language. The following sections make an explicit case for recognising the rising importance of visual culture in this 18th-century historical moment, where a deep belief in ‘knowing by seeing’, and an enriched depictional vocabulary were key elements of the visual culture of the time (Prude, 1991).

1.1 ‘PRIME HEALTHY NEGROES’

The following observations demonstrate how visual interventions were used to serve the commercial interests of the slave traders and speculators, and ultimately the interests of the colonial power. Limited by the image reproduction technology of the time, the most frequently used visual devises were woodcut images and special typographic treatments. Although these ads may look unpolished by today’s standards, they nonetheless provide a means to appreciate advertising imagery’s early contribution to the formation of racial ideology.

Consider the following two examples from the University of Virginia database. Picture 1.1 is a 1769 leaflet circulated in Charleston, South Carolina to promote an event where, according to the copy, “a cargo of ninety-four prime, healthy Negroes consisting of thirty-nine men,
fifteen boys, twenty-four women and sixteen girls” were to be sold. Picture 1.2 is a 1738 newspaper advertisement which appeared in the American Weekly Mercury, offering “A parcel of fine young healthy, Negroe slaves, boys and girls” for sale.

Enslaved Black people in both ads were depicted with the aid of illustration. In the case of the leaflet, an effort to represent the gender and age groups of the slaves for sale is observable. This illustration not only served to provide a physical description, it used details such as costume and posture to assign value to these Blacks to attract prospective slave buyers. It helped them picture what these enslaved Negro men and women could do for them once at their disposal – most typically men for plantation labour, and women and children for domestic needs.

Unlike the leaflet that promotes a big slave-trading event offering nearly 100 slaves, the newspaper ad does not mention the number of slaves to be sold, but judging by its description and scale that number was presumably considerably less. In comparison with the former, its depiction of the Negro slaves is also less sophisticated. Nonetheless, like the leaflet, the visual intervention in the ad helps to enhance the written sales pitch: the imagery of three Blacks with different builds and in slightly different costumes in this illustration helps to convey the advertiser’s message that there were a variety of slaves on offer; the feathers on their heads add a sense of non-threatening exoticism; and their expression of cheerfulness promotes their commodity value as desirable properties to potential buyers.

Remarkably, to maximise the traders’ profit margin, the ads made an effort to dress up the Negro slaves (not literally, as all characters were depicted nearly naked in these ads). Not only were these Black characters illustrated in good spirits and of non-threatening appearance, the images were reinforced with words such as ‘prime, healthy’ and ‘fine young healthy’ in the respective copy for both ads. This is despite the fact that these people were forcibly removed from their homeland, and despite the inhuman conditions they endured during the journey through the Middle Passage in which many died and others arrived in poor health. In fact, a large number of slaves died during the first year of their arrival, during the so-called ‘seasoning’ phase (Ploski & Williams, 1989).

Two significant characteristics can be identified from these slave-trading ads. The first is the ‘default’ use of Black imagery, which denotes the concept of slaves using illustrative icons of Blacks so exclusively that no other racial identities can be found. The second is the consistent discourse that described slaves as property. The former
trend is also apparent in runaway ads in the following section, so I will concentrate on the latter trend here.

With the help of words and the typographic enhancements, slave-trading ads consistently represented Blacks as inanimate objects or properties that were ‘imported’ to the Americas as ‘a cargo’ or ‘a parcel’, as these two 1770s examples and many others demonstrate. If the 18th-century slave-trading ads helped to spread the rhetoric of the slave as ‘property’ in America, this dehumanisation of Blacks gained an institutional seal of approval in the famous Dred Scott case of 1857 when Chief Justice Roger B. Taney proclaimed that: “Negroes were seen only as property; they were never thought of or spoken of except as property”. According to Smedley (1997), given that property was considered more sacred than people in American law, this ruling meant that the property rights of masters overshadowed the human rights of slaves. Effectively, with the backing of institutional power, the American slavery system dehumanised the ‘negroes’ and transformed them into ‘things’ that belonged to the master class and, in so doing, stripped them of their human rights, despite Jefferson’s much publicised statement: “All men are created equal”.

In short, in helping to promote this aspect of the colonial economy which profited from what Young calls “an exchange of bodies as of goods, or rather of bodies as goods” (Young, 1995: 181), Black imageries were used in slave-trading ads to sell Blacks themselves as prime properties by and for the slave traders. In the tradition of the racial discourses outlined here, and in the interest of justifying slavery, Blacks were conceptually dehumanised by categorising them as property. In the interest of attracting buyers and increasing profits, a false sense of these Black properties’ ‘good condition’ was created, and the pain and suffering they endured denied. In the process of appropriating Black skins, Black bodies and other Black symbols, the construction of racially based commodity signs showcases the earliest evidence of the play of race politics in advertising discourses, in which Blackness was at once dehumanised and idealised. It is through this manipulation of racial Otherness, that I located a key moment where the recognition of racial Otherness was attached to commodity value in the slave-trading market.
1.2
CUNNING ROGUISH OUTLAWS

The Transatlantic Slave Trade operated within an oppressive social and economic relationship whereby slaves were often subjected to extremely brutal and inhuman treatment. As Feagin suggests, White-on-Black oppression was fundamental and systemic in US history, and superexploitation and extreme violence were central to the slavery system (Feagin, 2006: 53-84). The extreme discriminatory measures that the enslaved racial Others – the Negro, mulatto and Indian slaves – endured can hardly be imagined but can be proved by the chilling official documents of the time which legitimised the oppressions:

All servants imported and brought into the Country... who were not Christians in their native Country... shall be accounted and be slaves. All Negro, mulatto and Indian slaves within this dominion... shall be held to be real estate. If any slave resists his master... correcting such slave, and shall happen to be killed in such correction... the master shall be free of all punishment... as if such accident never happened (1705 Virginia General Assembly declaration).

The high level of oppression and brutality endured by the slaves was not readily accepted. Despite the harsh punishments imposed by the institution of slavery, there were a significant number of slave rebellions in the Americas. In their struggle with the master class, many enslaved people rebelled by running away from captivity. Within this context, another theme of 18th-century advertising featuring the racial Other emerged in America – 'Runaway Slave' ads. The number of these ads was substantial, estimated to be among the thousands by the mid-18th century (Windley, 1983). By the second half of the century, these ads had become routine cultural artefacts (Kulikoff, 1986; Prude, 1991).

The majority of the runaway ads appeared in newspapers in the form of classified ads, with some in the form of posters as noted by Jackson (1970). A perusal of the collection of advertisements from 18th-century Virginian newspapers (University of Virginia) and other historical documents (e.g. Windley, 1983) shows that the use of imagery remained a luxury in 18th-century runaway slave advertisements, and the representations of the racial Other were still heavily dependent on written language.
Designed to communicate messages announcing runaway slaves and offering rewards for their capture and return, any noticeable characteristics that would assist in identifying and capturing the runaway slaves were listed in great detail among these ads. As a result, descriptions such as names and aliases, gender, age, physical features, and distinguishing marks, clothing and apparel formed the most basic components of runaway ads.

Although there is a lack of published analyses of these ads from within the advertising discipline, historians (e.g. Mullin, 1972; Windley, 1983) have used the archival runaway slave ads as evidence of the life experiences and struggles of slaves within the slavery system. Mullin (1972), for example, interprets the copy of some of the runaway slave ads to help establish an understanding of the reasons behind the slave rebellions. The economy of inclusion was also noted to be in play in the placement of runaway ads. The masters would not bother to advertise the runaways if they were not considered as productive labourers or valuable slaves. As Kern-Foxworth once observed, advertisements for slaves who were old, disabled or otherwise unable to work were often never placed (1994: 12).

A study using 1750-1800 data from American newspaper runaway ads (Prude, 1991) also yields some findings and understanding of aspects of the visual presence of 18th-century slaves. Prude uses the term ‘unfree laborers’ to study a particular group of ‘runaways’, as opposed to fugitive soldiers, criminals and missing family members. Among the runaway ads, he focuses on Black slaves, but also includes convict labourers from Britain, and other non-chattel slaves such as the so-called bound and indentured servants. With an interest in understanding how people at the bottom of society were described and seen by those with power over them, and working primarily on written descriptions, Prude finds that the most obvious distinctive characteristic of the runaway ads is their focus on plebeian figures. He suggests that skin colour, as well as unfashionable costume and ‘servant-like’ bearing, were frequently used in advertising copy to provide visual references for a higher-class readership (ibid: 129-130). Such descriptions used words to depict the slaves as an identifiable ‘lower sort’ in the society, while helping the slaveholders to capture their runaway subjects. In a culture deeply sensitive to all things visual, Prude argues, the appearance of runaways through the detailed description in the ads should be understood through a range of social relationships, which include race.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, studies into slavery related advertisements often focus on the written language, with a lack of attention to the visual aspects. Yet
visual language is powerful and dynamic. If we are prepared to look deeper it allows
us to learn not only about the visible characteristics and style of the ads, but also
the hidden cultural and social relationships. For this thesis, I have chosen three
runaway ads from different papers published in different States, and advertising
runaway slaves with different descriptions.

What interests me here are the similarities as well as the marked differences between
these runaway ads and the slave-trading ads. Judging by the collection of decades
of runaway slave ads from the University of Virginia database, the similarity
involves the tendency to apply shared illustrative icons in ads across times, regions
and media ownership. Picture 1.3 (Virginia Gazette, Williamsburg, 15 February 1770)
exemplifies a typical 18th-century style of runaway ad. It is notable that the majority
of ads of the same genre within the Virginia database repeatedly used the very
same image. This practice of repeated use of a common ‘runaway slave’ image was
carried into the mid-19th century. Picture 1.4 is a runaway slave advertisement
published in New Orleans Picayune (1 July 1849). This 19th-century depiction of the
runaway slave is remarkably similar to the one created in the previous century.

The typical visual devices used in runaway ads often denote a Black-skin character
as a ‘slave’. Such a character often carries some sort of possession, and the posture
conveys the concept of a fugitive ‘on the run’. One of these generic Black imageries,
similar to the examples shown in this section, would have been used indiscriminately
in many other runaway ads – irrespective of whether the skin colour of the subject
in the ad was Black or mulatto or White, and whether the runaways fled alone or
in a group. In other words, such imagery is found to be not necessarily racially, nor
quantitatively true to their respective written description. In Picture 1.4 for example,
the same illustration of a Black runaway slave is seen in the middle of this ad, yet
according to the copy the runaway slave in question is described as a ‘mulatto’. The
same discrepancy can be found in Picture 1.5 (Rivington’s New York Gazetteer, 15
September 1774). While the ad typographically emphasises its subject as ‘A Negro Man’ and visually depicts a Black character, the copy reveals the runaway slave to be of ‘somewhat a yellow complexion’. The same one-size-fits-all approach applied in many other ads – the generic Black image created was not only used in ads aimed at runaway slaves of Negro origin, but also of Native American, Scottish and Irish origins.

Given this one-size-fits-all approach, this is perhaps a proper place to raise a key similarity between slave-trading ads and runaway ads – the default-style deployment of Black imagery across slavery ads, which I flagged in the previous section. Slave-trading ads shares the same problem as runaway ads in that illustrative icons of Blacks denote the concept of slaves so exclusively that no other racial identity can be found in these ads. Such a default setting is hardly natural, given the fact that Blacks were not all slaves (Horton & Horton, 1969) before the establishment of a race-based slave system in America. Conversely, slaves were not necessarily Black. Native Americans were also enslaved (Perdue, 1979; Sturm, 2002) as well as, arguably, some Whites from Britain (Jordan & Walsh, 2008).

Why is this blanket use of Black imagery in both the slave-trading ads and runaway ads significant for this thesis? Because it can be seen as early evidence for using a racial signifier (Blackness, in this case) to convey a complicated conceptual link between ‘Blacks’ and ‘slaves’. I believe it is better to be considered the visual devices used in slavery ads as symbols rather than mere descriptions. In other words, the symbolic Blackness generalised in these ads not only stood for Black people, but also for the concept of slaves. Eventually, such symbolism fixed Blacks as slaves, as inanimate items, and as inhabiting the bottom reaches of the society. In runaway ads, for example, Blackness was assigned the meaning of a kind of lost property that ‘belonged’ (borrowing the language repeatedly used in the copy) to the master class. The construction of meaning through visual devices and their frequent repetition in mass media contributed to the formation of a myth that Blacks were ‘natural slaves’. In so doing, slavery related ads at once connoted the equation between Blacks as slaves, while reinforcing the conceptual linkage between Blacks and slaves.

I will now turn to the marked differences between slave-trading ads and runaway ads. Although one can write about the differences in terms of sophistication and particulars of depiction and style between the former and the latter, I am more
interested in pointing out the differences in the rhetoric on the same concept – the Black slaves.

The differences in rhetoric between the slave-trading ads and runaway slave ads are significant when surveying archival data, and are determined according to the interests of the advertisers and driven by the political economy of the slavery system. Slave-trading ads glossed over the poor physical condition of the slaves, while the runaway ads smeared their character and stripped them of their dignity.

While the slave-trading ads collectively constructed an attractive picture of the Black slaves and boasted of their condition and skills, the runaway slave ads painted an ugly picture. This is evident when reading many runaway ads. Picture 1.3 provides an example in which the derogatory terms ‘cunning’, ‘roguish’ and ‘deceitful’ are used to paint an undignified picture of the runaway slaves. Character attacks were not limited to written language. For example, the two visual devices taken from the Library of Congress’ Rare Book and Special Collections (1800) in Picture 1.6 consistently portray slaves negatively, in great contrast to the portrayal of the desirable and non-threatening features seen in slave-trading ads. From facial expression to posture, Black slaves were depicted as bad natured, untrustworthy, reprehensible and dangerous crooks, if not criminals.

The significance of this in relation to this thesis is that it implicates slavery ads, in the form of proto-advertising, as a source in establishing the negative stereotypes associated with Blacks for the future. The reading of slavery related ads, and the identification of the marked differences in rhetoric between the ads aimed at selling slaves and the ads aimed at controlling slaves, is also significant. It is by looking back to the earliest form of advertising as we know it in the West, that we observe the raw source of racial stereotyping and the original form of racial commodification.
Spencer has rightly claimed, “the image that most Europeans had of Africans was that of slaves” (2006: 61). I think it can also be said that the imagery of Black slaves used in slavery related ads from the 18th century onwards helped to complete and circulate such an image in the most easily understood, vivid and memorable visual way.

Together with other visual regimes, such as colonial exhibitions and the expos popular among colonial nations in the 18th- and 19th-centuries, slavery related advertisements in the Americas during this period acted as ‘go-betweens’ in social transactions – using Mitchell’s term (2002: 97) – which contributed to the construction of human relationships. During the pinnacle of the slavery system brought by European colonisation to the New World, the human relationships under construction were those of power relationships between the colonialist West and its colonised Other, between the superior Whites and the inferior Blacks, and the commodity relationships between slaveholders and the enslaved Africans. With reference to this time and context, the slavery moment outlined in Chapter One demonstrates some unique aspects of visual colonisation centred in the system of slavery and the use of the tropes of the racial Other in print advertising during its infancy.

Furthermore, the polarised discourses of the racial Other embodied in slavery-related advertisements demonstrate that the depictions of the racial Other, while all degrading in tone, differ in their representational strategies and rhetoric – slave trading ads commodify the racial Other for profit, while runaway ads demonise them for control. In short, focusing on the construction and discourse of race within the political economy of the slavery system, it is observable that the tropes were created essentially for the operation and maintenance of the slavery system.

In Chapter One, I have demonstrated how the identities of the racial Other were polarised, how the rhetoric was altered, and how the commodity value of racial Otherness was realised and attached to the skin and body of Blacks in slavery related advertisements. In Chapter Two, my focus turns to the ‘scientifically supported’ discourses of race from Enlightenment to the time of High Imperialism and their embedding within the nascent institution of advertising.
… it is a fact that at least since the seventeenth century what is called humanism has always been obliged to lean on certain conceptions of man borrowed from religion science or politics. Humanism serves to color and to justify the conceptions of man to which it is after all obliged to take recourse.

Foucault, 1984: 44

The modern epoch was founded on European imperialism and African Slavery. Both these systems were organized racially.

Winant, 2004: 205

… Victorian advertising took explicit shape around the reinvention of racial differences. Commodity kitsch made possible, as never before, the mass marketing of empire as an organized system of images and attitudes.

McCintosh, 1995: 130

This chapter traces and examines the interrelationship between the colonial racial script and the coding of race in early advertising amid a rapidly developing 19th-century consumer culture. Amid the political economy of that key historical moment, dominant colonial racial ideas, such as that of a racial hierarchy and racial aesthetics, framed the ways in which the racial Other was perceived, described and pictured in cultural discourses. In advertising, the colonial racial script informed, inspired and framed the coding of the racial Other conceptually and visually.
Conversely, as advertising draws, translates, renders and embeds colonial racial ideology – and transforms its stock of stereotypical racial metaphors into visual signs used to sell everyday items – it also popularises the emerging dominant, elitist philosophical and scientific racial notions. Put another way, it makes them come alive and transforms them into everyday truths via the form of commodity racism.

One of the key characteristics of the 19th century was its intense development of colonial racial concepts which complemented the peak period of European imperial expansion. Key among these concepts was that of ‘scientific racism’, along with the centuries-long accumulation of racial discourses from humanities and religion. The resulting racial script not only provided the intellectual underpinning for various colonial projects but was also simultaneously adopted by the cultural industries of the time, including advertising which was in its infancy as a cultural institution.

The institutional formation of professional advertising in the 19th century coincided with the age of High Imperialism in which there was a shift from colonialistic territorial expansion and slave trading to imperialistic economic exploitation when European imperial nations used their power to seize new markets and control cheap sources of raw materials. The escalation was not only a result of the Industrial Revolution, but also a continuation of the spirit of its predecessor – the commercial revolution and the earliest development of capitalism. It is against this backdrop that advertising found its space and importance within the developing consumer culture in the West. As Schmidt summarises:

A vast consumer culture was already flourishing in the late-eighteenth-century London and the spreading of that culture in North America was a matter of both immediate and prolonged enterprise. This “empire of goods” was built on an array of new industries that made commodities of everything from pottery to pets, from clocks to cutlery, from leisure and entertainment to shaving and soap. With the need to match the rising levels of industrial production with comparable boosts in demand, the burgeoning consumer culture was founded as well on ever-expanding forms of advertising, marketing, and promotion—newspaper puffs, bow-window displays, handbills, fashion magazines, and fashion dolls. (Schmidt, 1997: 32)

As a result of this expansion in production and consumption, the 19th century witnessed the emergence of the advertising agency, and the systematic development of the business of professional advertising which employed techniques from the
fields of psychology and statistics, as well as professional copy writers and artists (Packard, 1957; Leiss et al, 2005). This increased professional specialisation not only reflects a change in the way the industry functioned operationally, but also signals the beginning of a more sophisticated approach in communicating advertising messages in which rhetoric and strategy became major focuses of attention.

Among the many roles that advertising played in the growth of consumer culture, it was chiefly responsible for the emergence of what has been termed by McClintock (1995) as ‘commodity racism’. While utilising the discourses of scientific racism that saturated elite 19th-century literature, commodity racism was remarkable in that it was not classbound in the same way as science, philosophy and other forms of ‘exclusive’ knowledge. Embodied in advertising, evolutionary racist notions in their visual forms were easier to package, communicate and bring to life for a mass market. Through leisure activities, such as going to a freak show or an Expo as promoted by posters and brochures, ordinary citizens became cognisant of the primitive sexuality and conduct of the ‘Hottentot Venus’ from Africa or the ‘Man Eaters’ from Australia. Flipping through the pages of newspapers, magazines and story books they might visually learn about the ‘Half-devil and Half-child’ Filipino and the ‘Blood Thirsty Savage’ Indian. Going to stores, they were exposed to ads and packaging showing Black adults and children as servants and Sambos. In other words, the colonial racial ideology that had been established through institutional and intellectual discourses was translated into stereotypical visual imagery and racial iconography and effectively spread to the wider population through early advertising and promotional materials.

### 2.0.1 THE RISE OF SCIENTIFIC/PHILOSOPHICAL RACISM

Beginning in the 1840s, according to Feagin: “[T]he deep structure of racialized oppression set in place by European colonists and their descendants to exploit the oppressed African Americans was gradually extended to other people of color” (2006: 16). The colonial project during this period was not only “the most important in magnitude”, but was also considered “the most fraught with consequences, resulting from the European expansion. It overturned in a brutal manner the history of the peoples it subjugated” (Balandier, 1974: 34).

As colonial expansion reached its pinnacle, Western colonist nations faced the challenge of intellectually justifying their territorial conquests and subjugation of
the racial Other. The shift in the West towards science as a dominant epistemological paradigm had occurred since the Enlightenment which, according to Jacob (1988; 2001), was an important framework within which that justification could be framed. She noted:

In the midst of an international political crisis that Protestants defined as a struggle against arbitrary authority, science presented new standards for arriving at the truth. … Science stood for philosophical elegance — the elimination of any abstract notion for which no physical reality seemed to exist. (2001: 15)

Prior notions of race, informed by religious doctrine and the experience of early colonial exploration, were by-and-large built on observational opinions and intuitive generalisations. For example, reporting his initial encounter with the Native Americans, Columbus painted those who greeted him with an apparently friendly attitude as ‘simple children of nature’, while those with a hostile attitude in subsequent encounters were described as ‘cannibals’. The former were considered to be receptive to tutelage in civilisation and Christianity, while the latter must be subdued by force or eliminated. Sixteen out of twenty-two known editions of Columbus’s letter were published in Europe in the late 15th century, not only in Spanish but also in other major languages such as Latin, Italian and German and in English in the early 16th century (Dickason, 1997: 5-6). During the Valladolid debate (1550-1551), held in front of a Spanish royal audience and often attributed as the first and last public debate about race on such a scale, Columbus’s description of Indian cannibalism, Aristotle’s notion of the ‘natural slave’ and the Bible were used by renowned Spanish philosopher Sepúlveda in his arguments supporting the forceful enslavement of Native Americans. Sepúlveda unambiguously generalised that Indians were “barbarous and inhuman peoples abhorring all civil life, customs and virtue” (quoted in Pagden, 1982: 116). Furthermore, he argued that the Indians could only be made useful to the Spaniards and amenable to Christianity by way of force through slavery. By the 17th century, Petty’s influential book on race The Scale of Creatures (1677) was published. Transforming racial differences into a colour-coded racial hierarchy, it proclaimed that people of colour belonged to a distinct and inferior species located between White men and animals.

These early racial debates and notions proved to be of great value in serving the system of colonisation. As key actors, empires, statesmen and intellectuals supported and reinforced each other, and in so doing, these ideas eventually became popular beliefs in the West. However, in a culture where people had began to believe that
science was the foundation of truth about mankind and the natural world, it became less convincing to continually proclaim the inferiority of other races without scientific proof. As a result, as Jacob has pointed out, to maintain the credibility of existing racial beliefs, scientific backing was required more than ever (1988: 191). US President Thomas Jefferson’s call for scientific proof of Black inferiority is expressed in his only published book *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1787), and stands as one example of this phenomenon in racial politics. Despite his official declaration that “All men are created equal”, he “believed fervently that all persons of African descent should not be permitted to reside in the new republic unless they were enslaved” (Magnis, 1999: 491). Blacks, in Jefferson’s mind, had a lesser share of beauty, possessed lesser ability in reasoning, imagination and poetry, required less sleep, and were only capable of superficial emotions compared with Whites. He also asserted, “their [Black] inferiority is not the effect merely of their condition of life” (Jefferson, 1955: 138-143). To add currency to his observations and ‘suspicions’ and to support his policy, Jefferson needed scientific backing.

While publicly against slavery, Jefferson owned 175 slaves, up to 225 at the peak of his slave-holding (Finkelman, 2003). More ironically, as Waldstreicher has pointed out, despite his rhetoric, Jefferson “put black inferiority on a scientific basis and, in doing so, helped lay the groundwork for the modern, scientific racism, which would prove so useful to proslavery advocates in the antebellum period” (Waldstreicher, 2002: 37). The contradictions between two of Jefferson’s legacies – liberty and slavery – points to a key moral paradox of the Enlightenment.

The intellectual project of racial classification found as much support in philosophy as it did in science. Prominent Enlightenment intellectual figures such as Blumenbach, Hume, Kant and Hegel all contributed to the idea of race, mainly expressing White supremacist disdain for Africans and African culture (Eze, 1997). Hegel, for example, typified such thinking when he proclaimed: “The Negro is an example of animal man in all his savagery and lawlessness, and if we wish to understand him at all, we must put aside all our European attitudes…nothing consonant with humanity is to be found in his character” (Hegel, 1997: 127-128). Between the 17th and 18th centuries, Blumenbach, Kant, along with Bernier, Buffon, Linnaeus, Meiners, Voltaire and others developed their own systems for classifying and rating the known races of the world. Despite these leading Enlightenment thinkers’ different approaches, and different positions on slavery and the humanity of ‘race’, the forms and shapes of racial classifications and hierarchies they developed and promoted, without exception, positioned Whites on
the top of the scale and Blacks on the bottom, with the remaining coloured races in between.

2.0.2 THE AESTHETIC DIMENSIONS OF RACIAL CLASSIFICATION

While the most frequently articulated (and now criticised) aspects of inferior qualities assigned to the non-White races were centred on intellectual and moral grounds that characterised their inward traits, a less attended yet significant aesthetic dimension recurs within these discourses in racial classification. For example, rather than categorising races into colour-coded groups such as white, yellow, black (Hornius, 1666) or white, yellow, red, black (Linnaeus, 1735), Meiners (1775) divides race into two categories – light and dark – according to skin tone. These skin-tone specific racial groups were then attributed with opposite aesthetic values. The outcome of this aesthetic judgment is presented as a ‘light, beautiful’ race, and a ‘dark, ugly’ race. As we will see in Section 2.1, Meiners was far from alone among Western thinkers in making such discriminatory judgments based on the outward traits of the racial Other.

The aesthetic dimension of colonial racial classification is significant to works in visual culture and, in particular, the visual representation of the racial Other in advertising that is the core of this thesis. I argue that racially organised aesthetic notions contributed to colonial aesthetics and the deployment of the racial Other in advertising: from the very moment when non-White characters were considered useful and deployable, to the continued play of visual codes, racial identities and various discursive modes. Colonial aesthetics not only set standards that deemed non-White races ugly, they also preemptively deemed them abnormal and, more importantly, assigning social meanings to these aesthetic and normative standards. As a result, the said ‘ugly’ and ‘abnormal’ outward traits of the racial Other were coded with inferior inward traits in areas such as humanity, morality and intellect, and thus determined their place in a civilised world, as the following sections will show.
Animalism has been a fundamental theme in colonial discourses concerning both
the outward and inward traits of the racial Other. Hegel’s indicative and influential
work, *The Philosophy of History*, published in 1837, describes inferior characteristics
of Africans through tropes such as ‘animal man’, ‘barbarism and savagery’,
‘primitive’ and ‘animality’. These are employed by Hegel to build his case for
eliminating Africa from being considered as a legitimate part of his World’s History
(ibid: 124-128).

While Hegel gave no place to the Africans in world history, other leading thinkers
fixed a place for Blacks in the ‘Great Chain of Being’. In an *Essay on the Inequality of
the Human Races* (1853–1855), Gobineau wrote: “The negroid variety is the lowest,
and stands at the foot of the ladder. The animal character, that appears in the shape
of the pelvis, is stamped on the negro from birth, and foreshadows his destiny”.
(2003: 195). To understand how negative values were assigned to the facial features
of Blacks, consider the explicit and brutal language of Voltaire. To prove his claim
that “The negro race is a species of men different from ours as the breed of spaniels
is from that of greyhounds”, each part of a Black face became a symbol of
inferiority:

Their round eyes, their flat nose, their lips which are always thick,
their differently shaped ears, the wool on their head, the measure
even of their intelligence establishes between them and other
species of men prodigious differences. (quoted in Cohen, 2003:
85)

In the mind’s eye of these much-respected intellectuals, Africans and their Blackness
were perceived and proclaimed as everything opposite to the Europeans: the
subhuman/non-human Other; the primitive Other; the barbarous Other; the wild
Other; the undeveloped Other; the unhistorical Other; the unintelligent Other; and
the lowliest Other.

Physical anthropometry adding its weight and dimension to this colonial racial
script. It was a popular branch of the 18th and 19th-century study of race in which
scientists made a range of judgments based on the physical measurements of the body forms of different races. Metric dimensions of the human figure, particularly the skull/face and skeleton/body, were studied and the results assigned with meaning. These physical measurements were promoted as indicators for evaluating human evolution, abilities, skills and behavioural attributes, as well as beauty, ideal and normality.

The following subsections identify three general racial scripts generated by Western thinkers, scientists, statesmen and cultural elites. Their manifestations in early advertising are examined to demonstrate the visual pollination of popular culture by the elite ideas of racial Otherness circulating at the time.

2.1.1 THE UNCIVILISED OTHER

‘Uncivilised’ was one labels frequently attached to the racial Other in colonial racial discourses.

This categorisation strengthened the myth of the naturalness of Europe’s dominant global position and the mythology that it was her superior traits (not action or occasion) that had put it on the top of the world. With this myth in mind, colonisation became justifiable in the spirit of God-given noble duty and progress. Enlightening the darkest corner of the world became a European mission and this was communicated via the call to “Take up the White Man’s Burden” as British poet Rudyard Kipling so famously put it – an ideological imperative that was quickly embodied within a Pears’ advertisement in the US (Picture 2.1).

Kipling’s poem *White Man’s Burden* was written at the end of 1898 during the signing of the Treaty of Peace in Paris for the Spanish-American war over Puerto Rico, Guam, the Philippines and Cuba. It appeared in the 12 February 1899 issue of the popular *McClure’s magazine* days after the Philippine-American war was declared, and when the US was at a crossroad as to whether the country should join the European scramble for empire. Urging the US to become an imperial power, Kipling utilised his “power of observation, originality
of imagination, virility of ideas and remarkable talent for narration” (Nobel Prize Official Website) – a talent that won him the 1907 Nobel Literature Prize – and started his influential poem with this verse:

Take up the White Man’s Burden – Send forth the best ye breed
– Go, bind your sons to exile To serve your captives’ need; To wait in heavy harness, On fluttered folk and wild – Your new-caught, sullen peoples, Half-devil and half-child.

_White Man’s Burden_ is influential in many regards. Firstly, it was widely circulated. Apart from appearing in the _McClure’s_ – the popular monthly magazine that helped shape the moral compass of the time – it is estimated that the poem appeared in at least 600,000 copies of newspapers across the nation, reaching more than one million US readers (Murphy, 2010: 23). Secondly, it was a timely contribution to the propaganda urging the US to become the newest colonial power, replacing Spain in the Pacific. Conscious of the debate within the US about imperialism, Kipling sent a copy of the poem before its release to Theodore Roosevelt, the then Governor of New York (and soon to become the 25th Vice-president and 26th President of the United States). Roosevelt had been arguing for the annexation of The Philippines so the US would have a proud place in the world. The poem obviously caught Roosevelt’s attention and appealed to his political agenda as he forwarded it to another leading expansionist in the US politic – Henry Cabot Lodge – recommending it as “rather poor poetry, but good sense from the expansionist viewpoint” (ibid: 31). Thirdly, it inspired political discourse as well as advertising discourse at the time. In political language, carrying on the line of the _White Man’s Burden_, the then US President McKinley portrayed The Philippines as having been “dropped into our lap” and the US as duty-bound to bring Christianity and the benefits of Western civilisation to the “unenlightened” areas of the world, to the people who were “unfit for self-government”. In his words, “there was nothing left for us to do but to take them all, and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them, and, by God’s grace, do the very best we could by them, as our fellowmen for whom Christ also died” (in Tucker, 2009: 929). In visual language, eight months after the poem was published in _McClure’s_, Pears’ Soap launched an advertisement in October 1899 with the very same title – ‘The White Man’s Burden’.

The ad conveyed the colonial relationship through both words and images. Among the written and visual languages, there is no shortage of familiar concepts and expressions from those racist notions highlighted earlier in this section, albeit they
are twisted to create a link between the superiority of the product with the superiority of the White man. The copy reads:

The first step towards lightening The White Man’s Burden is through teaching the virtues of cleanliness. Pears’ Soap is a potent factor in brightening the dark corners of the earth, as civilization advances, while amongst cultural of all nations it holds the highest place—it is the ideal toilet soap.

The colonised racial Other was not positioned as the main character in this advertisement. That honour was reserved for well-known colonist, Admiral George Dewey. The then Commodore of the US Navy’s Asiatic Squadron became a national hero after he led the US Navy’s demolition of the Spanish fleet in the first battle of the Spanish-American war in Manila Bay in 1889. He also negotiated the help of the locals, led by Filipino independent leader General Emilio Aguinaldo who played a crucial role in ending the Spanish occupation (ibid: 114; 177). To support the advertiser’s claims, Dewey was depicted in the centre of the ad washing his hands with Pears’ soap. The well-equipped washroom helped to construct the Western ideal of a civilised living, and Dewey’s white US Navy uniform, with his rank on his shoulders, added to his fame as a national hero and made him an ideal symbol of the White man who would bear the ‘burden’ of civilising a subjugated race.

The ironic events that followed the joint effort to drive the existing coloniser Spain out of the Philippines not only turned Filipinos from de facto allies to wartime enemies of the US, but also determined the manner in which they were depicted. A series of events led the newborn Philippine government to conclude that the US actually “came to the Philippines not as a friend, but as an enemy masking as a friend” – as Filipino historian Teodoro Agoncillo puts it. Prompted by the realisation that the US had no interest in the liberating the islands (The Library of Congress) and that the true nature of the ‘independent’ illusion was no more than replacing an old colonial master from Spain with another from the US, on 5 January 1899, President Aguinaldo declared his country’s position to the world:

My government cannot remain indifferent in view of such a violent and aggressive seizure of a portion of its territory by a nation which arrogated to itself the title of champion of oppressed nations. Thus it is that my government is disposed to open hostilities if the American troops attempt to take forcible possession of the Visayan islands. I denounce these acts before the
world, in order that the conscience of mankind may pronounce its infallible verdict as to who are true oppressors of nations and the tormentors of mankind. (quoted in Agoncillo, 1990: 215)

On 4 February 1899, the Philippine-American war began when shots were fired by US soldiers. Derogatory images of The Philippines emerged in print media accompanied by the *White Man’s Burden*. The character from the 18 February 1899 issue of *The Detroit Journal* (Picture 2.2) is a typical artistic expression of the animalistic and uncivilised Filipino, leaving out any trace of the human side of the local freedom fighters who the US once used to help gain control of the South-East Asian country from the Spanish.

In the Pears’ ad, the imagery of the Filipino was, by design, far less dominant. Although the reader was shown neither face nor gender, the popularity of Kipling’s poem and other cultural discourses on race ensured that the imagined qualities of an uncivilised ‘Half devil and half child’ came to mind. The colonised Other was given a place in the bottom of the illustration. An image supposedly representing an indigenous person was fixed in a lower position within the ad (in both body language and composition), in line with the colonial racial hierarchy. Seated on the ground of a remote land, the filthy semi-naked figure was depicted in a subservient posture, both hands raised while looking up at a colonialist ‘saviour’ figure who was not only standing tall but was also in the act of ‘giving’ the gift of civilisation. While Kipling’s poem portrayed the Filipinos (and indeed all colonised natives) as ‘Half devil and half child’ and ‘fluttered folk and wild’ who were also sullen, unappreciative and uncooperative, Pears’ *White Man’s Burden* ad depicted the non-White Other as small, shadowy, lowly, dirty and needy. The Pears’ soap ad with its mighty colonial hero, and the ill-defined Other figure was coded with the dominant racial notions outlined earlier – through which, the public imagination and attitude toward the colonial relationship and the colonised racial Other were vividly framed.
2.1.2 THE UGLY OTHER

“One of the most important characteristics of tribes and peoples is beauty or ugliness” (quoted in Jahoda, 2007: 25), claimed Meiners, who championed the notion of a world divided into a ‘light, beautiful’ race, and a ‘dark, ugly’ race. As various measures were developed to make aesthetic judgments about races, another aspect of racial classification – based on a hierarchy of beauty and normality – emerged. Once again, Blacks were placed on the bottom of the hierarchy and Whites on the top, with the racial Other rendered ugly according to colonial aesthetics. To Meiners, and thinkers before and after him, the finding of beauty or ugliness among different races always followed an implication of racial identity. To advertisers, such knowledge affected the representation of the racial Other, from their exclusion or inclusion, to their depiction.

Camper’s theory of face angle (1791) was one of the most influential works of the time in regard to the physical traits of race. A horizontal line that across from the earhole to the base of the nose, and a vertical line from the incisor teeth to the most prominent part of the forehead in profile formed the facial angle. This angle, Camper proposed, has significant in terms of racial identity, and the ideal of beauty, among other aspects. Comparing the skulls of a European, a Mongol, a Negro and an ape, Camper found that the resulting angle differed (Picture 2.3). He wrote: “If I make the facial line lean forward, I have an antique head; if backward; the head of a Negro. If I still more incline it, I have the head of an ape; and if more still, that of a dog, and then that of an idiot” (quoted in Cohen, 2003: 93-94).

Based on his observation of the statues of Greek gods and heroes, Camper found a common facial angle of around 100°. He therefore surmised that the Greeks believed that the 100° facial angle constituted the most beautiful countenance (Walker, 1834: 56). Remarkably, the facial angle of Roman statues were found to
be in the range of 85° to 90°, most Europeans 80°, most Negroes 70°, the orangutan 58° and the African tailed monkey 42°. Camper concluded that: “Everything above eighty degrees belonged to the realm of art, everything below seventy degrees to the animal kingdom” (quoted in Spencer, 1997: 263).

Despite Camper himself was essentially a monogenist who did not regard non-Europeans as a separate biological species (Meijer, 1999; Poliakov, 2003), his findings and drawings were frequently drawn on in the theory of the Great Chain of Being. In attempting to construct a representation of such a ‘chain’ between man and animal, I found White’s work most worth noting because of his conscious attempt to use the power of imagery in his detailed narration of the Great Chain of Being, and the connection he made between racial aesthetics and racial inequality.

While ‘Man’ had always been at the top of the chain, White (1799) went one step further by specifically placing European Whiteness at the top of his diagram (Picture 2.4). Obviously based on Camper’s model, White constructed a hierarchy of living beings involving man and beast, from high to low, by using illustration and layout in an unambiguous and odious manner. White seemed aware of the significance of his comprehensively constructed visual hierarchy and its implications for the relationships in any society and system. He wrote: “From Man down to the smallest reptile, Nature exhibited to our view an immense chain of being, embued with various degrees of intelligence and active powers, suited to their stations in the general system” (quoted in Spencer 1997: 263).

Face angle was not the only measure used in the colonial racial aesthetic hierarchy. For the superior race, every outward feature typical of European Whites, from skin tone to hair texture to expression, was highly praised. For White:

… that variety of features, and fullness of expression; those long, flowing, graceful ringlets; that majestic beard, those rosy cheeks and coral lips … In what other quarter of the globe shall we find the blush that overspreads the soft features of the beautiful women
of Europe, that emblem of modesty, of delicate feelings, and of sense? (quoted in Horsman 1981: 50-51)

In White’s argument, the physical features of the Europeans were not only beautiful, and artistically and sensually pleasing, they embodied the superior qualities of gracefulness, greatness, dignity and humility. All these outward features of Whiteness became facial symbols that stood for White supremacy. In contrast a range of Black facial symbols were likened to animals as noted in, for example, Voltaire’s observation quoted at the beginning of this sub-section. As being non-White meant being excluded from the realm of art and beauty, it comes as no surprise that dark-skin characters were absent in advertisements that required beautiful and graceful imageries, such as these two Pears’ ads (Pictures 2.5 and 2.6).

While the racial Other was considered not only not beautiful but animalistically ugly, they were also considered ugly within colonial aesthetics because of the said ‘abnormality’ of their physiques and facial features — symbols of deformity and monstrosity. Meiners, for example, using his Europe-centric standard, published works such as On the Growth of Hair and Beards among the Ugly and Dark-Skinned Peoples, On the Colors and Shades of Different Peoples, and On the Differences in Size Among Different Peoples. He found that the Native Americans had a weak and plump body, a big “shapeless” head, and that even their hands were not in proportion — being “either
too small or too large” (c.f. Zantop, 1997: 26); that Chinese women had small “piggish” eyes; and that the Negro males had extraordinarily large “animal-like” penises (c.f. Jahoda, 2007: 25-26). This line of unflattering references was not new to the books of the colonial racial script. Similar attitudes can be found in François Bernier’s typology of races, in which he saw Blacks as:

1. Their thick lips and squab noses, there being very few among them who have aquiline noses or lips of moderate thickness. 2. The blackness which is peculiar to them, and which is not caused by the sun, as many think.... The cause must be sought for in the peculiar textures of their bodies, or in the seed, or in the blood — which last are, however, of the same color as everywhere else. 3. Their skin, which is oily smooth, and polished, excepting the places which are burnt with the sun. 4. The three or four hairs of beard. 5. Their hair, which is not properly hair, but rather a species of wool … and, finally, their teeth whiter than the finest ivory, their tongue and all the interior of their mouth and their lips as red as coral (quoted in Baum, 2006: 54).

Although the racial stereotypes offered by Meiners and Bernier are only drops in the ocean of the colonial racial script, they typify how the outward traits of the racial Other were framed and articulated. No other forms of advertising placed more emphasis on the ‘ugliness’, ‘wildness’ and ‘abnormality’ of the racial Other than the materials promoting the exhibiting and parading of colonised native people in the home nation of the colonial powers. They, perhaps, best demonstrate how these racial concepts were used and transformed within the language of advertising.

The practice of organising native human exhibitions began as early as 1500, when native Americans were brought to Spain and Portugal by explorers and put on show as exhibits from the New World (Pieterse, 1992). This practice had escalated by the late 19th century to become a phenomenon within the popular cultures of the major imperialist nations of Europe and the US. Some were organised by the imperial states as part of World Expos or World Fairs, some were run by circuses or zoos as part of shows or collections, and they attracted huge numbers of spectators who paid to see the captive native people displayed alongside the wild animals and exotic plants of colonised lands afar. The 1851 Crystal Palace Great Exhibition in London and the 1889 Exposition Universelle in Paris, for example, offered live displays of native people, attracting six million and thirty-two million spectators respectively (Maxwell, 2000: 1). The colonised people on display were at once
 commodified and objectified by the colonial organisers who operated within a relationship of absolute power. More than just a source of entertainment and amusement, the public display of the racial Other also served as a means to reinforce the colonial racial ideology and the scientific notions of racial classification and theories of progress. As Maxwell noted: “These displays [of colonised people] not only drew massive crowds but also claimed an educative function and gained the imprimatur of contemporary scientific theories of race” (ibid). The same can be claimed of the proto-ads for the ‘Hottentot Venus’ which, while promoted this colonial obsession, reinforced the ugliness of the Black female body.

Taking place during 1810-1815 in the UK and France, the public parade of Saartje Baartman, a young Khosian woman dubbed ‘Hottentot Venus’ by her original British handler, was one of the earliest human freak-shoses of colonised people. It made a lasting contribution to racial discourse and debate. As Crais and Scully put it: “Throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century, the Hottentot Venus participated in the great debates on evolution, race, and female sexuality” (2009: 144). Although the poster I am about to discuss here received very little scholarly attention in the field of advertising, I consider the imagery of the Hottentot Venus as iconic for a centuries-long racist cultural practice that lasted in the West until the 1970s. It put the concept of racial inequality squarely in front of people’s eyes – and directed the spectators’ gaze to the ‘abnormality’ of the Black female body and sexuality.

The 1810 British poster (Picture 2.7) from the collection of the City of Westminster Archives Centre and the 1812 French editorial print (Picture 2.8) show in here were both designed to promote the ‘Hottentot Venus’ show in their respective countries. Lured to England in 1810 by a British surgeon, Baartman was treated as an object of public spectacle, performing alongside animals for the paying public. She was also a subject of research for the exclusive scientific community. Her selling point for the curious public was that she was a ‘mixed stock’ African woman with overdeveloped buttocks; for the scientific elites, it was her extended labia minora (a.k.a. ‘Hottentot apron’). In both cases her features were used as signs of danger for racial mixing, as well as symbols of primitive womanhood and hyper-sexuality. As her value as a commodity in European imperial nations was based on these highly racialised attributes, it is not surprising that a similar approach was taken to promote the Hottentot Venus parades. Despite geographic and genre differences, both designs used words and pictures to set the spotlight firmly on the outward features of the woman’s body to convey a sense of deformity.
In helping to create the commercial hype over the Hottentot Venus shows, the British poster depicted Cupid sitting comfortably on the oversized buttocks of the illustrated Baartman while sending out a warning “Take care your hearts”. Despite the name, and apart from gender, there is no parallel between the Black Hottentot Venus and the White Greece goddess Venus – if judged only by the reactions depicted in the French editorial print promoting the show. There were no signs of admiration of beauty or of love, just disgust and revulsion. The illustration depicted shocked and amazed European spectators examining her naked body, while exclaiming “Oh! God”, “Damn, what a roast beef!” and “Ah! How comical is nature” (c.f. Pieterse, 1992: 181). The public opinion, as framed and promoted by the media, cancelled out even the tiniest trace of ‘compliment’ (albeit in an offensive way) in her show name ‘Hottentot Venus’. As Victor Hugo put it in Les Misérables, Paris “accepts everything royalty; it is not too particular about its Venus; its Callipyge is Hottentot; provided that it is made to laugh, it condones; ugliness cheers it, deformity provokes it to laughter, vice diverts it” (quoted in Crais and Scully, 2009: 145).

Viewed alongside colonial racial aesthetics, it is clear that the ‘Hottentot Venus’ was not meant to be perceived or appreciated for her beauty – quite the opposite, according to the way in which her image was depicted and the commentary about her framed. Under the influence of colonial racial aesthetics, dubbing Saartje Baartman ‘Hottentot Venus’ was sarcastic and racist, turning her into a profitable symbol of Black female hypersexuality. Her value as a human exhibit was in her physical and sexual ‘abnormality’ – both when alive and in whole and when dead.
and in body parts. Spectators were never meant to admire her beauty. In the eyes and minds of European spectators, she was no more than an ugly ‘primitive’ ‘sexual freak’ that belonged in a circus or human zoo for their amusement and fascination. Essentially, she was also made a convincing ‘proof’ of the existing colonial racial ideology.

2.1.3 THE DANGEROUS OTHER

While deeming the coloured people as uncivilised and ugly, the colonial racial script also made Blackness a symbol of danger. Darwin’s conclusion in *The Descent of Man* said the native “delights to torture his enemies, offers up bloody sacrifices, practises infanticide without remorse, treats his wives like slaves, knows no decency, and is haunted by the grossest superstitions” (Darwin, 1874: 619). At once, Blacks were viewed in colonial minds on the one hand as warmongers, barbarians, child-killers and women-abusers, and on the other as indecent, peculiar beings.

Visualisations of the concept of the ‘barbarous’ racial Other can be seen in 19th century popular cultural narratives across genres. For example, in picture 2.9 (Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University), an illustration depicts an Indian raising an axe to a White woman with the heading “Savage barbarity” and the caption “Mrs. Barber intreating a blood thirsty savage to spare the life of her little daughter”. It put the concept of brutality firmly in the picture and linked it to the native people. In picture 2.10 (the British Library), a brochure promoting the 1884 ‘Australian Boomerang Throwers Show’ in England brings graphic language alive through the use of typographic devices. Without the slightest sign of the objectified colonial subjects, the brochure, through its typography, promised the would-be spectators that what they would see with their own eyes were “man eaters” collected “from the Continent on the other side”. The brochure used a familiar line of derogatory descriptions to stereotype the native people. In the bluntest manner, the Aborigines were not only described as man eaters, but also “ferocious, treacherous, uncivilized savages”, “blood-thirsty beasts in distorted human form”. The last sentence of the promotional blur completed the picture, delivering the essence of the commercial and racial assault: “Worth journeying a hundred miles to see these specimens of the lowest order of man”.

Picture 2.9, 1818

Picture 2.10, 1884
The colonial racial script extended the notion of the racial Other as ‘dangerous’ behaviourally by assuming a criminal tendency. For example, according to the theory of the ‘born criminal’ (Lombroso, 1876/2006), certain physical remnants of our ‘ape’ past were considered indicators of a ‘savage’ type of behaviour, and people possessing these visible ‘abnormalities’ (such as a receding forehead, large ears, broad cheekbones) were of a criminal type. In *Criminal Man*, Lombroso provided a photo collection of types of African criminals (Picture 2.11), and concluded that based on his study of 219 criminals, “Normal and beautiful physiognomy is found in only a few very intelligent criminals, especially swindlers” (ibid: 205), compared with its opposite. According to this logic, Blacks were not only considered to be born sub-human and ugly, but also to be born savage and criminal – a stereotypical racist label which is still deployed in contemporary advertising as this thesis will later show.

Up until this point, it seems the racial Other was not of much use according to dominant racial ideology – being ruled out of the civilised world, of the realm of beauty, and of humanity and decency. But this is not the full picture – there were certain areas in which the racial Other was recognised as a capable, or even worthy, resource. Sadly, however, these ‘desirable’ aspects were all rooted in and derived from existing concepts of inferiority in the inward and outward traits of the racial Other, which in turn reinforced and enriched the development of colonial racial ideologies.

One such area was the battlefield, where Blacks were considered natural fighters. The Civil War became an important catalyst in war anthropometry, measuring soldiers against a racial divide. Taking advantage of the first-time induction of 180,000 soldiers of African decent into the federal army, the Sanitary Commission was formed to conduct the most comprehensive study of racial differences between White, Indian, Black, Mulatto and others (Haller, 1971). The study was based on Quetelet’s statistical methodology used in the search for an average man, which followed Camper’s study of human physiognomy, but with an added edge. The US
government used Quetelet’s method of reading facial appearance of different races and linking the measurements to moral and political science through probability, to assess the suitability of newly freed Black slaves, together with Native Americans and Mulattos, for military duty. It also assessed their suitability for different level of jobs within the military (Molnar, 1992: 18).

Predictably, these studies collectively confirmed the ideology of White superiority in military service, ruling the coloured recruits out of high-ranking positions. To quote one examiner, Blacks “never can be as well qualified as he who by nature possesses greater physical perfection and greater mental endowments”. Additionally, the ‘smaller facial angle’ found among Black soldiers was interpreted as a physical representation of “brute force rather than intellectual pre-eminence” (quoted in Haller, 1971: 30) raising concerns about their capacity to learn tactics and their personal hygiene, and fixing them as lower ranking soldiers only. This said, the physical endowment of ‘full Blacks’ (as opposed to ‘Negroes of mixed blood’ who were considered incapable of enduring hardship, and thus most unfit) was rated highly in the strength department. Remarkably, Black feet attracted significant attention as racial markers. While the report characterised Whites by “the length of the head and the neck” and Indians by “the long fore-arms and the large lateral dimensions, excepting the shoulders”, for Blacks it was “the wide shoulders, long feet, and protruding heels” (ibid: 28). Although some considered the foot as the only physical deformity of Black soldiers, according to Hunt, one of the expert examiners, the “large, flat, inelastic foot…almost splay-footed” was an advantage in marching over rough terrain (ibid: 31).

The impact of the series of Sanitary Commission studies of racial differences was not limited to identifying soldiers suitable for military duty in the US. As Haller has pointed out, “nearly all subsequent late nineteenth-century institutionalized attitudes of racial inferiority focused upon war anthropometry as the basis for their beliefs” (ibid: 20-21). Indeed, the markers of physical and mental readiness and usefulness the Sanitary Commission examiners found in Black recruits were not much different to those used to mark their inferiority in society and among the cultural media such as advertising. For example, the cheerfulness and the “natural fondness for rhythmical movement”, their “habit of obedience inculcated by the daily life of the slave” as well as their build and physical strength, that leads Hunt (ibid: 31) to consider Blacks as suitable soldiers and potential drill-masters, can also be observed in the singing and dancing Black Sambos and happy maids, cooks and servants in 19th-century advertisements.
The next section examines the process by which the advertising industry turned to the stock of colonial racial discourses for inspiration, and strategically rendered existing racial metaphors and stereotypes into the visuals and tag lines of advertisements. The section that follows shows how both the handful of ‘useful’ attributes and the long list of negative attributes outlined above were capitalised on by advertisers to define and confine the racial Other in advertising discourses during the historical moments of colonialism and High Imperialism.

2.2 CODING AND COMMODIFYING RACE IN EARLY ADS

In the 19th century, advertisers in imperial nations began to discover even more value in the trope of the racial Other beyond its previous applications. Meanwhile, more imageries of non-White people other than Blacks were deployed in a wider range of consumer product ads. Manifestly based on imperialistic colonial racial concepts, these advertisements coded races visually and transferred these concepts from words on paper to pictures on packaging, trade-cards, posters, magazine/newsprint and brochures. They creatively contributed to the commodification of race in the lead up to High Imperialism.

Victorian advertising, according to McClintock, took explicit shape around racial differences, and in turn made possible “the mass marketing of empire as an organized system of images and attitudes” (1995: 130). I begin this section with the familiar script of the ‘uncivilised’ Other, and one of its archetypes in Victorian advertising – the ‘dirty boy’. By linking darker skin tones with the concept of dirtiness, the racial Other was positioned as uncivilised. This is particularly the case in the use of Black people in some of the landmark soap advertising. Not only widely viewed as a pioneering the professionalisation of the industry, soap advertising is also infamous for exploiting Black imagery. Given this reputation,
soap ads have become focal points for studies of imperial advertising, particularly the influential works of Richards (1990), McClintock (1995) and more recently Ramamurthy (2003).

Both McClintock and Ramamurthy show the ways in which visual representations of Black people were portrayed in soap advertisements funded by leading brands in the UK at the peak of British imperialism. One such example is Vinolia’s 1893 ad which depicted a Black boy being challenged by a White girl who offers him a piece of soap: “You Dirty Boy, Why don’t you wash yourself with Vinolia soap?” (Picture 2.12). The other significant ad with the same theme is Pears’ 1884 ad (Picture 2.13), in which a Black boy seemingly unfamiliar with the bath is directed by a White boy who hands him a cake of Pears soap with which to scrub himself. When he emerges from the bath, he was offered a mirror – again by the White boy – and finds most of his body (except his head) transformed from ‘black’ to ‘white’.

The overwhelming message in these ads was loud and clear: The soap, the Whites and the Empire were the civilisers, and the Blacks were the uncivilised people with dirty bodies and unclean souls. With the help of the civilisers, the latter could be washed clean and brightened up through consumerism. It reflected the same sentiment of in Pears’ earlier White Men’s Burden ad discussed in Section 2.1.1. Given that the audience for these ads was predominantly Whites, it served as yet another visual endorsement of the European psyche based on White supremacy, and renewed the call for the audience to “Take up the White Man’s Burden” – only this time, the ‘burden’ was not the external colonised subjects (such as Filipinos), but the internal colonised subjects (such as Blacks) among colonist nations.

Picture 2.12, Vinolia Soap, 1893

Picture 2.13, Pears’ Soap, 1884
Notably, only examples depicting Black imageries were used in McClintock and Ramamurthy’s works. The same data selection can also be observed in other studies that have touched on the topic. While this tendency reflects the mainstream approaches adopted by soap advertisers at the time, it would be a mistake to assume that commodity racism began and ended with images of the Black Other only. Although Black skin was more commonly exploited as a visual metaphor for racial inferiority through Victorian scripts on purity and hygiene, other non-White races were not free of such exploitation. To highlight how the ‘dirty’ label extended beyond Black boys, I again draw on examples of Pears’ ads – not only because we do not need to look elsewhere for evidence, but also because comparisons between the use of different racial tropes in promoting the same product can better capture and pinpoint the variation in rhetoric that emerged at the historical moment of High Imperialism.

The first example is the use of the imagery of a naked bathing Japanese woman dubbed ‘Happy Jappy’ as the focal point of a 1910 Pears’ ad (Picture 2.14). With the exception of her younger age, the ad remarkably reflects a scene in Mrs Hugh Fraser’s story *In Tokyo*, about a young Britain’s ‘shocking’ encounter with the Otherness of Japanese bath culture:

> Some things shocked his untried prudery beyond words. It would be difficult to describe his feelings when, as he was walking, tired and dusty, through a hill village, an old woman, paddling in her bath in sight of all beholders, called out to stop him as he passed.

> “What does she want?” he asked of his guide, glancing with a visible shudder at the aged bit of humanity (brown as a last year's oak leaf, and innocent of clothes as a fish in a tank) which stretched an arm to him from a steaming tub.

> “She very kind woman,” the guide explained, “she say, young gentleman tired, dirty, bath plenty big for two people; please get in!” (Fraser, 1899: 31-32).

In this ad, the ‘Happy Jappy’ was also seated in a wooden bathtub, unclothed “as a fish in a tank”. Just like the old woman in the story, one of her arms was also stretched out, only this time her inviting gesture was directed not only to a young Britain but to anyone in the West who encountered the ad. Her body language may have conveyed the same invitation as the old woman in the story – “please get in” – yet the piece of Pears’ soap in her hand and the special typographic treatment of
an otherwise standard Pears’ tag line at the time – “Matchless for the Complexion” – delivered the sales pitch for the soap through both image and word.

Through stories like In Tokyo and other travellers’ tales, Japan’s bath culture had long been made known to the West as an infamous sign of Japaneseess. The common practice of ‘promiscuous bathing’ in Japan raised many Western eyebrows in disgust and was interpreted as indecent, unhygienic and uncivilised. An article entitled Pictures of the Japanese published in the Harper’s New Monthly magazine offers one example of such discourses:

The bath is also a great public institution in Japan. Men and women bathe together in a manner which shocks all our ideas of decency. As far as their persons are concerned the Japanese are certainly a very cleanly people. But this does not hold good of their garments. These are worn day and night, and rarely changed. This, together with the habit of promiscuous bathing, renders cutaneous diseases extremely prevalent. (Harper’s New Monthly, November 1863).

While the inferiority being associated with Japaneseess in this ad was different to that of Blackness, it too failed to meet the Western ideal of ‘civilised’. The tone of the discourses in Western popular media, as exemplified above, indicates that Japanese bath culture (nude female bathers in particular) was perceived negatively, and interpreted as a sign of immodeesty, indecency and inferiority. Yet ironically, this ad deployed the female body and Oriental sexuality of the same cultural practice that so disgusted the West to lure the consumer.

The second example is another Pears’ ad that exploited ‘Chineseness’ (Picture 2.15). While the main characters depicted in this ad were said to be White missionaries, the Manchurian dress code and hairdos of China’s Qing dynasty were featured and used to strengthen Pears’ selling point. Under the heading of “CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES IN CHINA”, the ad’s concept is self explanatory as related in the last two paragraphs of its copy (said to be an extract from a letter written by Miller, a war correspondent for The Graphic of London and Harper’s Weekly of New York):
—You will note the exceedingly neat and cleanly appearance of these white people in native dress. Is it due to the use of Pears’ Soap, which I notice is the only soap to be found in a white man’s house, anywhere in the Far East?

—If anything can civilize and Christianize China, Pears’ Soap and the missionaries will’.

Although the words ‘dirty’ or ‘uncivilised’ did not appear in its copy, the ad was able to positioned the Chinese as the opposite of clean and civilised. The very fact that the ‘exceedingly’ neat and clean native dresses worn by the White missionaries were worth writing home about, relays the opposite underlying assumption – that native dresses were untidy and unclean. However, the reference to physical cleanliness is far-fetched and largely a sideline here. The punchline that really put China in an inferior position was directed towards the country’s non-Christian religion. The non-believer status was picked up by the advertiser and used as a sign of their inferiority, based on the good old equating of ‘Christianisation’ with ‘civilisation’. Following this logic, Pears’ soap strategically aligned its product with the Christian missionaries. Pears’ soap and White missionaries were projected as partners in a mission to civilise China – while the missionaries bore the White Man’s burden to Christianise China and cleanse the Chinese soul, Pears armed them with its soaps to keep clean the native dresses they worn and to civilise the Chinese.

The rhetorical use of the trope of the racial Other in consumer product ads during the period of High Imperialism was not limited to painting them as ‘dirty’, and therefore ‘uncivilised’. As the emerging profession began to realise the sign value of the trope of the racial Other, and use it as a visual device to promote consumption following Pears’ success, the range of deployed racial stereotypes also widened. Indeed, most of the lasting stereotypical racial icons were created during the period of High Imperialism.

Carrying on the slavery racial script, Black women were portrayed as Southern mammy-style of domestic servants in post-slavery ads to promote consumer products, particularly for the manufactured food industry. The most famous identity
of all is that of Aunt Jemima – the face of the first commercially marketed pancake syrup – which was on the market for more than a century. Picture 2.16 shows Nancy Green, a slave by birth assigned the original role of ‘Aunt Jemima’ on the stage of the 1893 World Columbia Exposition. Green cooked pancakes, sang songs and told jokes from the South to help the company promote its product. While this ad captured Aunt Jemima’s stardom (character-wise and product-wise) in the Expo, it did not neglect to remind the audience of Aunt Jemima’s real ‘place’: the centre point of the ad depicted Green cooking in a kitchen (belonging to a well-to-do household which also enjoyed the service of a Black male butler in full uniform).

Although this subordinate status was a long-held stereotype assigned to Black women, it can also be seen in the portrayal of the Black man in ads. Pictures 2.17 and 2.18 used identical rhetoric to construct of the imageries of Aunt Jemima and Rastus, two of the most recognisable faces in manufactured food advertisements. Like Aunt Jemima, Rastus (the face of Cream of Wheat) was seen with a broad smile serving food to his White masters. Unlike his female counterpart who was depicted serving a stack of pancakes to a table full of White men and women, Rastus was portrayed serving bowls of steamy hot cream to two White children.

The portrayal of the subordinate role and servitude of the racial Other can also be seen beyond the kitchens and dining tables, as this packaging of Patersons’ “Camp” Coffee shows (Picture 2.19). Noteworthy, is that a new conqueror-conquered relationship has been added to the servant-master relationship as constructed in the imageries of Aunt Jemima, Rastus and the like in the same period. The presence of a Black man serving coffee to a couple of seated White officers in the field, together

Picture 2.16, Aunt Jemima, 1893  Picture 2.17, Aunt Jemima, 1935  Picture 2.18, Cream of Wheat 1917  Picture 2.19, Paterson, 1945
with a number of standing Indian soldiers, exotic palm trees and military camps in the background, added a significant colonial flavour to the product. The audience does not know if the Black man is a member of the imperial force or a local Black man who has already being ‘civilised’ (according to his dress) by the imperial force. Perhaps, it does not matter to the advertiser. Either way, we see a smiling Black man cheerfully serving his White superiors as if he knows he will make them happy – because “Paterson’s Camp Coffee is the Best” and the product “can always be depended on”, as the ad’s heading and caption claim.

The iconographical Black children imageries were no less stereotypical and useful in helping to promote various products. Pictures 2.20, 2.21 and 2.22 exemplify the manner in which they were constructed as non-threatening mirthful icons used to help sell goods ranging from alcohol, to watermelons, to washing powders. In addition to the exploitation of Black children, the iconic ‘black face show’ was created whereby White men darkened their faces, wore Afro wigs and hats, played the fool, and mocked Blacks on stage. Picture 2.23 (right) is an example of the promotion of such a popular yet degrading cultural event of the time. Like their minstrel and comic versions, stereotypical representations of ‘Sambo’ from the US and its European versions, such as ‘Golliwog’ of the UK, ‘Sarotti-Mohr’ of Germany and ‘Black Peter’ of the Netherlands (discussed in Pieterse, 1992), shared extremely exaggerated facial features such as polished black skin, woolly hair, bulging eyes, white teeth and thick red lips in proto- and early advertisements. Adhering to the colonial racial script, these outward features were visualised and commodified by advertisers, as were their peculiar behaviour and
poor use of language (think of “OH – I IS NOT!” and “IT MUST BE SUMTHIN I ET!!” attributed to the ‘Piccaninny’ girl in the watermelon ad). While being ridiculed to help the ads gain attention and be memorable, the archetypes of Black children were coded as inferior beings in terms of their conduct and intellect.

Advertisers at the peak of High Imperialism also began to exploit the exotic appearance of other non-White races as a result of territorial and market expansion. The different attributes of foreignness were picked up and transformed into selling points to boost the advertised product’s world market dominance and universal appeal. Evidence of this phenomenon can be found in various product promotion and advertising materials. Pictures 2.24 and 2.25 (Digital Collections, Duke University) are two of the twenty-five trade cards in a 1888 collection entitled *Savage and Semi-Barbarous Chiefs and Rulers* that formed part of W. S. Kimball & Co’s cigarette promotion campaign: one features a Zulu King and the other features an Afghan ruler. The company’s competitor, Duke’s Cigarettes made a much greater effort with a similar strategy. A total of fifty trade cards were created which showed that, as claimed on the reverse side of each card, the company had “spared no pains or expense in producing”. Judging by these collections, the effort invested in creating each of the featured foreign national figures and the unique backgrounds of the culture of their home nations were indeed significant for the time. The design of the trade card that featured China (ibid), for example (picture 2.26), not only featured a Chinese Mandarin, but also made the effort to show the scenery and inhabitants of the land he represented. In addition, consumers were also presented with what looked like a coat of arms and a flag. As much as being symbols of the nation, it is worth noting that both the coat of arms and the flag were purely how the exotic land, exotic people and the exotic myth (as exemplified by depicting European-style dragon for the Chinese mythical version) were imagined by the Western mind. As twisted as these visions were, they were useful devices for the
campaign and for the manipulation of consumer perception. In return, each imagery of the foreign figures was positioned directly on top of a tag line: “Duke’s Cameo Cigarettes Are the Best”, as though these exotic people and their respective nations actually endorsed the brand.

On rare occasions, the depiction of the racial Other came out of left field for the era, as the example found here (Picture 2.27) demonstrates. Imageries of people of different skin colour were constructed to form a crowd and create a scene of frenzied demand for Frank Rippingille’s stoves. They could be identified as consumers, on a superficial level, if only judging the apparent trading scene. However, the tag line “Englands gift A blessing to all nations” reminds us to look beyond the obvious. The exploitation of coloured people was indeed not as much about ‘them’ – the racial Other, as it was about ‘us’ – the British Empire, Britons and the brand. The trope of the racial Other was chosen for this ad for its collective sign value to help convey a sense of international appeal and global demand for the product, and for popularising the existing racial relationships: a relationship between the ruler and the ruled (the Queen vs the commoners of different races); a relationship between the benefactor and the beneficiary (England represented by the Queen and the said superior product vs the racial Other represented by the Blacks with their excessively thick lips and the Asians with their exaggerated slit-eyes rushing for the ‘gift’); and a relationship between the cultured and the uncultured (represented by the well-presented White woman already enjoying cooking with her stove vs the racial Other represented by two semi-naked Black men holding a stove with eyes and mouths wide open). This said, despite the real purpose for deploying the racial Other in this non-mainstream ad, it does provide a sign of the beginning of an unease and complicated development in the use of non-White people to promote the consumption of consumer products in later historical moments.
This chapter identified the key features and tendencies of the colonial racial script as it emerged from the philosophical and cultural knowledge and discourses generated from the 18th century to the peak of High Imperialism in the 19th century, and how it was applied to define and confine the racial Other in advertising discourses right from the beginning of its professional inception during this historical moment. It captures a key moment which saw the maturing of a body of colonial racial script as well as the birth of advertising as a profession at a time when scientific racism mingled with commodity racism to generate some of the most influential racist iconographies in history. As scientific racism provided the concepts and categories of race through claims of truth and knowledge, commodity racism gave these notions commodity value by exploiting racial stereotypes and strategically rendering them as real, believable, popular and easier to ingest through the power of advertising.

The key characteristics of this historical moment have been well identified as being both expansionistic and capitalistic. From the colonialistic territorial expansion and slave trading to the imperialistic economic exploitation of markets and resources in conquered lands, the second historical moment of this genealogy discussed in Chapter Two is both notion-packed and action-packed. Like the African slavery discussed in Chapter One, European imperialism was also organised racially (Winant 2004: 205). As outlined in this chapter, this era was crucial in the formation of a dominant worldview of the concept of race: it established the authority of knowledge and key concepts about different races through natural history and various branches of science; it set the cultural attitude and value of the racial Other through cultural discourse; and eventually, a binary racial hierarchy marked by the supremacy of the Whites and the inferiority of the non-Whites was firmly held as truth beyond question or doubt.

West suggests that our understanding of modern racism would be inadequate without the knowledge of the related notions, metaphors, categories and norms embodied in modern discourse (2002: 92-93). The advertisements of the 19th century that deployed imageries of the racial Other are one form of modern discourse from which race notions, categories, metaphors and norms can be read
and appreciated. What, then, does this interweaving of key notions and categories in intellectual and scientific race discourse with metaphors and norms encoding race in advertising race discourse tell us about advertising’s deployment of the racial Other in this historical moment?

In general, we have learnt to appreciate the contribution the advertising industry and visual texts made to the establishment of the colonial racial ideology. As a project in progress, colonial racial ideology developed in uneven stages based on a wide range of works from the social, intellectual and cultural elite. As this chapter has argued and demonstrated, the advertising industry evolved into a profession at the peak of the colonial era. It not only transformed the rich stock of colonial racial metaphors and stereotypes into images and slogans in the language of advertising, it also helped to popularise colonial racial understanding of and attitudes towards the racial Other while being paid by advertisers to promote everyday items. Arguably, advertising was one of the – if not the – most effective promoter of the colonial racial ideology among the masses, as they did not have the knowledge of, access to, or interest in reading the body of philosophical and scientific books of the high culture, or the money to spend to see the colonised Other in freak shows, minstrel shows or movies, among other forms of popular culture. While *Gone With the Wind*, for example, portrayed the Southern mammy imagery on the silver screen, leaving a vivid but momentary picture of the servitude of Black women in moviegoers’ minds, the imagery of Aunt Jemima and the like were in people’s homes, on a box of pancake mix or a bottle of pancake syrup, ready to be consumed (pun intended).

The unambiguousness and overt racism found in colonial literature and advertising discourses was consistent. It was also consistent between advertisements themselves. The aspects of inferiority assigned to the racial Other and the often brutal language used to describe non-White people (Black people in particular) that originated in the literature of the humanities and science were picked up, transformed into undisguised racist tag lines, copy and pictures, and used in ads with typographical and illustrative treatments. Blatantly hostile attitudes and visual executions were the norm, no matter if the ad was designed to promote freak shows parading non-White bodies or to sell a consumer product. Following the colonial racial scripts that framed the racial Other, and the cultural tenor that scorned them as the opposite of civilised, pure, beautiful, graceful, intelligent and decent, imageries of the racial Other were commonly coded with primitiveness, dirtiness, ugliness, dangerousness, servility and clownishness in the ads of this era.
The use of the trope of the racial Other in advertising within the context of High Imperialism was phenomenal in terms of the range of products, the number of non-White races exploited, and the variety of racially stereotypical imageries created within the ads. The capitalistic nature of the era and the successful use of imageries of the racial Other in a series of Pears’ ads prompted an explosion of consumer product ads. Advertisers recognised the commodity value of imageries of non-White people, which were used to sell consumer products beyond soap, ranging from manufactured food and drinks, to cigarettes, fruit, toys, entertainment and stoves. This chapter has demonstrated that at the same time, a dramatic territorial expansion saw the advertisers’ attention turn to the non-White races of other continents, as well as the Black people of the African continent, such as – using Linnaeus’ terms – the Red and Yellow races. Furthermore, with the spirits of both expansionism and capitalism existing during the period, efforts to create visual icons in a competitive market resulted in the construction of some of the most memorable and lasting (albeit discriminatory) racially stereotypical icons in history. The Southern mammy imagery of Aunt Jemima and the child-like imagery of Black Sambos mentioned in this chapter were typical examples. Notably, while the great majority of racial stereotypes were used intensively in 19th-century consumer product ads, some (such as those coded as dangerous or sexual) by and large remained in the toolbox waiting for their turn to be deployed in ads. With extremely rare exceptions, the constructed imagery of the servile servant, clownish Sambo and the exotic alien were the most common stereotypical themes created under the conditions of High Imperialism and commodity capitalism.

After outlining the ethos of the colonial mind that set the hierarchical place for the racial Other; identifying the racial concepts, metaphors and categories from the Enlightenment to the peak of High Imperialism; and scrutinising the visual application of the colonial racial script, I now turn to the third moment in my genealogy of the deployment of the trope of racial Other – the post-World War II era to the end of the 1960s. This era was marked by post-colonial racial politics worldwide and power struggles over racial identity and equality within the Civil Rights movement in the US.
Few mixtures are more volatile than race and politics. The normal frictions and resentments among individuals and groups seldom approach the magnitude of frenzy and violence produced by the politicization of race. The twentieth century, which has seen the spread of mass politics and mass ideologies to vast new regions of the globe, has also been the century of resurgent new racial persecutions, reaching new heights—or depths.

Sowell, 1995: 117

American advertising is responsible for much of the Negro's current demand that he, too, be allowed to participate in the fulfilment of the American dream.

Evers & Peters, 1967: 32

The historical context for this chapter is the aftermath of World War II until the end of 1960s and its rapidly changing political and cultural climate marked by a post-war awareness of racism; struggles over racial equality within settled colonies; and decolonisation movements in conquered lands. Winant (2004) has argued the significance of this moment of racial insurgency and reform in understanding the emergent new racial politics of the era. Sharing this position, this chapter focuses in on the politics of race in general and the interplay between racial politics and racial representations that affected the deployment of the trope of the racial Other in advertising.
For several reasons, the turbulent post-World War II era marked a turning point in the understanding of the concept of race and the deployment of imageries of the racial Other in advertising. Public attitudes towards racist doctrine and practices certainly shifted markedly following the Nazi Holocaust (it was in this period that the term ‘racism’ itself became a common vocabulary to criticise all forms of racial discrimination). From the late 1940s, the term ‘racism’ came to frequent use – more than a decade after it was coined by Hirschfeld for the title of his book before the war in 1933. The United Nations outlawed genocide in 1948. Most significantly, the colonial race belief which had dominated the worldview of the West for centuries began to lose favour after World War II, following after the extreme application of strongly related doctrines by Nazi Germany.

By 1966, the ground rules were set regarding racial discrimination. Part 1, Article 1 of the UN’s International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination resolution defined racial discrimination as:

any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life. (United Nations, 1966)

To combat racism, the same convention also resolved to:

adopt all necessary measures for speedily eliminating racial discrimination in all its forms and manifestations, and to prevent and combat racist doctrines and practices in order to promote understanding between races and to build an international community free from all forms of racial segregation and racial discrimination” (ibid).

Three years later, in 1969, the resolution finally entered into force. By the second half of the 20th century, the harm of the racial crime had been witnessed, the evil ideology and acts against the racial Other had become known as ‘racism’, and racial discrimination had been officially and universally condemned.

The post-World War II era also marked the beginning of growing struggles for racial equality and identity. Both the struggles for independence from Western colonial rule in non-settler colonies across the world and the struggles against racial discrimination within settler-colonies (most significantly the Civil Rights movement
in the US), provided battlegrounds between the ex-colonialists and the ex-colonials, and between the ex-masters and ex-slaves. These two highly significant movements combined to mark an early sign of the shifting landscape of racial politics which included a range of post-colonial power plays in relation to racial identity.

Although there were signs of a revolt against colonialism before World War I that led to England losing Egypt in 1922 and Iraq in 1932, decolonisation became unstoppable after World War II. To gain the vital support of the colonised people, the Allies had fought both World Wars under the flag of the right to self-determination, and the Atlantic Charter text of 1941 appeared to promise an end to colonialism. In the Charter’s text, Churchill and Roosevelt stated that, as the leaders of their respective nations: “[T]hey respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and they wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them” (Atlantic Charter text of the Churchill and Roosevelt Charter of 1941).

Real progress towards decolonisation was slow. When the UN was established in 1945, almost one-third of the world’s population remained subject to colonial rule. According to UN data, 750 million people still lived in non-self-governing territories dependent on colonial powers. In 1960, the UN General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (a.k.a. the Declaration on Decolonisation). The declaration stated that all people had a right to self-determination and proclaimed that colonialism should be brought to a speedy and unconditional end.

The remaining colonies eventually won their independence between 1947 and 1980 – although often not without conflict and bloodshed. With the unstoppable decolonisation movement in colonised lands sweeping through continents from the Middle-East to Asia and Africa, the West could no longer ignore the will of self-government and the voices of resistance to colonial oppression.

The very fact that the colonised racial Other – labelled ‘Brown’, ‘Yellow’, and ‘Black’, rated on the bottom of the Great Chain of Being, and deemed to be ‘uncivilised’ and ‘incapable of governing’ – managed to regain a sovereignty long lost to the colonial master is, in itself, a political statement that challenged not only the status quo of the colonial power structure but also the long-held colonial racial concepts that justified conquer and oppression. Despite this, the racial Other was still considered inferior conceptually by the West and in cultural discourses: as the
‘underdeveloped’, the ‘Third-World’ and the ‘needy’, for example. I will discuss this in more detail in Section 3.1, but for now, a voice from the ex-colony:

We, politely referred to as ‘underdeveloped’, in truth are colonial, semi-colonial or dependent countries. We are countries whose economies have been distorted by imperialism, which has abnormally developed those branches of industry or agriculture needed to complement its complex economy. … We, the ‘underdeveloped’, are also those with the single crop, the single product, the single market. A single product whose uncertain sale depends on a single market imposing and fixing conditions. That is the great formula for imperialist economic domination (Guevara, 1967: 31).

In the realm of intellectual developments, the bursting of the Victorian racial myth shook the scientific legitimacy of long-held colonial racial beliefs. Richard Lewontin’s study of race and biology, in which he applied gel electrophoresis to blood samples data collected from all over the world in the 1960s, proved that existing blood-based imperialist colonial racial beliefs were scientifically flawed. In investigating genetic variations within, and between, groups that had long been regarded as races, Lewontin found that any two individuals within any so-called race may be as different from each other as they were from any individual in another so-called race. Based on this research, he concluded that race had “virtually no genetic … significance” (1972). The importance of this finding to humanity and to the knowledge of race, is best summed up by Stephen Gould, a leading natural historian, in the 2003 PBS documentary RACE: The Power of an Illusion: “Under the skin, we really are effectively the same”. In 1964, a team of internationally prominent scientists met in Moscow and declared that: “Racist theories can in no way pretend to have any scientific foundation” (UNESCO, 1969: 48). In a 1967 conference in Paris, a committee of experts on race and racial prejudice proclaimed: “[R]acist doctrines lack any scientific basis whatsoever” (ibid: 50).

In the eyes of modern science, the biological myth of race was effectively debunked. However, this did not mean that those widespread and deep-rooted myths about race were no longer in play in society. Although by the late 20th century race could no longer claim scientific credibility as a ‘biological entity’, it still firmly existed symbolically and socially. The ideology of race, as Smedley suggested: “proclaims that the social, spiritual, moral and intellectual inequality of different groups was, like their physical traits, natural, innate, inherited, and unalterable” (1997). With the demise of scientific race theory, race was only real because it remained a social
category, and remained real in many people’s belief system. As such, despite its scientific and intellectual illegitimacy, the colonial ideology of race still lingered.

Bearing these cursive contextual factors in mind, the four sections that follow are designed to examine the discursive conditions under which the ‘politicization of race’ was in play, and their effect on the strategic deployment of the trope of the racial Other in post-World War II advertising. Given the undercurrent of racial struggle that had surfaced with unprecedented scale and momentum in this historical moment, and given that the past racial injustice in the practices and representations of advertising was under attack in the US like never before, this chapter seeks to establish whether the trope of the racial Other and its visual representation were destabilised under pressure from the vantage point of the US—particularly, whether the Civil Rights movement achieved its goal of altering the advertising industry’s existing discriminatory practices, such as racial exclusion and negative stereotyping.

I begin in identifying how political rhetoric made in political and advertising discourses responded to a changing post-colonial race relationship on the one hand, and the advertising industry’s calculated response to the Civil Rights movement’s fight for the right to be present and to be represented on the other. I then discuss ads placed in mainstream magazines which deployed imageries of Blacks for White audiences; before scrutinising two typical advertising themes placed in the Black-owned magazine *Ebony*, which used Black models and targeted Black audiences. Together, they capture the interplay between racial politics and post-World War II advertising, and highlight the adjusted rhetoric, developing themes and strategic power plays that arose in this era.
Where Do We Go from Here? Under this title, Martin Luther King Jr delivered the last speech before his assassination, offering an assessment of the Civil Rights movement at the time. The notably less than optimistic tone expressed in it was shared by many Black leaders of the 1970s at the “downward swing” of the Civil Rights struggle, according to Levy (1992: 228). A sense of dissatisfaction was evident in this opening passage:

> When the Constitution was written, a strange formula to determine taxes and representation declared that the Negro was sixty percent of a person. Today another curious formula seems to declare that he is fifty percent of a person. Of the good things in life, the Negro has approximately one half those of whites. Of the bad things in life, he has twice as those of whites. (King, 1972: 228)

Two key points made by King in this landmark speech, one of the “voicelessness and powerlessness” that confined the life of Blacks (ibid: 229), and the other his foresight that “A nation that will keep people in slavery for 244 years will ‘thingify’ them—make them things” (ibid: 230), are of particular significance to the politics of racial representation in this thesis. Political and economic power aside, in the cultural field of advertising a de-facto racial segregation between Black and White models remained in the US for most of the post-war period. The visual exploitation of the racial Other in ads, in the manner of the ‘economy of inclusion’ (using Young’s term, 1990: 4) where oppressed people were ‘thingified’ (or objectified) among ads from this period, reflected this drastic lack of voice and power to present and represent. More significantly, the syndrome of oppression and commodification highlighted by King then, and captured in this section are not isolated to the US. Carrying on a colonial relationship described by critics such as Fanon (1968), Said (1978) and Cixous (1986), the voicelessness and powerlessness the racial Other or the Orient has suffered under the Western dominant culture, formed a starting point for postcolonial studies that began in the late 1970s and took the field of cultural studies by storm in the late 1980s – in which these syndromes remained the key points of criticism shared by postcolonial scholars.
3.1.1 FROM ‘UNCIVILISED’ TO ‘THIRD WORLD’: THE ADJUSTED RHETORIC

For the formerly colonised people, the identities of their nationhood and personhood remained inferior from the West’s perspective, despite the change of rhetoric. While the old ‘uncivilised’ tag was out of fashion, the new label ‘Third World’ was just another ‘polite’ expression for its popular synonym – ‘underdeveloped’. Once again, the identity of the ex-colonised countries and their people were placed in a lowly position in another version of the West’s evolutionary ladder – only this time it used the logic of neocolonialism and was backed by Rostow’s (1960) influential modernisation theory. This theory painted an evolutionist picture of the world as populated by nations in various stages of ‘development’, with all of them having to travel through the same five-stage sequential steps towards industrialisation, and with some further developed than others. The difference in the stages reached was explained by Rostow, “as one would expect in the essentially biological field of economic growth” (ibid: 36. My emphasis). As the West (or ‘the North’ as Rostow called it) had reached the highest stage while the Rest (or ‘the South’) lagged behind, Rostow’s theory provided the rich ex-colonialist nations a rationale for maintaining their economic grip and cultural influence on the ex-colonies in the name of ‘aid’ and ‘help’.

Modified for the post-colonial condition, this ‘new’ line of racial discourse, developed from the perspective of the former colonist and for the interests of the former colonist, and like the ‘old’ ones, was visualised and promoted through advertising. A 1962 ad (Picture 3.1) for the US chemical giant Union Carbide, circulated in mainstream magazines such as the National Geographics Magazine and the Saturday Evening Post, is one example where a number of postcolonial concepts were subsumed within one single-page ad which boasted of the company’s success and credentials. If the heading ‘Science helps build a new India’ does not give enough of a clue to the post-colonial relationship between the developed, superior and advanced Occident and the underdeveloped, inferior and backward Orient, then the opening of the body text does:

Oxen working the fields … the eternal river Ganges … jeweled elephants on parade. Today these symbols of ancient India exist side by side with a new sight—modern industry. India has
developed bold new plans to build its economy and bring the promise of a bright future to its more than 400,000,000 people.

► But India needs the technical knowledge of the western world.

In the bottom right of the picture, the ad showed two oxen working the field, driven by an Indian man wearing traditional headgear and trying to balance himself. Two Indian women, also in traditional dress with their hair covered, are seen walking into the picture from the same direction. On the other side of the sacred river Ganges, a group of tall metal constructions rise up from the horizon symbolising the fruit of Western involvement, and highlighting how “Union Carbide recently made available its vast scientific resources to help build” the “major chemicals and plastics plant” in India as the rest of the copy claims. To complete the story, at the top of the ad, a giant hand from above released red liquid from a test-tube onto the land.

 Obviously, this ad, from its visuals to its copy, was underpinned by Rostow’s modernisation theory reaffirming his logic that: India could not deliver its promise of a bright (post-colonial) future without the help of the (scientifically advanced) Western world (of which Union Carbide was a leading giant). It occurred to me that the apparently tactful rhetoric expressed in this ad was very much a ‘friendlier’ repackaging of the existing colonial race ideology under the tag of ‘development’.  

Reading more deeply between the lines and images, however, I began to think the racial concepts behind the tactful rhetoric of this Union Carbide ad needed even more repackaging. For example, the giant hand from above and the test-tube it held conveyed the concepts of powerful, high and scientific, while the smaller traditionally dressed Indians, grouped with oxen at the bottom of the picture conveyed the opposite concepts, namely weak, low and physical. The relationship between the faceless White (ex)master and the natives constructed through this visual language reminds me (both conceptually and visually) of Fanon’s power
relationship between the two colonial ‘species’ and Pears Soap’s White Man’s Burden ad. In the same Union Carbide ad, we can also find traces of the concepts of progress, humanity and quality the White man represented, in contrast to the primitive Other as framed by the ‘white mythology’ as outlined by Young. Furthermore, the imageries of the Oriental in this ad, even with the ‘jeweled elephant’ promised in the copy disappeared from the visual, demonstrating a typical set of Oriental imageries matching Said’s account of such representation: The man is feminine and weak; the women are strikingly exotic; and the river Ganges is sacred. With a touch of nostalgia, the ad told a story that while the Oriental carried on their traditional (and therefore backward) routine, their ‘lacking’ and ‘passivity’ were observed by the Occident who took active action to lend them a god-like hand.

The decolonisation movement, together with other post-World War II events, posted a major challenge to racial discourse and racial relationships, and the dominant powers reacted tactically. When it became morally unacceptable to label formerly colonised subjects as ‘uncivilised’, the rhetoric adopted more diplomatic labels such as ‘underdeveloped’ and ‘Third World’. When ‘colonising’ a sovereign country became a sinful act, the rhetoric of control switched to the moral high ground of ‘helping’. Symbolised by the giant hand from above, and the tag line “A HAND IN THINGS TO COME”, the ad’s tactic of muting the native on one hand while speaking for them on the other, made them sound ‘needy’.

3.1.2 TO PRESENT AND TO BE REPRESENTED: DEMANDS AND RESPONSES

For generations in this country, the arts have been prostituted to help foster discrimination, the dangerous illusion of ‘white supremacy’ to make the Negro people an object of scorn and contempt. … It is to root out these falsehoods that we are dedicated.

The above is part of the Statement of Principle for the National Negro Congress (NNC) (quoted in Chambers, 2009: 123). The realisation of the importance of the cultural representation of Blacks in the fight for racial equality led to the establishment of NNC’s Cultural Division. The Division initiated a strategy of using the arts to improve the image of Blacks in society, and commissioned the first study on Black employment in the advertising industry, The Negroes Status in Advertising in 1947.
The US government disbanded the NNC was by in the 1950s following allegations of Communism and “the fight for black employment and representation in advertising lay dormant for much of the 1950s” (Chambers, 2009: 127). However, its mission – to increase Black employment and change the manner of the portrayal of Black imageries – set the framework for other Civil Rights organisations such as the National Urban League, Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in the 1960s and 1970s. These causes were fought both on ideological grounds in street marches demanding rights and on economic grounds organised product boycotts and ‘selective patronage’ campaigns by Black consumers. In an effort to change advertising’s long-held discriminatory attitudes and practices against Black people, Civil Rights organisations demanded that Blacks be employed in advertising agencies, and that the negative depiction of Blacks in advertisements cease.

These two demands both represented power-related struggles: the former a fight for the power to be present as practitioners in advertising; the latter a fight for the right to not only be represented in advertisements, but also be represented as equals. This is a moment in history where the advertising industry faced a direct challenge from a Civil Rights movement with a scale and momentum unmatched anywhere in the world. The snapshot that captures the power play between Civil Rights organisations and the advertising industry provided here yields a significant contextual factor in my genealogy of the tropes of racial Other and their use in advertising during this historical moment.

On the jobs front, a 1947 Biow study commissioned by the NNC found that the advertising industry remained a ‘white world’. According to his report, *The Negroes Status in Advertising*, among the 20,000 employees working in New York’s advertising industry, only twenty-two were Blacks. Half of these Black employees were in minor positions such as messengers, receptionists or janitors, while the rest worked as assistants in various administrative roles. Only fifteen were working on anything connected to advertising (National Negro Congress, 1947). Commissioned by a local chapter of the National Urban League, another three-year study of the employment of Blacks in New York city’s ten largest advertising agencies was released in 1963. The study revealed that only twenty-five Blacks were employed in creative or executive roles among the city’s 20,000-plus strong advertising workforce. The situation in the 1970s was not much better. In 1975, Jordan, the executive director of the National Urban League again criticised the advertising industry’s discriminatory employment practice. He sharply pointed out that: “The advertising
industry is one that deals in image selling, ideas and new concepts, but it badly needs to sell itself the idea of affirmative action” (Jordan, 1975). The criticism was well grounded – after more than a decade of struggle for Black inclusion, the gain remained decimal. Furthermore, among the small number of Black recruits entered the field of advertising, some were employed to work only on Black-related projects – in a practice criticised by the Urban League as “a form of segregated integration” (quoted in Chambers, 2009: 128).

In hundreds of advertisements in popular magazines from 1865 to 1920 which I examined, no Black person was ever depicted as the consumer. When Blacks appeared it was either as a servant or as a personality such as the Cream Of Wheat cook or Aunt Jemima. Moreover, I failed to find any national-brand advertisements directed to Black consumers. (Norris, 1990: 190)

Norris’ account summarised the consistently discriminatory treatment of the racial Other by the advertising industry which the Civil Rights organisations attempted to change. But the struggle for Black inclusion in advertisements also faced resistance. In fact, it could be said that a de facto racial segregation existed in advertisements for most of this period. Growth in the number of Black models used in advertisements was slow. According to Kern-Foxworth: “It was not until the 1950s that real-life blacks were used on a small scale to advertise products” (1994: 49), and most appeared in Black publications. A study conducted by Lester and Smith found that the number of Blacks featured in ads was “low in 1957, moderate in 1962-1972, gained in 1978, and have declined for all three magazines since 1978” (Lester & Smith, 1989: 13). Figures aside, most disturbing was the common practice of segregating Black and White imageries in advertising. Following the lingering discriminatory tradition, Black models still had to face an “entrenched ideology that said that blacks and whites should not appear together in advertisements” and that “ads should separate the two races with ads featuring black models reserved for ethnically targeted media” (Chambers, 2009: 114). As a result of this industry-wide tradition of racial segregation, Black imagery was rarely seen in ads placed in mainstream media, except for a few renowned Black sport stars or the same old stereotypical roles of servile Black butlers attending White characters.

Various organisations in the Civil Rights movement fought strongly to eliminate the negative depiction of Blacks in advertisements. Political, legal and economic avenues were used to push the cause of racial equality: politicians were lobbied; legal action was taken; products and businesses associated with ads portraying
negative racial stereotypes were boycotted or ignored as part of ‘selective patronage’ campaigns. While the effect of these efforts on the use of the racial Other in advertising during the post-World War II period will be explored in the following sections, it is worth noting at this point advertising industry’s response to the call to eliminate negative racial stereotypes. In a typical power play, the demand for eliminating the negative stereotyping of Blacks was answered not by attempting to depict them in a positive light, but by eliminating them from advertisements altogether. Chambers insightfully outlines the roll-on effect of this move:

By the early 1960s, the advertising industry had ceased using most of the pejorative and derogatory images that had been popular in the early portion of the century. But rather than featuring more realistic images of blacks, the industry simply eliminated blacks from most of the advertisements in mainstream media, rendering them invisible. In turn, that invisibility helped perpetuate the belief that blacks were not equal to whites. … Certainly blacks could open an Ebony magazine and see blacks enjoying the material comforts of consumer lifestyle; finding similar results in Life or the Saturday Evening Post was nearly impossible (ibid.: 122).
3.2

“WHAT’S COOKING?”

A LINGERING TRADITION COMPLICATED

The complex post-war political and economic conditions combined with the racial struggles of the Civil Rights and decolonisation movements complicated the manner in which the racial Other was deployed in post-World War II advertisements in US mainstream media during this historical moment.

The first issue was the persistent use of the colonial racial script, despite mounting pressure from Black activists to project racial equality in ads. Compared with the imagery of the ‘aspiring’ Blacks featured in the ads in Ebony in the following sections, the depiction of Black people in ads in mainstream publications was far from flattering. A Van Heusen ad from 1952 (Picture 3.2) provides one example. The ad was titled “4 out of 5 men want Oxfords… in these new Van Heusen styles”. Five men were featured in the ad, and guess who is the odd one out? Apart from being the only Black in the scene, his Otherness does not stop there: while the four White men were all dressed in a shirt and tie, the Black man was not only naked, he was also wearing animal bone and teeth as accessories, his body was tattooed and his nose pierced; while all White men’s expressions and body language were cheerful, the Black man looked subdued and contemptuous; while the White men were positively depicted showcasing the new Van Heusen styles of shirts in different colours, the Black man joined them only as an alienated object standing for everything the civilised Whites were not. His deployment in this ad was driven by the negative symbolic value of the racial Other assigned to him, i.e. savage, uncivilised and inferior. With these undesirable attributes linked to the only man not wearing an Oxford shirt – a Black man – the majority White audience was
persuaded to be anything but like the Black man – again, by way of consumption, by buying the Van Heusen Oxford shirt.

Colonial stereotypical roles also continued to be assigned to the racial Other when Black models or imageries were used in mainstream ads. In most cases, Black characters were deployed as servants attending White characters, as the following two examples demonstrate. In a 1947 ad for New York Central Railway (Picture 3.3), the only Black person in the ad was a smiling train attendant who bent to light a cigar for a White man sitting on a couch. A 1960 ad for Austin Nichols (Picture 3.4) also had an explicit colonial flavour. It depicted a courteous Black servant holding a tray of alcohol for the pleasure of two uniformed White colonists. In the former ad, the trope of a Black man was used to sell the elation that modernity would bring to the Whites; in the latter, to satisfy a wishful affection for the colonial past. While the way in which Black characters were depicted was very similar in these two ads, they were deployed to signify two different things: one, the promise of modernity; the other, nostalgia in a post-colonial time. Yet in these different settings, both Black men were positioned in a lower socioeconomic role, as a minority to remain at the service of the White characters. The racial relationship constructed through the visual coding in both ads, told the story about who was in power and who was the subordinate; who was the ‘us’ and who was the ‘them’ in mainstream culture; and ultimately, who was superior and who was inferior in the post-World War II US.
An early sign of racial fetishism in the field of advertising can also be observed in post-World War II ads. A small number of ads during this period showed an interest in the exotic aspects of the racial Other and used these to add value to advertisers’ products and services. In a 1957 ad promoting South Africa as a tourist destination (Picture 3.5), a single Black child was depicted stirring something mysterious inside a giant metal pot. With the heading “What’s cooking?”, the colourful headpiece, the accessories on the child’s naked body, the unusual cooking gear with its mysterious ingredients, and the attraction of a cute-looking Black child, this ad generated audience curiosity towards an exotic culture and the desire to take a tour to discover the unknown. The naked Black child, wearing colourful and unusual accessories, was rendered as a symbol for the whole continent.

Apart from rendering the racial Other as a child, feminine characters represented the Orient often used in tourism ads (such as the one promoting Hawaiian tourism in 1954, shown here in Picture 3.6). However, the exotic female body of the racial Other was not only used to symbolise the Orient and the Oriental, it was also used in other product ads as a fetish. In a 1951 ad promoting Van Heusen’s Vanuana sport shirts (Picture 3.7), for example, a White man was depicted surrounded by all things exotic: his Van Heusen shirt was decorated with a lei; his right hand was holding an opened coconut, his left hand a piece of pineapple; lying on the ground in front of him was a range of tropical fruits and flowers. Yet these exotic products were not the high point of his treat. As expressed in the heading and his body language, he was having a ball enjoying “a feast for the eyes”. And the source of this feast was the female Islander’s bodies, their exotic costumes and their seductive dance movements. The exotic and sexual qualities of the female body of the racial Other, and their folk culture, were realised and exploited and in turn, consumed by the dominant Whites and their consumer culture.
The last point I would like to make here is the somehow contradictory reactions to the demand for racial equality and the fight against the negative depiction of the racial Other in post-war advertising. For example, while some brands bowed to the pressure of Black consumer boycotts, and began to modify the existing racially stereotypical branding imageries, other brands chose to continue to promote the existing racial stereotype. On the one hand, in 1968 Quaker Oats took its first step to reducing the racial stereotype of the Aunt Jemima trademark by replacing her kerchief with a head band and reducing the size of her build in 1968 (Pictures 3.8). On the other hand, overtly racist branding images were still being developed and deployed during this period. One such example was the Fun to Wash washing powder, which was marketed with a typical Southern mammy image similar to that of the original Aunt Jemima during the post-World War II period (Picture 3.9). Another was a White-owned restaurant chain, established in 1957, which named itself Sambo’s. After opening its first shop in Santa Barbara, amid protests from Black activists, Sambo’s managed to grow to 1200 shops “from coast to coast” at its peak in the late 1970s. It became one of the biggest restaurant chains in the US at the time (Sambo’s corporate website). Despite its trade name being one of the most well-known racial slurs against Blacks, the restaurant owners maintained it was nothing more than a play on their names – Sam Battistone and Newell Bohnett. The company also maintained that its use of the children’s book *The Story of Little Black Sambo* (Bannerman, 1921) as the branding of its promotion material was an afterthought. However, there was a very string resemblance between the restaurant’s original logo (Picture 3.10) and the cover illustration of the popular children’s book (Pictures 3.11 and 3.12).
One characteristic of the post-World War II period was the push for post-war consumption. By the early 1950s, as production exceeded demand in the West, the push for production was relatively secondary for manufacturers, compared with the pressing need to stimulate consumption. The desperate situation and the nervous sentiment within the US corporate world, for example, was captured in a claim by the president of National Sales Executives: “Capitalism is dead–consumerism is king!” (quoted in Packard, 1957: 21). The unprecedented pressure on US consumers has been best described by church groups as a push to “consume, consume and consume, whether we need or even desire the products almost forced upon us” (Christianity and Crisis, 1955). Arguably, the US in the 1950s was where and when a culture of irrational consumption was cultivated through huge spending on advertising. According to Packard, in 1955 roughly $53 advertising dollars were spent on every man, woman and child to promote consumption. This sharp increase in advertising spending reflected the attitude in the business world towards the problem of overproduction. When confronted by the threat to the economy caused by overproduction, Wiley, a Senator also known as the Cheese Senator, argued on behalf of producers: “Our problem is not too much cheese produced, but rather too little cheese consumed” (Packard, 1957: 20-21).

True to the logic of capitalism, the strategy to solve the problem of overproduction was not to adjust production but to increase the consumer base and encourage consumption – be it rationale or irrational. As the advertising industry geared up with record revenues to not only sell products but also buy consumers, middle-class African Americans were recognised as an ‘undeveloped’ consumer segment, and lured into the much-needed spending spree. Here I outline the ways in which Blacks were depicted, as the advertising industry targeted them through various promises to improve their social status.

Just as in the political sphere, the racial struggle for the right to be present and to be represented as equal citizens also surfaced in the post-World War II era. The Black magazines’ struggle for political and financial survival and the surge of Black
consumer power signalled the beginning of a changing dynamic in the landscape of post-war consumer culture. For the first time in history, Black Americans had established themselves not only as new (albeit minor) players in the mediascape of popular magazines, but also as new players in the econoscape of consumption.

The push to get Black magazines into the US mediascape involved persistent efforts from Black publishers, including earlier pioneers such as Du Bios. However, the difficulties they faced were massive, as Pendergast (2000: 243) recounts:

One after another, magazines that tried to reflect and comment on black culture failed because they could attract neither adequate advertising support nor ample circulation. Neither rage at racial injustice nor forbearance with slow but noticeable progress provided the motive force to build a commercially successful general magazine.

It was not until November 1945, with the publication of *Ebony*, that a Black-owned magazine reached a mass-circulation audience. *Ebony*'s success in tapping into a more broadly dispersed consumer culture was not by chance. Externally, it had benefited from a realisation among advertisers of the need to cultivate underdeveloped markets of the US in a “dual effort to solidify the national market and expand into international markets” (Brooks, 1991: 133), as they began to widen their consumer base by including the previously ignored Black population in an attempt to boost the consumption of their products. Internally, to attract advertising revenue, the magazine also shifted its editorial focus from the earlier Black magazines’ collective concentration on ‘rights’ issues for the disadvantaged Blacks to promoting Black success and Black beauty, in terms of content, and adopting the style of leading mainstream magazines, most notably *Life*, in terms of design.

Against the odds, *Ebony* became “the major vehicle to bring Black consumers to manufacturers and advertisers. As a cultural artifact, it was the major forum for the circulation of consumer ideology” (ibid: 153). A series of examples presented in Section 3.2 supports this claim. In addition, with its new found position in the mass media, and its clear focus on Black success and beauty, *Ebony* was effectively a part of the struggle for national recognition of Black models and the use of Black celebrities in advertisements, within the framework of the Civil Rights movement.

The growing Black consumer market in the post-war US economy is also significant. Throughout the 1950s, the Black population in the US rose by 25 per cent in contrast with 16 per cent for Whites. Among the 25 largest cities in the country,
Black consumers accounted for more than 60 per cent of all retail sales, and 90 per cent of all wholesale sales (Chambers, 2009: 119). The importance of Black consumer power could no longer be ignored by the market and they began to be described by industry commentators as “the least understood, most controversial, and yet most promising consumer group in the nation” (quoted in Chambers 2009: 120). As a consequence of this newly emerging Black consumer power, advertisers began to concede the importance of tapping into the Black consumer market, regardless of their racial attitudes: if not as a mere moral gesture, defiantly as a fight for market share – an economic imperative for business – amid the post-war crisis of overproduction.

The real joy of good living was promised by Schlitz in this 1959 ad (Picture 3.13). Beneath the imagery of a Black man in a business suit holding a glass of Schlitz raising his glass to a woman in a Chinese silk dress, the copy suggested: “Make your move to Schlitz, the beer with just a kiss of hope. It’s one of life’s most refreshing pleasures”. The ad suggested that by making a move to the brand, the Black man may be able to “Move up to quality”. Through its visual framing, this multi dimensional ad offered the Black man (and his fellow middle-class Black consumers) the chance to move to a more tranquil environment, a more intimate relationship and a higher social class that embodied the ‘good life’ – as well as a good quality, refreshing beer! In so doing, it effectively linked happiness and virtue, social life and relationships, and success and failure, with the mere consumption of Schlitz.

For its part, a 1964 ad for Johnnie Walker persuaded Black consumers to consume its Red label whisky by promising them: “You’ll be glad you said ‘Johnnie Walker Red’” (Picture 3.14). The ad featured four Black people in formal attire at a social function. Directed at potential hosts, or guests, of social gatherings, the copy began with the line: “You honor your guests with a truly great Scotch. Because discerning people everywhere honor Johnnie Walker Red”. At one and the same time, the product’s reputation was established and guidance to any Blacks wishing to match the socio-economic status of their White counterparts was provided. While the advertiser counted on the desire and purchasing potential of the Black population,
doubt remained as to whether they would be able to appreciate the said prestige product. This skepticism was evident in the remaining copy, as it delicately gave out giving out unusually detailed instructions on how to enjoy the “incredibly smooth Scotch Whisky”. In other words, this ad not only tapped into the desire for social acceptance among the Black middle class and offered the Red Label as a symbol of success and good taste, it also assumed the problem of the inability of its ‘culturally inferior’ audience to appreciate an upmarket product originally marketed for the educated and cultured. Thus, it thoughtfully provided a recipe for their improvement.

As well as promising a better life and improved status, advertisers also tried to target other aspects the desire of Blacks to be seen as equal citizens. Among these desires was the urge to be rid of the long-held negative images associated with them. An ad in the May 1964 issue of Ebony provides one such example (Picture 3.15). Featuring a Black couple in evening dress behind a bottle of Old Hickory, the man held a glass of whiskey in his right hand and his lady’s waist in the other while whispering to her: “It seems all the nicest people drink Old Hickory”. By putting this line into the mouth of a Black man in an intimate private conversation, the urban middle-class Blacks were at once tagged with a hidden self-dissatisfaction and an obvious thirst to be accepted into the prestige group of the ‘nicest’ elite. Here, the advertiser exploited their vulnerability arising from past suffering due to all forms of discrimination – the Black couple could get invited to a social event, could afford to dress like well-off Whites, yet they were not naturally considered (by society and therefore by themselves) as ‘nicest people’ unless, as the ad suggested, they joined the club of Old Hickory consumers.
If there is a product category of advertising that can be said to be specially geared for Blacks and other non-White people within the post-World War II consumer society, it would be ads for skin bleach. As reviewed in Chapters 1 and 2, dark skin tones, along with ‘nappy’ hair textures were consistently highlighted in colonial racial discourses as visual markers of Black inferiority. In slavery advertising, ‘black skin’ by default equalled ‘slave’ and vice versa. In the era of High Imperialism, dark skin tones were utilised to mark many overtly racist stereotypes, including the Southern Mammy, the Sambo, the Piccaninny, the Golden Dust Twins, ‘the half devil half child’ and ‘the dirty boy’ who wanted to be White. Given that these were the very racist stereotypes the Civil Rights organisations challenged the advertising industry to make good, and given that the rationale for skin bleach products was rooted in centuries-old colonial racial ideology and aesthetics, how did advertisers walk the fine line in selling skin bleach products with their inherently racial overtones through strategically deploying imageries of the racial Other within the post-World War II context?

The practice of skin bleaching (a.k.a. skin lightening) not only reminded us of the dominant aesthetic distinctions of the light, beautiful race and the dark, ugly race championed by Meiner, but was also closely linked colonial relationships. Recounting the reports of the phenomenon from 16th-century journals, Hoetink wrote: “[T]he Indian women of Santo Domingo subjected themselves to painful treatment with vegetable mixtures in order to bleach their skins, so as to be more attractive in the eyes of the conquistadores” (Hoetink, 1971: 182). The ‘skin color hierarchy’, Hoetink suggested, was one in which skin colour became an index of socio-economic status where by-and-large the darker one’s skin tone was, the lower one’s position in the social and economic hierarchy (Hoetink, 1973). While the colour hierarchy helped to maintain the existing colonial status quo between the Whites and the non-Whites, it was complicated by the worldwide struggle for equality at the time and the rise of a middle class within the population of the racial Other. In these regards, the existence of a colour hierarchy “conspires to encourage the colored elite to emulate white groups, both culturally and in physical
appearance” as Hoetink asserted (1985: 70). The practice of bleaching one’s skin to achieve a lighter tone that was close to White people was one manifestation of the ‘bleaching syndrome’ (Hall, 1995) in a racist society. Under this condition, “the less powerful group must assimilate into the more powerful cultures to increase their quality of life” (Hall, 2008: 40) at the expense of their physical and psychological well-being.

The current US President himself recalled becoming aware of shocked by the practice of skin bleaching at the age of nine while reading a magazine article about how such a ‘treatment’ went tragically wrong:

There were thousands of people like him, black men and women back in America who’d undergone the same treatment in response to advertisements that promised happiness as a white person.

I felt my face and neck get hot. My stomach knotted; the type began to blur on the page. (Obama, 1995: 30)

The ads I am going to discuss here are representative of cases of the particular genre of skin bleach ads referred to in Obama’s account. Not only do they reflect advertising’s involvement in luring Blacks, in particular, and the other non-White population into consumerism generally, they did so by creating a sense of self-denigration and reaffirming the inferior/superior, undesirable/desirable binaries between Blacks and Whites in a new and seemingly benevolent manner. To attract and persuade non-White consumers, they made dark skin a ‘problem’, and turned light skin into the ‘solution’.

Following the advertising tradition of making big promises, the skin bleach ads promised their product would ‘improve’ dark skin. In all cases, the underlying rationale for these ads was that dark skin tones were undesirable in society and therefore undesirable for Blacks themselves, and that the consumption of the advertised product could help Blacks to overcome the problems they faced in all aspects of life, be they social, personal or psychological.

From reading issues of *Ebony* published from the 1950s to the 1970s, I found that skin bleach ads were prevalent throughout the 1950s and 1960s, but less frequent in number and less prominent in size in the 1970s. From a large collection of such ads found in the magazine, I will discuss the five most representative to identify the traces of colonial racial ideology and the ways in which the racial concepts of the
colonial time evolved to fit post-colonial conditions in the strategic deployment of racial tropes.

One of these ads was for Bleach and Glow cream, featuring top Black model Helen Williams, endorsing the brand with the tag line “You’d never know… My Skin Was Once Dreadfully Drab” (Picture 3.16). The ad did not give any visual cues as to how ‘dreadful’ her skin was, except through the use of the word ‘drab’. What the ad chose to show were the desirable results of her projected transformation. Although mainly working for ads targeting the Black population at the time, Williams was attributed as “one of the most beautiful models of all time, Black or White” by Linda Morand, an internationally renowned supermodel, now fashion historian and executive producer of the Supermodels Hall of Fame TV Awards. This ad presented the audience with a lighter skin toned Williams – beautiful, confident and on location. Individually, these signs spoke of personal fulfilment and career achievement. Together, they created a formula which reads:

light skin tone = beautiful = confidence = success

This equation reflected the aesthetic standard of the White-dominated modelling industry. According to Morand, Black models’ White-like features were highlighted and their success implicitly attributed to them. Speaking from a White supermodel’s and industry insider’s position, she wrote, for example:

Barbara January, who posed for cigarette ads and other national ads. She was very beautiful; light skinned and had Caucasian features. With skin the luminous shade of milky caramel, Dorothea Towles is generally credited with being the first successful Black mannequin, appearing in various fashion shows. (Morand, 2010)

Significantly, the equation established in this Bleach and Glow ad reinforced Meiners’ notion of a skin-tone based racial divide and aesthetic divide – which could also be read as ‘light = beautiful’ and ‘dark = ugly’. Perhaps even more significant is that this centuries-old colonial racial script was being (re)conveyed in
the heat of the Civil Rights movement, to a Black audience, with the endorsement of a Black celebrity – and in a Black-owned magazine which championed Black success and Black beauty. On the surface, Williams was used to serve as living proof of the wonder of the product, but on connotation and ideological levels, she was also used to endorse colonial racial aesthetics, giving a first-person voice, as a successful Black woman, to the assertion that dark skin was problematic and undesirable.

Apart from promising career success, advertisers also promised romantic success. In a 1959 ad for Black and White Bleaching Cream, the ‘Black’ was represented by an image of a Black man in the background playing with a snowman, and the ‘White’ by a White-skinned woman (who could be White or a ‘lightened’ Black) and the snowman (Picture 3.17). The woman was positioned in the foreground above the headline “YOUR LIGHTER, BRIGHTER SKIN will ‘melt’ him like a snowman”. The sales pitch began with the line: “For nothing attracts a man more than a lovely, glowing complexion – and it can be yours! Start using Black and White Bleaching Cream as directed and see your dull, dark skin take on a lighter, brighter, softer, smoother look”. Here, the Black man was muted, while the White-skinned woman’s role was not only to lecture Black women about what it took to ‘melt’ a man, but also to assume the authority to speak for Black men as to what they were (and should be) attracted to in a woman. The message conveyed in this ad was that if you did not fix your dull dark skin, you would have a problem attracting men – a notion that was both racist and sexist at the same time. More ironically, this ad was placed on the page next to a story concerning the problems facing children of cross-racial marriage entitled “America’s Brown Babies”.

A 1964 ad promoting a German invention called Palidia claimed that it “Solves Dark Color Problems as No Other Cosmetics Could Before” (picture 3.18). With the slogan “Lighten Dark Skin”, and making the bold claim that by using the advertised product “Dark skin – however dark it naturally may be, is bound to brighten”, the ad showed two images of the same woman, judging by the storyline
and the resemblance between the visual features of the two. The image in the background showed a Black woman with her supposedly natural skin tone – a ‘before’ image in a sense – while the image in the foreground showed a character with a White-like skin tone – an ‘after’ image which served as proof of the claimed: “Now dark skin can be lightened!”.

The ad used a popular visual trick of contrasting the ‘problematic’ dark-skinned look with the ‘improved’ lightened-skin look of the same woman. Interestingly, the ‘improvement’ shown in this ad was so dramatic that the woman in the foreground became somehow racially ambiguous after being ‘improved’. On her own, the woman in the foreground could easily be identified as a White woman. Perhaps such ambiguity was a hidden part of the message the advertiser was communicating: By using the product, you will become a different woman – a White woman – and enjoy a good life. While perhaps trying to be helpful to the Black audience by completely transforming them to look White (unlike the Black boy in the Pears ad whose skin was whitened only from neck down), the ad also reminded Black people to improve their ‘neglected zones’, so as to leave no trace at all of their Blackness.

As mentioned in Section 3.1, Black models were seldom seen in mainstream magazine ads during this historical moment, as the advertising industry was preserving the old tradition of separating Black and White models. However, this normal practice of segregation did not prevent White models from appearing in ads targeting Black audiences. My research in Ebony found that the vast great majority of ads used Black models only, some used White only, while only a very few depicted cross-racial imageries. Picture 3.19 is a 1966 ad for Nadinola that
depicted both Black and White models. The ad showed a photo of three women: two Blacks, one on each side of the frame, with a White in the middle. The ad’s banner read: “the bright… light… beautiful answer to your skin problem”. What was the bright, light, beautiful ‘answer’, and who were the ones with the skin ‘problem’? The visual language used here provided the key to these questions: the ‘answer’ was embodied in and provided by the White woman who pointed the two Black women troubled by their ‘skin problem’ in the direction of the advertised product – Nadinola. The presence and role of the White woman in this ad, provided a trace of the Enlightenment aesthetic, particularly that of Meiners, White and Camper, discussed in Chapter 2. The advertiser had to use a White woman in this role, as only a White, Blond woman could embody the ideal of bright, light, and beautiful under colonial racial ideology.

The concept of White as beautiful was specifically aimed at the Black population, though not exclusively. In an ad promoting the ARTRA brand of skin bleach cream, the advertiser widened its net to capture all woman of colour (Picture 3.20). With a claim of “NEW BEAUTY FOR WOMEN ALL OVER THE WORLD”, the ad made the familiar promise of “Lighter, Lovelier Skin Beauty”, however, with a twist. This ad went one step further to imply that all non-White women had the problem of not being White: While they might not technically be black enough to have the same level of problem as Blacks, they nevertheless were not White enough to be considered light, lovely and beautiful – which was a ‘problem’ in its own that needed
to be resolved. Again, a universal standard of beauty was assumed through the worldview of the West.

Unlike the above-mentioned examples, the following ad was not published in *Ebony*. Designed for the African market, this 1964 AMBI ad featured three Blacks under the headline “Successful people use AMBI” (Picture 3.21). What made this ad special was its strategy to (re)construct the mythical relationship between skin tone and success to promote skin bleach. Set in a medical clinic, the two lighter coloured Blacks were depicted as health professionals with the darker colour Black man depicted as a patient with a problem of some kind. The man with a stethoscope, on the left, and the woman holding a file, on the right, were both dressed in white gowns, and both looked knowledgable and confident. The man in the middle, on the other hand, was not only standing awkwardly, without any trace of clothing on the visible parts of his body, but also looked confused and disturbed. This was not a ‘before and after’ comparison nor a ‘Black vs White’ comparison like the other examples discussed earlier, but a powerful comparison nonetheless. This was a comparison between middle-class Blacks and underprivileged Blacks according to their darker and lighter skin tones. The logic of this claim can be considered in line with the rigid dichotomy between ‘noble savage’ and ‘barbarian savage’ – this time, the crux was what they decided to do with their skin tone. In this comparison, the Blacks who made the attempt to be accepted by the powerful White culture by whitening their faces (note that the visible part of their hands and the woman’s neck were still as ‘Black’ as the underprivileged Black man) were linked with success, whereas he who did nothing to solve his ‘problematic’ skin tone and Black identity was doomed to be left behind. The rhetoric was obviously designed to persuade Black consumers of the value of the product being promoted. Yet as outlined earlier in this chapter, the colonialisist racial myth of a linkage between skin colour and intelligence had already been debunked. The way in which the trope of racial Other was deployed and constructed in this ad illustrates a cruel reality of racial relationships at this point in history – social pressure was placed on the racial Other to assimilate within the dominant White culture by all means, if they wanted to gain legitimacy or to be treated anywhere near equally.
This chapter outlined the interplay between racial politics and racial representations in advertising during the post-World War II period. The decolonisation movement across continents, the holocaust of World War II, the demise of the scientific grounding of colonial racial ideology, and the Civil Rights movement in the US all contributed in one way or the other to the worldwide recognition and eventual condemnation of racism. Unlike the previous era, this moment in history was one in which racist acts and attitudes were commonly recognised and officially condemned, and one in which the previously rigid colonial racial ideology was beginning to be questioned and challenged.

As World War II drew to an end, there was an air of excitement and hope for a new world free of fascism and racism. Given that historical events were all pointing to a new dynamic and a paradigm shift, surely a significant change towards the racial Other was certain to follow. Insightful critics, however, voiced their concerns about such an illusion and warned of a long fight for racial equality ahead given the durability of racism even at a time of jubilation (e.g. Arendt, 1950; Banton, 1969). Unfortunately, these concerns proved to be legitimate, as this chapter has shown. Although Hitler’s eugenics-backed holocaust during World War II gave racism a bad name, the defeat of Nazism did not equal the defeat of racism, nor did the physical withdrawal of European colonial ruling powers from their ex-colonies, the bursting of the scientific myth or the hard-fought Civil Rights campaigns, for that matter. So what did this chapter unveil about the survival of the colonial racial script during this turbulent era of racial struggle, specifically in the hands of the advertising industry?

From the chosen vantage point of post-war advertising in the US, and taking into account the mounting social and economic pressure for racial equality confronting the advertising industry, this chapter indicated an unsatisfactory outcome, paralleling that of the Civil Rights movement more generally as assessed by King (1972). While progress was being made, the goals of increased Black representation in the advertising profession and a greater Black presence in advertisements were
far from fulfilled. The demand for a positive portrayal of Black people in advertisements was met with resistance, and defused with tactical strategies.

The attitude in dealing with the imagery of the racial Other in post-World War II advertising, amid the racial struggle for racial equality was worth highlighting. We began to see multiple attitudes instead of the uniformity of a homogeneously hostile attitude expressed in earlier ads. On the one hand, the existing paradigm was challenged and, to a degree, renegotiated given that what was previously accepted and unchallenged in advertising discourse was no longer tolerated by the racial Other and the more liberal-minded people of the post-World War II society. Advertisers and advertising agencies began to realise that overtly racist ads could no longer be expected to have a legitimate place in the post-war political and economic climate. It was within this era that advertisers learnt the importance of avoiding bad publicity, as they witnessed some very public lawsuits, marches and sit-ins across the country, and found that businesses could no longer afford to ignore, let alone offend, a growingly important consumer group. They had to bow to Black spending power and avoid the risk of being on the receiving end of mass ethnic product/patronage boycotts. The retreat of many blunt racist ads in the 1960s provides some evidence of this. On the other hand, reflecting the competing racial ideologies, measures to eliminate racial stereotyping varied – some advertisers made an effort to either withdraw or modify existing racially discriminatory advertising imageries, will some found ways to continue to use or even create such imageries. While overtly racist stereotypes began to fade out, they were replaced by covertly racist stereotypes that maintained the colonial racial hierarchy, despite some attempts of constrain.

The strategies reflecting the use and usefulness of the racial Other as observed through post-war US advertising was also significant. After World War II, ads deploying Black people with derogatory rhetoric persisted. It was not until the 1960s the industry by and large ceased deploying imageries of Black people with an overtly racist tone. Up until this historical moment, tropes of the racial Other had been unreservedly at the disposal of advertisers, given Black imagery was used and abused freely in ads and assigned with negative stereotypes. In other words, I am suggesting that from the inception of the industry until this point, advertisers had been enjoying a free ride in exploiting imageries of the racial Other for capital advancement. However, mounting political and economic pressure from the Civil Rights movement, in some measure, altered the rules of the game. When the free ride was interrupted or over, and there were demands to rule out the use of the
negative depiction of the racial Other, advertisers reacted by withdrawing the imagery of Blacks from mainstream advertisements altogether – the phenomenon of rendering Blacks invisible as described by Chambers. This can be interpreted as a reactive strategy to deal with the intense pressure on the advertising industry mounted by the country’s Civil Rights movement. Furthermore, the loss of appetite for using Black imageries in post-war advertising and the elimination of Black imagery from advertisements in mainstream media, I believe says as much (if not more) about the perceived value and usefulness of racial Other in advertising as the many ads that exploited them within different contexts.

The loss of appetite for deploying imageries of the racial Other in ads in mainstream media, however, should not be mistaken as a loss of appetite for the ethnic market. To the contrary, the growing consumer power of the Black population was so desirable to advertisers during the post-war era, that it was enough to warrant a growing number of advertisers placing ads in popular ethnic media such as *Ebony*. Indeed, some researchers have considered the placement of ‘non-ethnic specific’ product advertisements in ethnic media during the mid-1960s as the unofficial beginning of ethnic marketing (e.g. Kovach, 1985; McCarroll, 1993). The consequent need to treat Black people as consumers meant that, for the first time, the racial Other was on the receiving end of marketing and advertising campaigns – a marked shift from the roles they had been assigned for centuries, as outlined in previous chapters. This shift is significant for this research because it signalled a turning point in which advertisers had to adapt to a new found target market and to alter their rhetoric (even if mainly limited to the ads placed in ethnic media) to gain a benefit for their advertising dollars. Through capturing this unique moment and focusing on the specific context through the advertising pages of *Ebony*, this chapter has provided a window into some noteworthy emerging themes and rhetoric of the time.

Typically, Black characters featured in ads targeting Black audiences were depicted as the aspiring middle class craving to be treated as equals in society. While seemingly to be a positive move, there was a catch. It was precisely by depicting Blacks in middle-class settings, by manipulating their aspiration for equality into a desire to be White, and by using the logic of neocolonialism and modernisation theory, advertisers found useful themes to speak to their Black audience through Black-owned media: improvement and legitimacy. These themes were widely used to persuade Black people to consume the advertised product. Skin bleaches and hair straighteners were promoted as solutions to Black problems by physically
transforming them into the Western ideal of beauty and civilisation so they could be more successful in all aspects of life, from employment to relationships. A range of non-ethnic-specific products, such as alcohol promised Blacks a way to move to a higher class and be accepted as respectable — simply by consuming the said product. In short, while imageries of Blacks were deployed in a seemingly positive light in advertisements to attract the Black community to consumerism, the underlying rationale of these ads continued to be based on the premise of Black inferiority, despite the rhetoric and discourse being adapted to the context, the occasion and the audience.

Centred within the socioeconomic climate of the post-war era in the Western world, and with reference to the use of the trope of Black people in US advertising, the events outlined in this chapter signalled the start of a palpable struggle for racial equality and identity in the field for years to come. The undercurrent of anger and discontent over the discriminatory racial tropes that for centuries had been constructed and circulated through the cultural industry had finally surfaced and manifested after World War II — and the advertising industry felt the pressure. Through this organised power play, we can begin to appreciate the multiple ideologies, positions, actions and shifts relating to the deployment of the tropes of the racial Other. In a Foucaultian fashion, we began to see strategic and tactical resistance to the colonial racial tropes, and the ways in which “each offensive from one side serves as a leverage for a counter-offensive from the other” (Foucault, 1980:163). I conclude Chapter Three with this quote as it also helps introduce Part Two of this thesis, which investigates a more complex context and wider scope of advertising racial discourse during the moment of contemporary globalisation to address the research question.
PART TWO

DEPLOYMENTS OF THE RACIAL OTHER WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF CONTEMPORARY GLOBAL ADVERTISING
Racism is not what it used to be, and ideas of ‘race’, and racisms and anti-racisms, are in constant motion.

Shire, 2008: 7

The struggle to come into representation was predicated on a critique of the degree of fetishization, objectification and negative figuration which are so much a feature of the representation of the black subject. There was a concern not simply with the absence or marginality of the black experience but with its simplification and its stereotypical character.

Hall, 1996: 443

Part One of this thesis constructed a genealogy of tropes of the ‘racial Other’ and their use in early advertising. In each of the key historical moments examined, the focus was on considering the tropes of the racial Other developed and communicated through proto- and early advertising discourse by the dominant Western commodity image industry for both political and economic gain and to enshrine particular cultural perspectives that hierarchize according to racial taxonomies. In the second part of this thesis, I turn to the contemporary moment and examine the ways in which tropes of the racial Other – some new and some related to older exemplars – are deployed in contemporary advertising within the different cultural, social and economic contexts of ‘globalisation’.

Over the past decade, the word ‘globalisation’ has become a ubiquitous term in a wide range of academic and popular discourses (Szeman 2001: 209). As a complex and pervasive concept, globalisation has been an important explanatory signifier in debates ranging from politics to economics, technology and culture. As mentioned in the
Introduction to this thesis, I approach globalisation as at once a phenomenon and a process through which a paradigm or domain of knowledge about race and racial ideology is being developed with elusive rather than predictable motions that make the already problematic concepts more unsettled, unequal, evolving and multidimensional. Given the multidimensional nature of globalisation, this thesis focuses on specifically its cultural dimension – as the realm of global culture is the meta-context in which the research question is located.

Anderson (1990) characterised the new global age with the quip that “[r]eality isn’t what it used to be”. At the same time the concept of race and image were in motion (Bhabha, 1994; Shire, 2008), which made imageries of the racial Other more volatile and unstable. Two questions arise from these critical observations. The first concerns the reality of the condition of a global culture – what are some of its crucial parameters and features? The second concerns the ways in which imageries of the racial Other are deployed in contemporary advertising and branding campaigns within the context of globalisation. The first question is addressed in Chapter Four, in the form of an account of the global context within which advertising and branding operate. The second is explored in detail in Chapters Five and Six through a close examination of the advertising discourse itself – a range of advertisements and branding materials tells the story of the different strategies employed and the cultural politics operationalised in deploying imageries of the racial Other.

In outlining the context, I take advantage of the five dimensions, or ‘scapes’, of the global cultural flows identified by Appadurai (2002: 33) and use these as a basic framework through which to explore the disjunctures of a global culture relating to the subject matter of my research question. In the first instance, advertising is a visible component of what Appadurai identifies as the ‘mediascape’. But what advertising actually ‘does’ closely links it to the ideoscape. Further, the tropes of the racial Other and their deployments are by and large ‘located’ in the ethnoscape. In addition, the global relationship between ethnoscapes and the finanscapes and technoscapes, as Appadurai puts it, is “subject to its own constraints and incentives … at the same time as each acts as a constraint and a parameter for the movements in the other” (ibid: 33). All these dimensions are interconnected, as demonstrated throughout Part Two.

The contextual background of advertising in the age of globalisation also cannot be satisfactorily understood in isolation from institutional shifts within the profession itself. As such, the interrelationship between advertising and the spread of a global commodity culture, and the industry’s strategic adjustment to the shifting geopolitical, cultural and market environments, such as national identity, multiculturalism, anti-
discrimination, as well as growing non-White consumer power within and outside of Western countries. are outlined in general and considered in particular cases. Efforts have been made to identify the dominant wisdom, attitude and practice of an industry in a time of renewed challenges posed by the current process of globalisation – of which the advertising industry itself is a powerful and visible force.

In examining the ways in which imageries of the racial Other are deployed in contemporary advertising and branding campaigns under the reality of globalisation, I continue to employ a Foucauldian genealogical approach in the way in which I have organised of research data, focusing on the recurrence of the racial scripts and tropes in advertising and branding campaigns, and investigating the different roles being selectively deployed under different challenges posted to advertisers by contemporary globalisation. I am less interested in identifying patterns of racial representation in advertising according to industry or product, than in the strategies of racial representation as they arise and recur in different arenas and to address different challenges. This perspective leads to the need to ‘free’ the advertisements and branding materials from the confines of their industry or product origins. Therefore, my analyses of data are performed according to thematically divided discourses in which imageries of the racial Other are used to fill different roles in different campaigns. The analyses are framed within unique scenes where racial politics and articulations are in play, in order to capture the conditions and practices, and to register the typical needs, motivations, dilemmas and strategies of deploying imageries of the racial Other in contemporary advertising.
CHAPTER FOUR

ADVERTISING, RACE AND GLOBAL DISJUNCTURES

Global advertising is the key technology for the world-wide dissemination of a plethora of creative, and culturally well-chosen, ideas of consumer agency. These images of agency are increasingly distortions of a world of merchandising so subtle that the consumer is consistently helped to believe that he or she is an actor, where he or she is at best a chooser.


4.1.

THE CONDITION OF GLOBAL CULTURE AND ADVERTISING

Although ‘globalisation’ only became a buzzword in the last decades of the 20th century, its emergence and effect on culture was envisioned far earlier, in the age of High Imperialism. In their Communist Manifesto (1848), Marx and Engels foresaw the emergence of a global culture and linked it with the global spread of capitalism. Taking into account the constant revolutionising of bourgeois production and the subsequent need to expand markets, and according to the logic of capitalism and imperialism, they predicted that “national one-side[ld]ness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures there arises a world literature” (Marx & Engels, 1976: 488). For them, the process of economic and cultural globalisation leading to a genuine
internationalism or universalism was anticipated to be a force challenging nations and nationalism of 19th-century Europe.

Contemporary discourses link the emergence of globalisation with a late-century shift in capitalism from Fordism to post-Fordism, regimes of flexible production and accumulation, and finance capitalism (e.g. Jameson, 1998; Appadurai, 1990, 1996; Harvey, 1990; Waters, 2001). Concerned with the spread of capitalism to every corner of the globe, Cvetkovich and Kellner (1997) claimed the existence of a global system of mass production and mass consumption. Such a global system is described as one that “disseminates throughout the planet fantasies of happiness through consumption and the products that allow entry into the phantasmagoria of consumer capitalism” (ibid: 6). By and large, a global culture has been interpreted by scholars as a late-world capitalist culture, or a global commodity culture.

The spread of this global commodity culture was – and continues to be – motivated by both economic and political concerns. In line with the historical pattern of inequality in world affairs, globalisation can be considered as the simultaneous continuation and transformation of Western imperialist relations in the period after decolonisation and post-colonial nationalism. Accordingly, past and present critics of globalisation often ask questions also posed by postcolonial scholars, such as the nature and survival of social and cultural identities. In this regard, the insights into the cultural dimensions of imperialism and colonialism provided by postcolonial studies, particularly the insistence that culture must be seen as essential to the creation, production and maintenance of colonial relations, remain valid in the context of the spread of a global culture. Or, as other neo-Marxist globalisation scholars have put it, the global present is marked by “the becoming cultural of the economic, and the becoming economic of the cultural” (Jameson & Miyoshi, 1998: 60).

Much of the academic interest in cultural globalisation has focused on the impact of the global spread of an American-style capitalist culture, and on the overt threat posed to the very existence of many other local cultures and traditions. Many of the studies of global culture compare the global diffusion of American cultural products and values to cultural imperialism. A range of contemporary metaphors of globalisation have been developed in critiques of the market domination and cultural perpetuation of American-centric products and tastes, and the emerging phenomenon of a ‘monoculture’. Copeland (1997), for example, finds that ‘globalisation’ and ‘Americanisation’ have become largely indistinguishable. Other
than Americanisation, value-laden terms such as Coca-Colonisation (Wagnleitner, 1994; Howes, 1996), McDonaldization (Ritzer, 1996), and MacDisneyization (Ritzer & Liska, 1997) have also gained currency in debates arguing that the domination of US material and media products will eventually lead to a homogenous world culture, erasing existing differences between local cultures and resulting in a standardised or Americanised culture of commodity consumption. At the heart of the problem of cultural imperialism is the sweeping and strategic use of political and economic powers to exalt and spread the values and habits of a Western culture at the expense of a native local culture (Tomlinson, 1999).

The critique of cultural imperialism and Americanisation has not itself gone unchallenged. It has been argued that US culture and ideology have not managed to turn a docile Europe into an Americanised global village (Kroes, 1999), and that the Americanisation of Europe is a myth (Pells, 1997). In, for example, Cultural Transmissions and Receptions: American Mass Culture in Europe (Kroes et al, 1993), the authors argue for the term ‘cultural imperialism’ to be replaced with ‘cultural transmissions’, with an emphasis on interaction rather than domination. However, the power and desire to dominate or exploit local cultures and markets can be exercised just as much through interaction as through naked subjugation – the crux of the issue, I would argue, are the context-specific cultural politics and motivations underlying these interactions.

At the same time, it is pertinent to note here that globalisation is not a level playing field and this is particularly so in those interactions where the political and economic powers of the parties involved are clearly unequal. This kind of imbalance between dominant multinationals and ‘Third World’ markets is visually manifested in a 2007 ad from Nike designed by Gray Group Vietnam (Picture 4.1). Entitled ‘Nike Now in Vietnam’, this ad not only claimed Vietnam as its commercial territory, in replacing the Yellow Star with a Nike Swoosh and embroidering the Nike tag line within the

![Picture 4.1, Nike, 2007](image-url)
country’s red national flag, it also symbolically and effectively removed of local historic and social identity and imposing its own, in a classic ‘Just do it’ manner.

While advertisements deliver persuasive sales pitches for advertisers to promote their products and policies, they also, among other things, assert and express the underlying worldviews of those who are behind them. The visual rhetoric of this ad – as well as others – is conditioned by the advertiser’s judgment about, attitude toward, and strategy regarding various global and local challenges that these ads were designed to manage. Therefore, a contextual awareness of the most influential theories, practices and strategies of contemporary global advertising is needed at this point to help analyse the advertising and branding materials in later chapters. Bear in mind the play of cultural politics manifest in the Nike ad, I now turn to two of the most prevalent wisdoms that underpin the advertising industry’s strategic response to the challenging cultural and racial politics brought about by the current acceleration of globalisation.

### 4.1.1 STANDARDISED ADVERTISING VS GLOCALISATION

There is no shortage of examples of multinationals manipulating local taste and values in the field of advertising. However, within this section, I begin with the notion of ‘standardized’ international campaigns – a pervasive advertising industry strategy predicated on ignoring the taste and values of local populations.

An influential champion of this approach to a globalised market is Levitt (1983). For Levitt, following the direction of the world economies, consumption communities are to be viewed as global in nature, with local communities having little relevance in the larger framework of a global economy. Declaring that “The world’s needs and desires have been irrevocably homogenized” (ibid: 93), he argues that “Different cultural preferences, national tastes and standards, and business institutions are vestiges of the past (ibid: 96)”.

Based on this assumption and the logic of capitalism, comes the suggestion that advertising agencies need to align with their clients’ move to become globalised, and to sell products to the global consumer market through a kind of ‘one sight—one sound’ message, for the sake of ‘economies of scale’.

Leading US corporations and other multi-national brands have shared and practiced Levitt’s vision as an answer to the new challenges posed by their ever-
expanding markets across the globe and across cultures. For example, in a program preparing the executives of a Fortune 200-sized firm for the challenges posed by global competition, Bolt offered the corporate leaders ten ‘criteria for success’ (Bolt, 1995: 333-343). Notably, the ability to “operate as though the world is a large market, not a series of individual countries” was the fifth of his criteria, quoting Levitt and drawing on the success of McDonald’s and Coca-Cola (ibid: 337).

The influence of Levitt’s strategy on the big end of town is significant to the operation of the advertising industry, which has also been trying to find a way to deal with their multinational blue-chip clients’ need to advertise beyond their existing cultural comfort zones. The idea to treat the world as a single large market is one contributing factor to a series of Western-centric practices. The overwhelming dominance of the ‘global advertising industry’ by agencies with headquarters in the US and Europe is one aspect of this practice. According to the industry source AdBrands, by 2010 “[s]itting at the very top of the [advertising] industry pyramid are a small number of holding companies. There are now just four major international groups, Omnicom, WPP, Interpublic and Publicis Groupe, each of whom controls a huge number of different agency brands spread all over the globe”. Among these four giants, two have headquarters in New York, one in London and one in Paris. A study into the globalisation of the advertising industry conducted in 2008 has also confirmed “the pre-eminence of New York as clearly the global advertising centre” (Faulconbridge et al, 2008: 17). Even when taking into account factors such as market fragmentation and the need to set up local branches or joint-ventures and hire some local staff in major market centres in other parts of the world, the US headquarters (especially New York) are firmly in control of strategy, direction and decision-making, and operate as the “lead office” for their global networks (ibid: 5).

Beyond the dollar value of revenue and billings to the ‘global advertising industry’ that reaffirms the market dominance of the West, the recognition of creative achievements have similarly been dominated by the West over ‘the Rest’. Every year, the most creative works of the circulated advertisements in all media around the world are judged through major annual international and regional awards. Scores are tallied, countries and agency networks are pooled and ranked for their creative success according to their creative success, and industry reports released (such as those of the above-the-line-advertising focused Gunn and the below-the-line-advertising focused Big Won). Even a cursory glance at the rankings across the years in these reports produces a sense of déjà vu – the top three agency networks
are often either BBDO Worldwide, DDB Worldwide or Ogilvy Worldwide. The US, the UK and Germany are constantly the most awarded countries, albeit with an occasional change of order between years and reports. While these rankings have symbolic and practical meanings for the profiles of agencies and clients alike, they also offer a window to some aspects of the culture in the ‘creative economy’ (borrowing Florida’s term, 2004) of our time. Although computed through a medal tally and being quantitative data in their own right, these rankings can also be considered as signs of the global culture. For example, at least in part, they stand for what is accepted as ‘creativity’, for what origins of ideas, concepts and aesthetic are appreciated, for who are the named ‘winners’ of the game of global advertising, and for who is judging and according to whose understanding of ‘value’.

In contrast to a standardised approach, the advertising industry’s other key strategic response to changed global conditions has been through the rhetoric of ‘glocalization’. Originally developed as ‘global localization’ and circulated in Japanese business circles in the 1980s when they were trying to penetrate markets in the US and return to the market in Asia, glocalisation refers to the process in which global corporations tailor products and marketing strategies to particular local circumstances to meet variations in consumer demand. Robertson suggested that just as the global modifies the local, the local practices also have a determinate impact on the global (Robertson, 1995). Correlate theoretical accounts can also be found in postcolonial studies which argue that the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised is a dialectical one, in which the coloniser shapes the culture and identity of the colonised on one hand, while being shaped by their encounter with the colonised on the other (Said, 1978, 1993; Bhahba, 2002; Viswanathan, 1997). In a similar approach, Robertson (ibid) used the term glocalisation to describe the reality of contemporary cultural globalisation.

The original application of the glocalisation strategy helped Japanese global brands to wash away the ‘odour’ (Iwabuchi, 2002) that associates with Japan’s past colonialism, nationalism and wartime brutality. A quite literal exemplar was the 2003 retreat of the existing Panasonic brand identity ‘National’ from all markets outside Japan. Since the 1980s, different rebranding activities have been conducted by a number of multinationals whose existing established brand identities carried degrees of racist overtones (see examples in Chapter Six).

The glocalisation strategy and theoretical perspective has been criticised as neglecting the homogenising aspects of Westernisation/Americanisation in the
politics of globalisation. Ritzer, for example, offered a theory of ‘globalization’ to understand the globalization phenomena that could not be fully explained by glocalisation theory. Glocalisation, according to Ritzer, was “the interpenetration of the global and local resulting in unique outcomes in different geographic areas” (Ritzer, 2004: 73). The theory of globalization, on the other end of the globalization continuum, referred to “the imperialistic ambitions of nations, corporations, organizations, and the like and their desire, indeed need, to impose themselves on various geographic areas” (ibid). Ritzer argued that capitalism, McDonaldisation and Americanisation were the three major forces behind globalization in general and imperialistic impositions in particular, in which these entities were forced to “explore and exploit possibilities for profit in more remote and less developed regions (ibid: 80)”. As such, a companion to the notion of glocalisation was needed:

[T]hese imperialistic impositions occur whether or not there is opposition to them at the individual or local level. That is, those entities involved in such impositions take the necessary actions anywhere and everywhere they go. Again, at least theoretically, those actions do not depend on how they are received in various places throughout the world. (Ritzer & Ryan, 2007: 52)

The dialectical relationship, when in play, ultimately depends on the balance between cultural and economic forces. In the game of advertising, every informed player knows that the world is not flat. But for those who think they can make it flat, and treat it as such with standardising ads, their industry dominance is enough to reward them with the reduced financial burden of creating and producing multiple versions of localised advertisements, and with the reduced cultural burden of adapting to the ways of life of the local audience. However, multinationals with such an attitude do, from time-to-time, run into situations in which some of the standardised elements in their campaigns clash with the local culture. When dealing with cross-cultural communication challenges, brands’ attitudes differ, and so do their strategies. To illustrate the multifaceted reactions and the different (and at times completely opposite) strategies, I chose a rare example involving two different multinational brand entities facing the exact problem in Spanish-speaking markets.

In the 1980s, Both British General Motors in the UK and the Chevrolet division of General Motors in the US used the word ‘nova’ to name their car models: Vauxhall Nova and Chevrolet Nova respectively. Although the word in itself denotes ‘star’ in English, and can somehow be connoted as ‘new’ in Latin, Nova’s pronunciation in Spanish was problematic. In local language, ‘no va’ means ‘it
doesn’t go’. Given that the model was manufactured in Spain and marketed to several Spanish speaking countries, the Vauxhall Nova was sensitively launched as Corsa in these markets and badged Vauxhall Nova only for the UK market. The Chevrolet Nova, on the other hand, remained Nova until its production ceased in 1988. It was not simply the case of innocent ignorance, because: “Although GM's Mexican managers were worried about the name, Nova was indeed used” (Business Mexico, Jun, 1993). In defence of the controversial decision, marketing analyst Bouleau argued that such cross-cultural communication problems for a brand name in an international marketplace could be counterbalanced by a strong ad campaign. To back his argument, the case of Coca-Cola was again used: “One thing that never ceases to surprise me is how Coca-Cola has never had a problem (in Latin America). ‘Coca’ has drug connotations and ‘Cola’ means ‘tail’ – yet no-one thinks the worse of it” (ibid).

This is a familiar line of defence for a common practice among multinational brands of standardising rather than tailoring advertising campaigns and of ignoring local cultures instead of adapting to them when venturing into foreign markets. This practice is based on a long-held, almost religious-like belief in so-called ‘brand power’ built with the help of the ‘magic’ of advertising. Much has been said about advertising as a magical system in the influential work of Williams (1980) mentioned earlier in this thesis, and advertising agencies have boasted of as its unique selling point – a point preserved for ‘the propaganda to their clients’ and rarely confessed to the public, as Williams has sharply pointed out (ibid).

The same can be said in the age of contemporary globalisation, judging by the commonly drawn example of Coca-Cola and the example of Chevrolet Nova used here. Using the device of advertising and its power to name and to assign meaning and value, multinationals seem able to turn a blind eye to detrimental cross-cultural communication blunders if they so choose. With big advertising budgets and clever campaigns, locals in Spanish markets could be persuaded to think of Coca-Cola as an ‘it’ drink (backed by the “Coke is it!” and the ‘America’s real drink’ campaigns of the 1980s) instead of a ‘drug tail’; they could also be persuaded to value Chevrolet Nova as a dream car that embodied the Americanness desired by people all over the world (as Chevrolet’s “Feel the heartbeat of America” campaign of the 1980s suggested) instead of a self-proclaimed automobile that ‘doesn’t go’.

As this line of logic goes, whether or not a brand needs to respect local reactions and adapt to local cultures is all down to the question of whether or not the brand
is powerful (or deep-pocketed) enough to sway locals through an expensive and ‘strong’ advertising campaign in that market. Here, we can see where the balance of power rests, lending weight to the warnings of scholars regarding the onset of a ‘global capitalist monoculture’ (Tomlinson, 1999).

4.2.

THE CHANGES AND THE (UN)CHANGED

As a number of analysts have pointed out, im/migration is one of the most important elements of contemporary globalisation and “[m]assive global population movements are transforming many nations” (Anderson, 1990: 241). While McNeill attributed the perpetuation of an ethnically homogeneous nation as a “barbarian ideal” which was “incompatible with the normal population dynamics of civilization” (1984: 17) in the modern era, the ideologies of ethnic-nationalism and racism remain tenacious in reality as we will see in various parts of this chapter.

Immigration, as one of the important elements of contemporary globalisation and being the mechanism for global population movement, has contributed greatly to the changing racial politics of many Western nations. The sharp increase in non-White people migrating from Africa, the Middle East and Asia to predominantly White Western nations during the new waves of immigration from the end of World War II to the late 20th century and beyond, has not only challenged the ideology of ethnic-nationalism, but also begun to question the ‘minority’ label which has been consistently assigned to the racial Other within these nations. For instance in the UK, one of the most racially diverse nations in Europe, a 2000 study by Interfocus predicted that Blacks and South Asians would outnumber the White population in half of all London boroughs, as well as the cities of Birmingham and Leicester by 2011. Another typical example is the US. By 2007, the Census found that minorities constituted a majority in four states: Hawaii (75 per cent), New Mexico (57 per cent), California (57 per cent) and Texas (52 per cent) (The New York Times, 17 May 2007). The figures in the following year prompted one of the country’s leading
demographers to predict that immigrants would “gradually change the fabric of minority-majority interactions nationwide” (ibid: December 8 2008).

This broader change has been celebrated by some as a triumph of multiculturalism, and feared by others as a threat to the existing status quo of nationhood, and a dilution/degeneration of the dominant White racial identity. In any case, governments have had to re-evaluate existing policies, while marketers and advertisers have needed to re-map consumer demography and target audiences. For the purpose of this thesis, this widespread demographic change signals an emerging dynamic that has destabilised the previously stable power relationship, which in turn represents an important consideration affecting the strategy and rhetoric in the deployment of the racial Other in advertising and branding campaigns.

Leading figures of the advertising industry such as Snyder has remarked on this shift and the necessity of the industry itself becoming more racially diverse. He states:

Advertising that effectively addresses the realities of America’s multicultural population must be created by qualified professionals who understand the nuances of the disparate cultures. Otherwise, agencies and marketers risk losing or worse, alienating, millions of consumers eager to buy their products or services. Building a business that “looks like” the nation’s increasingly multicultural population is no longer simply a moral choice; it is a business imperative. (Snyder, 1993: 28)

Such a notion remains a point of advocacy rather than an experienced change. According to Holman: “The boardrooms and executive suites of general-market advertising agencies nationwide resemble percale sheets washed by the latest detergent – whiter than white” (Holman, 1993: 10). In Kern-Foxworth’s words: “The only thing that I have seen lately that is whiter than the advertising industry is snow” (Kern-Foxworth, 1994: 118).

Entering the 21st century, the Whiteness of the US advertising workforce remains largely unchanged, prompting the launch in 2009 of the Madison Avenue Project. The project claimed that Madison Avenue not only has a diversity problem but is also guilty of ‘pervasive racial discrimination’. A Bendick Egan Advertising Industry Report issued in 2009 found that for advertising agencies with 100 or more employees, African American representation was 13.3 per cent among ‘sub-
professional’ employees, falling to 5.9 per cent for professional positions, and to only 4.3 per cent for managerial positions. At the other end of the scale, over the same three levels, the representation of Whites increased from 68.2 per cent to 79.3 per cent and then to 88.0 per cent (Bendick & Egan, 2009: 27). For leading agencies with at least 50 professional and managerial positions, 15.9 per cent had “zero Black professionals and managers” (ibid: 29). The report concludes: “That failure [to hire, assign, advance, and retain the readily available Black talents], in turn, reflects an industry culture in which deeply-embedded racial bias, both conscious and unconscious, creates systemic barriers to inclusion for African American employees” (ibid: 2). The phenomenon of a lack of change in a changing time is worth considering as it indicates not only the measurable reaction of the advertising industry to the changing ethnoscape and the challenges of communicating to a multicultural audience in the age of globalisation, but also who is behind planning, conceptualising, directing and executing the advertisements that circulate in the contemporary mediascape – some of which are the subject of this study.

4.2.1 ENTERING A POST-RACIAL WORLD?

Putting structural inequalities within the advertising industry itself to one side for the moment, the question has been asked as to whether the West has entered a post-race era whereby racial identity is no longer relevant? Among the many factors complicating the question of racial identity is the pervasive ideology of colour-blindness. Emerging in the 1980s, proponents of colour-blindness effectively claim we live in a post-race world in which racism and racial discrimination are no longer a problem, and that any current disadvantages or gaps between Black and White Americans are no longer the result of racial discrimination but of other factors such as the cultural and behavioural deficits of the disadvantaged (Brown et al., 2003: 225). Such claims are not confined to the US and have stimulated debates in the US and Europe alike. The ideology has been criticised as “new racism” (Barker 1982), “cultural racism” (Taguieff, 1990), “neo-racism” (Baliber and Wallerstein 1991), “Color-Blind Racism” (Carr, 1997), and “racism without racists” (Bonilla-Silva, 2001), to name a few. Suggesting that “color-blind ideology performs for whites in defending white advantage in the present context” (Ansell, 2006: 333), Ansell explained that such ideology has “allowed whites to claim the moral high ground of being “beyond race” while refusing to sacrifice white privilege in the face
of challenge” (ibid: 352). As Toni Morrison rightly put it: “The world does not become raceless or will not become unracialized by assertion” (1992: 46).

It is relevant here to look at data showing the ways in which non-White citizens are perceived by the dominant group within two of the Western nations where the colour-blind ideology has commanded a place in cultural discourses. In the US, despite the data presented by proponents of the colour-blind ideology showing minimal racist stereotypes, Brown and colleagues’ research data indicate otherwise:

When the University of Chicago’s National Opinion Research Center asked people to compare blacks and other ethnic groups on a number of personal traits in 1990, they discovered that 62 percent of nonblack respondents believed that blacks were lazier than other groups, 56 percent stated that they were more prone to violence, and 53 percent thought they were less intelligent (Brown et al., 2003: 40).

In France, according to Lamont (2001), surveys at the turn of 20th century have consistently shown relatively high levels of racism and xenophobia:

[A] 1999 Harris poll conducted for the Commission nationale consultative des droits de l’homme revealed that 68 percent of the respondents in a national sample declared themselves somewhat racist; 61 percent believed that there are too many foreigners in France; 63 percent believed that there are too many Arabs (up 12 percent compared with 1998); and 38 percent believed that there are too many blacks (up 8 percent compared with 1998)” (ibid).

These findings suggest that colour-blindness is a myth.

It has also been suggested that the identity of the racial Other has become less clear-cut in Western countries within the context of contemporary globalisation. Hirschman, for example, suggested “the presence of immigrants is a hedge against the parochial view of us versus them”. Some of his examples point to the effects of interracial marriages on attitudinal behaviour against the racial Other in the West: “The children of intermarried couples are likely to be an important bridge to a more tolerant society”; and “It is more difficult to hold onto ethnic stereotypes when the ‘other’ is a nephew, niece, cousin, or grandchild” (Hirschman, 2005). In addition, a range of anti-discrimination laws have also set boundaries for racial discourses. Compared with the 1920s, when “Speeches by Ku Klux Klan members [against non-White immigrants] were virtually indistinguishable in substance and
language, if not in style, from the writings of many university professors” (Muller, 1993: 41), the overtly racist language, the offensive KKK style racial stereotypes in can no longer have a legitimate place in today’s intellectual or media discourse – though it is not to say they do not exist. While stereotyping has become a “dirty word” when used in connection with race or ethnicity (Helmreich, 1984: 213), racial stereotyping appears to remain prominently an issue of racism. The growing population of non-White immigrants, the children of intermarried couples, the rise of the non-White elite, the anti-discrimination legislation and the assertions of a colour-blind society seem to carry some hope for solving the problem of negative racial identity in the West. But do they?

My personal experience as a practitioner of the industry provides anecdotal evidence of racially shaped views within the profession itself. While the fact that I have been accepted in some leadership roles rarely available to a non-White female migrant and even given the honour of serving as a juror in a number of international poster biennials and logo competitions may support the colour-blind claim, it is not that simple. Comments such as “your design/style doesn’t look Asian” (considered a ‘praise’ by peers), and rhetorical questions such as “how can an Asian girl/lady come up with such a bold (also ‘brave’ or ‘cool’) idea” (expressed with ‘pleasant surprise’ by superiors and clients) underscores an ‘enlightened’ version of racial (and gender) stereotyping which regrettably remains in the subconsciousness of even the most liberal-minded professionals who have the best of intentions. This paradox points to the complexity of the concept of race and discriminatory racial ideology in contemporary times. As Shire puts it: “Liberalism is technically anti-discriminatory, but it is plugged into the whiteness of the privilege of power” (Shire, 2008: 12).

The question of colour-blindness, in a US context, has become part of public debate via the election of the current President, Barack Obama. Not only did the media dub the then Senator Obama an ‘exceptional African American’ and his family an ‘ideal family’, his presidential campaign running mate, the then Senator Biden, publicly branded him “the first mainstream African-American who is articulate and bright and clean and a nice-looking guy” on his first day of official campaigning (quoted in Swarns, 2007). In 2010, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid had to apologise for his “poor choice of words” (Preston, 2010) following reports that during the presidential campaign he had privately described Obama as a Black candidate the country was ready to embrace – with a “light-skinned” appearance and “with no Negro dialect, unless he wanted to have one” (quoted in
Heilemann & Halperin, 2010: 37). From the Obama phenomenon, Wise has identified a new form of racism – he terms it ‘racism 2.0’ or ‘enlightened exceptionalism’ – one that “allows for and even celebrates the achievements of individual persons of color, but only because those individuals generally are seen as different from a less appealing, even pathological Black or brown rule” (Wise, 2009: 9). He warns that “not only does the success of Barack Obama not signify the death of white racism as a personal or institutional phenomenon, if anything, it may well signal the emergence of an altogether new kind of racism” (ibid: 8-9). Furthermore, the “new, ‘color-blind’ racial system”, Winant warns “may prove more effective in containing the challenges posed over the past few decades by movements for racial justice than any intransigent, overtly racist ‘back-lash’ could possibly have been” (Winant, 2004: xiv).

4.2.2 ‘NEW’ MARKETS, NEW DEMANDS?

After contextualising relevant developments in the ethnoscape and ideoscape, and before embarking on the bulk of the case studies, it is appropriate to close the last section of this chapter with the mediascape – a site in which advertising operates – to appreciate the complex condition which drives the desire and need of advertisers for the tropes of the racial Other. Here I will briefly explain the significance of the interrelationship between the recognition of the rising purchasing power possessed by the racial Other within predominantly White Western nations and worldwide, and the forces and politics involving the deployment of the racial Other in advertising and branding campaigns.

The trope of the racial Other gaining greater currency since the last two decades of the 20th century is not a phenomenon that is innocent or coincidental, nor a ‘natural’ outcome of the changing minority-majority balance. It has much to do with the capitalist economy and the politics of multiculturalism in the context of globalisation.

A 2000 study conducted by the Minority Business Development Agency, US Department of Commerce, found that ethnic minorities in the country had expanded their purchasing power by 47 per cent over the previous 15 years. In the eight years between 1990 and 1998, the dollar value of ethnic purchasing jumped from $0.7 trillion to $1 trillion, and by the year 2000, ethnic purchasing power had reached $1.3 trillion (MBDA, 2000b). In releasing the report, Secretary of
Commerce Norman Mineta reminded all levels of business of the significance of this set of figures: “America’s population will increase fifty percent over the next fifty years, with almost ninety percent of that increase in the minority community. Both Fortune 1000 and minority businesses need to pay attention to the consumer purchasing power that will result from that growth” (ibid). The advice in the press release went one step further, concluding: “Companies that plan to stay competitive in the future will have to design and market their products to these new multicultural buyers. This will probably have to include multi language packaging, target marketing and products geared to specific cultural needs.” (MBDA, 2000a).

As discussed in previous chapters, Western capitalism had an eye on the local ethnic and international markets and tried to recruit their racial Other into their consumer base far before the contemporary acceleration of the globalisation process. But the emergence in the 1980s of ethnic spending power inspired the business world to move more swiftly – long before the release of this MBDA data and before the advice of US officials. In his highly influential work on business in today’s global economy, Drucker identifies the shift in population and the shift in the share of disposable income as the most reliable foundations of any business strategies. Among the two, “the share of the disposable income of their customers” is “the truly important figure” for management, according to Drucker, as he argues that consumer expenditure would determine the survivability of a business (1999: 43-44). As an economic imperative, the fast-growing ethnic population represents a newfound market segment for those who can penetrate it; and the rising ethnic purchasing power promises enormous potential for larger sales volumes and greater profit margins for those who can manage to attract customers with high disposable incomes. Winning or failing to penetrate the non-White market domestically and globally can make or break a business in a highly competitive, cut-throat marketplace.

Pursuant to the disposable income, it is no coincidence that the unofficial beginning of ethnic marketing in the 1960s has expanded exponentially since the 1980s to involve more corporate players on a bigger playing field. No longer confined to Black media, as in the post-war US as outlined in Chapter Three, advertisers have extended their boundaries from mainstream media networks to include more targeted racial groups through a wider scope of ethnic media. Leading advertising agency networks have actively sought to expand their client base to include ethnic-owned brands and made attempts to acquire established ethnic-owned agencies. By 2007, a study into the US advertising industry found that agencies traditionally
under Black ownership no longer exclusively commanded the market for advertising targeting Black consumers: “Under historic separations along racial lines, the market for these agencies was confined to an ‘economic detour’ from the general market for advertising services” (Bendick & Egan, 2009: 12). Nor did these agencies necessarily remain in Black ownership, as acquisitions or joint ventures saw several of the largest traditionally Black-owned agencies (such as UniWorld, and Burrell) become subsidiaries of leading agency networks (ibid).

The growing desire to grab a piece of the domestic ethnic market pie saw corporations such as Coca Cola, AT&T and Sears take drastic steps to run marketing campaigns targeting not only Blacks but also Latinos and Asians using up to ten language media. The financial return from the strategic cultivation of the non-White consumer segment is measurable. For example, in 1991 Estée Lauder marketed its ‘All Skins’ line under Prescriptives offering 100 shades to match the skin tones not only of its traditional White consumer base, but also of the non-White population – its motto: ‘Designed for all skins, all women’. By targeting ‘all women’ and thus tapping into the ethnic market historically ignored by nearly all other cosmetic companies, this strategic move resulted in an immediate and measurable financial reward. According to Weems, in its first year, All Skins attracted 50,000 African-American buyers in the US market alone (Weems, 2000: 175).

Domestic market aside, the lucrative overseas market – the ‘underdeveloped world’ – again became a battleground for the major powers, this time not between colonist nations but between multinationals for their global share and dominance. Coca-Cola was selling its products in more than 200 countries across the globe, but was still trying to narrow the gap between it and Pepsi-Cola in the Middle East. In the battle for dominance, Coca-Cola spared no expense to acquire the local bestsellers. In 1999, it spend US$300 million on a long and hard-fought battle to acquire Peru’s Inca Kola. More recently, in 2008 it offered more than US $2.4 billion on a failed attempt to acquire China’s best selling soft drink Huiyuan Fruit Juice. Indeed, foreign expansion was high on Coco-Cola’s agenda as early as the 1970s. A 1971 advertising campaign “I’d Like to Buy the World a Coke” illustrated its ambition. To make the point, young people from around the world were picked to lip-sync the jingle on a hilltop near Rome in Italy. The song married the pop song “I’d Like to Teach the World to Sing” with Coke’s sales pitch, ending with the “it’s the real thing” slogan. While a White girl was the lead ‘syncer’, the ad deployed the tropes of the racial Other throughout the clip using different skin tones, facial features and
costumes to harmonise with the White girl and convey a sense of Coca-Cola’s world presence (if not dominance) and goodwill.

It is interesting to observe what happened to Coca-Cola’s profile in the years following this commercial. At the time this ad was aired, Coca-Cola remained unable to open the doors of its cold-war rival Russia, or to enter one of the biggest markets, China. It had also been kept out of nations such as Egypt for more than ten years. Entering the 1980s, apart from dominating the world’s soft drink market (including these hard to enter markets), the Coca-Cola brand also dominated. “The power and prestige of Coca-Cola were exemplified in 1988”: the company proudly quotes three independent worldwide surveys, conducted by Landor & Associates, confirming the brand’s status as the world’s best-known, most-admired trademark (Coca-Cola website).

In light of these developments, it is worth highlighting the shifted emphasis in the featured character – ‘the face’ for the brand – over time. Anyone watching the 1971 “I’d Like to Buy the World a Coke” ad would have little doubt as to who was the ad’s ‘featured character’ – The White girl’s image dominated for nearly 15 seconds. However, the image of an Asian girl who only appeared for 3 seconds in the middle of the same ad – in a group scene – is now being used as the sole image and icon of *The Chronicle of Coca-Cola* chapter on the Coca-cola official corporate website (Picture 4.2). The very fact that a ‘background’ image of the 1970s has been brought to the fore and elevated to become a featured image nearly four decades later is indicative of a complicated re-negotiation and displacement of the meanings and sign value of the racial Other for multinational corporations. Imageries of the racial Other are, as evident in this case and data in the following chapters, becoming more useful for brands in the age of globalisation. The centre of my inquiry is in what manner are tropes used and what makes them useful in contemporary advertising and branding campaigns.

In addition to the economic imperative, political climates and regulations are also factors in the increasing deployment of imageries of the racial Other in contemporary advertising and branding campaigns. To begin with, a range of governmental and institutional initiatives themselves depend on the imageries of the racial Other in branding and to make their advertising statements. Governments
tend to use imageries of the racial Other to send messages promoting multiculturalism and equality, and rejecting racism. Transnational or supranational institutions also utilise the trope of the racial Other to project their global outlook and vision. For example, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the period between 1988 and 1997 as the *World Decade for Cultural Development*. The logo representing this initiative was formed using five abstract faces each of a different colour (Picture 4.3). Hans Erni, the Swiss artist who designed this logo, explained that the five faces represented the five continents of the Earth, and were used to symbolise the manifold creativity of social and cultural life. This imagined togetherness was also expressed in the 1991 *People to People – Paper Unites* calendar designed by German designer Helmut Langer, and involving the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the International Council of Graphic Design Associations (ICOGRADA) and Germany’s Zanders Fine Paper Company. The symbol on the cover of this calendar (which also became an official UN stamp) was illustrated by Marina Langer-Rosa (Picture 4.4) and constructed as a motif of twelve faces in diverse costumes, each representing a distinct ethnic population. Significantly, these two examples demonstrate a strategy and the need to use different skin colours and different facial features to help convey messages of togetherness among global citizens. In both cases, designers created visual symbols using representations of different faces to signify racial/geographic differences on the one hand, and arranged them in such a manner that each of the signifiers were equally (re)presented on the other hand. To manage this difficult balancing act, motif and circular composition were used and applied to the artistic expression in the faces to prevent the
dominance of any of the racial or geographic group.

It is important to emphasise here that political and social institutions are not only among the major users of the tropes of the racial Other (such ‘public interest’ deployment is the focus of Chapter Five), but also act as a force to push the use of the racial Other in commercial advertising campaigns. In multicultural countries such as the US, the UK and Australia, policy and regulatory forces have set guidelines explicitly or implicitly about how the racial Other is to be included and depicted in advertising. One of most explicit examples is the US, in particular The Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988 and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, which together make up the government’s Fair Housing Act, and the criteria issued and monitored by the Ad Watch Committee of the Black Media Association (BMA). While I am not particularly interested in simply setting rules for the ‘Dos’ and ‘Don’ts’, or prescribing ‘good’ versus ‘bad’, as these measures sometimes do, they nevertheless represent a factor that affects the cultural work advertisements do in a particular historical and cultural moment. In a sense these criteria remind me of the demands made by Black activists during the Civil Rights era some decades ago as part of the struggle to change the rules of the game for racial representation in advertisements. They need to be appreciated as a part of the context in which advertisements – both public interest and commercial campaigns that deploy imageries of the racial Other – are commissioned, regulated and scrutinised.

Section 804 of the Fair Housing Act, for example, clearly puts racially discriminatory behaviour in advertising in the spotlight. It unambiguously details possible violations in its Guidelines:

You should be sensitive to advertising campaigns such as those which depict:

- All or predominately models of a single race, gender or ethnic group
- No families or children
- Particular racial groups in service roles (maid, doorman, servant, etc.)
- Particular racial groups in the background or obscured locations
- Any symbol or photo with strong racial, religious, or ethnic associations
- Minorities who are not residents of the complex

The Guidelines take a further step to warn that “Advertising campaigns depicting predominately one racial group are particularly vulnerable to legal challenge if one
or more of the following factors are present” – among the offending factors are racial exclusion and segregation, such as: “The complex is located in a neighborhood which is predominately white or known historically as being racially exclusive and the models are white”; “The complex is located in a neighborhood known to be a black or minority area and the advertising depicts minority- race models”; and “The ad campaign involves group shots or photos or drawings depicting many people, all or almost all of whom are from one racial group”. Financial penalties are attached to the Act and the price to pay for non-compliance is high. For example, a ruling delivered in 1992 awarded $850,000 in damages against a branch of the Mobil Land Development Corporation for using only White models in the company’s property advertising from 1981 to 1986.

Demands to stop racist stereotyping when deploying imageries of the racial Other have also been put to the advertising industry by Civil Rights organisations and one of the clearest messages issued to the industry is again found in the US. In 1982 the Black Media Association (BMA) used a carrot and a stick approach with the advertising industry. Its Ad Watch Committee created letters praising ads depicting Blacks in a positive light, and shaming the agencies for any negative portrayals. To qualify for a letter of praise, the ad needed to meet the following criteria:

1. A black person is the sole spokesperson for a product or service. He or she is discussing the product's attributes intelligently without singing, dancing, or clowning. 2. The black(s) is portrayed as a serious person, a decision maker, and a responsible citizen. 3. Black youth are portrayed as honest, intelligent, and studious. 4. Ads that show a slice of black life (weddings, births). Ads that show being black in America is not always synonymous with poverty and frustration. Ads that show that blacks, like other Americans, have joys and triumphs. 5. Ads that show a dual-parent black family. 6. Ads that show black adults in caring relationships with their children, Ads that show parents concerned about their children's health, education, and safety. (Gist, 1992, quoted in Kern-Foxworth, 1994: 119)

On the other hand, a letter of shame was to be issued to the advertising agency in the following circumstances:

1. Blacks using slang or talking jive. 2. The fat black mother, single parent. 3. Ads that portray blacks as living in only low-income communities. 4. Ads that portray all blacks as criminals, unemployed, and/or welfare freeloaders. 5. Everyone in ad has
lines to say except black persons. 6. Blacks absent from situations in which they are present in reality. Example: an ad featuring an all-white professional basketball team. 7. Ads that resort to the following stereotypes: irresponsible black man, overbearing black woman, hustler, savage African, happy slave, petty thief, vicious criminal, sexual superman, natural-born athlete, chicken and watermelon eaters, intellectually inferior to whites. (ibid: 120)

Every line of both criteria is evidence of a long and bitter struggle against racist portrayals of the racial Other in advertising. The very fact that in the US in the 1980s, the BMA still had to take such measures to seek for the treatment their White countrymen took for granted tells part of the story. The legal step taken to make the presentation of ethnic imagery compulsory is also ironic. Despite the racial Other, particularly the Black population, having ‘earned’ their ‘right’ to be equal consumers many decades previously and despite being recognised as a valuable market segment, the Civil-Rights era struggle of being represented in advertising discourses still had to be fought in such a way decades later. These situations and the drastic measures the Government and Civil Rights groups have had to take, in themselves represent a phenomenon Hall calls “a struggle of the margins to come into representation” (1997: 34).

Between the commercial interests and the political interests, there was also an emerging trend that associated consumption with social activism and popular ideas by creating a link between the brand and the idea of consumer citizenship. With a more sophisticated manner, branding in the 21st century, Moore suggests, has become “the deliberate association of a product not just with a mere name but with an almost spiritual image, an idea” (2007: 5). However, it needs to be acknowledged that some brands had begun to systematically build such a spiritual image even earlier than that. Benetton, for example, has built its advertising campaigns around social and political issues through an array of highly memorable ads from the 1980s to the 1990s. Among the many issues the brand has tackled, racial integration has gained the most market exposure. The connection established between the brand and racial politics serves to give purchase a new meaning – in Benetton’s case, imageries of the racial Other not only help to enhance the brand’s corporate image, serving as a metaphor for the ‘United Colors of Benetton’, they also help to delineate difference and identity among its audiences, and appeal to the niche group of young unborn ‘progressives’. Although, as Giroux has argued, “[s]ocial conscience and activism in this [Benetton’s] worldview are about purchasing merchandise, not
changing oppressive relation of power” (1994: 5), Benetton effectively ‘fashioned’ itself as a brand that not only united colour in product sense but also united people in social sense – through some of the high-profile and racially charged advertising imageries (e.g. Pictures 4.5 and 4.6). Strategically, mixing social activism with consumerism helped transcend ethnic faces into eye-catching objects of ‘colour’ with staged and often controversial relationships which made the brand – the ‘United Colors of Benetton’ – a mediator for the real-world racial problems. Through this new found strategy, racial struggles and ideologies are consumed alongside imageries of the racial Other by trivialising and neutralising them, and reducing them to refined commodity fetishes.

Before I examine the strategies of deploying imageries of the racial Other in contemporary advertising and branding campaigns, and before we see the saturation of ‘colours’ in all discourses being studied, I need to put the apparent demand for racial tropes in advertising into context and leave no illusion as to the context in which they are depicted this regard. Because of my research focus, all the ads studied in the following two chapters not only include non-White imageries, but also feature them as main characters conceptually and visually. However, even in the age of contemporary globalisation, there are many others ads out there that still either exclude them altogether, or deploy them tokenistically. An advertising campaign to promote Levi’s Curve ID line of women’s jeans, launched in 2010, is one such example in point. With a tag line “ALL ASSES WERE NOT CREATED EQUAL”, and a claim at the end of the copy “IT’S THE NEW DEMOCRACY OF JEANS! FINALLY, JEANS FOR US”. The term ‘us’ is represented by three White models (Picture 4.7) in the most widely circulated print ad and poster. Out
of the nine models used in the print campaign’s three designs (each featuring three women in like manner and based on the same layout), only one non-White model was used (a Black model posing for the ‘Bold Curve’ shape) – most likely to be placed in ethnic media outlets.

Arguably, demands for racial tropes are growing but only in relative terms, and the representation of non-White imageries in advertising and branding campaigns is by no means the norm. The struggle of the racial Other to come into representation is by no means settled. The trope of the racial Other, therefore, is in demand in contemporary advertising for various reasons and to serve various interests. In a commodity culture, radicalised Otherness becomes a necessary source of sign value which, according to Goldman and Papson, is addicted to new styles and appearances. They suggest: “Advertising gives new, but certainly limited voice to otherness. Ads celebrate, romanticize, and incorporate otherness, turning it into a nonthreatening, but well paying commodity sign” (Goldman & Papson, 1996: 162). Consequently, Otherness, according to bell hooks (1992), becomes spice, seasoning that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream White culture, whereby the negative connotations of the racial Other are replaced with some kind of desirable qualities suitable for consumption. It is within this general context and climate in the globalisation disjuncture I locate each of the unique cases studied in Chapters Five and Six.
CHAPTER FIVE

THE USE AND USEFULNESS OF THE RACIAL OTHER IN PUBLIC INTEREST CAMPAIGNS

5.1.

STEREOTYPING AND COUNTER-STEREOTYPING

The Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) was set up by the British Government in 1977 under the country’s 1976 Race Relations Act. Under the Act, the Commission is responsible for “the elimination of racial discrimination” and “the promotion of equal opportunity, and good relations between persons of different racial groups generally”. Coinciding with a shift in the dominant national racial paradigm from an earlier emphasis on ‘integration’ to ‘diversity’, the birth of the CRE was indicative of a change in the official politics of race in the United Kingdom. During the 1990s, the Commission released several advertising campaigns with anti-racism messages partly to promote awareness of the Commission and partly to draw attention to the existence of racism in Britain. Two of the most controversial campaigns were launched in 1998 and are examined here as complex exemplars of the tactic of using racial stereotypes to address racist attitudes at a national level.

Bhabha regards stereotypes – a major strategy within colonial discourse, as “a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always ‘in place’, already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated” (1994: 66). Indeed, as Hall (1997: 249) notes, the traces of 18th and 19th-century racial stereotypes had not died out but instead persisted into the late 20th century. What makes these two CRE campaigns extraordinary is that while they had an express purpose of fighting the prevalence of racial stereotyping, the agency used the power of stereotyping itself as a strategy when executing the assignment.
5.1.1 A PROVOCATIVE APPROACH

On 18 September 1998, a ‘tease and reveal’ style advertising campaign was launched, with a series of three ‘teaser’ posters placed at 192 sites in major cities across Britain. All three posters in the series used negative stereotypes of Black people, and then deconstructed them.

The most offensive stereotype employed in the posters (Picture 5.1) explicitly linked the image of a Black man with the concept of a rapist. Spoofing a ‘rape alarm’ advertisement, this poster depicted a man of African appearance sitting on a bus. Within the frame, the only passenger seen sharing the bus with the Black man was a young White woman who sat a row behind across the aisle, watching him with an anxious and cynical gaze. The tag line – on her side – was literally ‘alarming’: “Because it’s a jungle out there”. With the advertiser’s identity absent, the ad’s only link to the CRE was a telephone number. In the same manner, another poster in the series bore the tag line “Born to be agile”. Appearing to be a sport shoes advertisement, it depicted a Black sportsman and an orangutan jumping in the same manner – while the Black man aimed to reach a basketball hoop, the orangutan reached for a branch. The third poster in the series, appears to be an executive recruitment advertisement, showing a competitive situation in which two men in business suits were climbing a ladder – not only the White man depicted on top of the ladder, he was also stepping on the hand of his Black competitor. The image was accompanied by the pun: “Dominate the Race”.

The ASA expressed its concern and asked the CRE to withdraw the campaign following some complaints about the posters. Instead of complying, the CER went on to release the follow-up ‘reveal’ poster series in a weeklong campaign which
began on 21 September. Each referred to the earlier ‘teaser’, with the new posters containing a smaller-size reproduction of the original racist advertisement, with a new and visually dominant headline in bold typeface which read: “WHAT WAS WORSE? THIS ADVERT OR YOUR FAILURE TO COMPLAIN?” (Picture 5.2). Revealing the overall objective of the campaign, the Commission issued a statement claiming: “The unique advertising campaign is designed to generate complaints and condemnation and also acts as a snapshot of public reaction to racism” (2005). Additionally, the statement described the number of complaints from the general public as ‘disappointing’.

The number of complaints about the large-scale nationwide ‘teaser’ campaign that depicted Blacks with extremely racist visual and written language was low indeed – the CRE reportedly only received six, the ASA twenty-seven. Yet even this small number of complaints was enough to put the government-funded race relations watchdog in the hot seat and see it attacked from a number of quarters for sanctioning and promoting racial stereotypes. The ASA, for instance, believed the CRE poster campaign had breached the advertising code of conduct in relation to taste, decency and social responsibility and “concluded that the posters were likely to cause serious or widespread offence” (1998). It then announced that all future CRE advertisements would be vetted for two years for taste, decency and social responsibility. In a traditionally self-regulated advertising industry, this ruling effectively made the CRE the first organisation in UK media history to have its advertisements pre-examined by the industry watchdog.

Ethnic groups also expressed their disapproval of the poster campaign’s approach. Milena Buyum of the National Assembly Against Racism, said the campaign was dangerous: “The problem is people may see the teaser and take it at face value because there is nothing to say it is produced by the CRE”. Worse still: “Then, if they do not see the follow-up, it simply has the effect of reinforcing racial stereotypes, which I’m sure is what the CRE is trying to contradict” (1998).

The poster campaign controversy also provided ammunition for British Labour’s political opponents. The most vocal criticism came from Tory MP Sir Teddy Taylor, who argued: “They [the CRE] have no right to put forward posters which are insulting to racial minorities, whatever their warped reasoning is for doing this” (ibid). According to the BBC, the MP for Southend East and Rochford went so far as to call on Home Secretary, Jack Straw, to close down the Commission and to withdraw all of its public funding.
The CRE defended its campaign by addressing most of these criticisms. First and foremost, the CRE and its advertising agency argued that the racist representation of Blacks in the teaser posters was deliberately created and necessary for educational reasons. Sir Herman Ouseley, Chairman of the CRE, argued: “These posters are just the first part of a wider campaign to challenge passivity in the face of racism” (ibid). As such: “The campaign is designed to force people into considering their own personal attitude to racism and is specifically intended to provoke a reaction – preferably complaint or condemnation” (1998). He went on to point out: “There were still thousands of people who must have seen these posters and thought about complaining but couldn’t be bothered” (ibid).

In an interview with BBC Radio’s *The World at One* program, Brett Gosper, a spokesman for the advertising agency, branded those who failed to make a complaint a ‘passive majority’. Pointing to the failure of past campaigns to target the passive majority, he said: ‘Advertising in the past had focused on ‘extreme’ acts of racism, the impact of which was to make people say ‘I’m not like that, I wouldn’t do that, I wouldn’t throw bricks through windows and so on’” (1998). However, when encountering a racist joke, the passive majority would not protest – “they will perhaps laugh and move on”, according to Gosper. This was used to justify the need to use a provocative tactic to make a statement. The message the CRE wanted the public to take out of this campaign was: ‘condone or condemn, there is no in-between’.

Addressing the National Assembly Against Racism’s criticism, a CRE spokesman for the made no apology for portraying Blacks with negative racial stereotyping, arguing the early posters were just the ‘opening shot’ of a public information campaign. “It is extremely unlikely that people who have seen these initial posters do not then see the follow-up”, said the spokesman (ibid).

In November 1998, the CRE fired its closing shot in this controversial campaign. An ‘advertisement of apology’ was launched with a new poster featuring the slogan “Sorry We Exist”. According to Ouseley: “The purpose of this latest advert is both to highlight the amount of work still to be done to end discrimination and to stress that if everyone took action to deal with prejudice and discrimination we would justifiably be out of business” (1998). Unapologetic about the racist representation of Blacks in the teaser posters, as well as the manner and tactic of the campaign, the poster once again addressed the necessity of an ongoing campaign to combat the widespread tendency towards passive racism in the UK at the end of the 20th
century. In this regard, the apologising poster could be read as a counterattack against its political opponents over their call to close down the Commission and withdraw its public funding—a fight for the Commission’s own political survival while scoring a political point. (c.f. Boothman, 1998)

5.1.2 A ‘HUMOROUS’ TAKE

Soon after the release of the “Sorry We Exist” poster, the CRE fired another shot in its fight against racism with a new campaign in late November 1998, again tackling racial stereotyping. The need for such campaign was evident in a CRE-commissioned survey which showed that an overwhelming 84 per cent of ethnic minority respondents believed that Blacks and Asians were often perceived as victims and in a negative way. The survey also showed a collective desire among the respondents for more positive minority images in the media (1998).

With the visual identity of the CRE clearly marked with its logomark and logotype, this campaign consisted of a series of three posters, each featuring a racial Other in the UK context—a Black man, an Indian woman and a Muslim boy (Pictures 5.3; 5.4; and 5.5). All three posters shared the same design style in terms of layout, colour scheme and typographic treatments, only with different characters and copy. The poster depicting the Black man went with the bold red headline ‘SCARED?’, while below it was a smaller sized white punch line ‘YOU SHOULD BE, HE IS A DENTIST’. The headline in the poster depicting the Indian woman read: ‘IMPROVE YOUR ENGLISH’, followed by the punch line ‘PERHAPS THIS HEADTEACHER COULD HELP’. The poster featuring the Muslim boy bore the headline ‘NO-ONE RESPECTS ME’, with the punch line ‘I AM A ARSENAL FAN.’.
The image of each character was constructed through different visual treatments. The Black man was depicted in a close up. With his hair and ears fading into the black background, the image featured nothing more than the centre of the man’s face – his eyes, nose, lips and pronounced bone structure. The use of high-contrast lighting, projected from a low angle, added a touch of menace to the face. Such framing and lighting arrangements ensured that the typical facial features of Blackness commanded the centre of attention on the one hand, and established a sense of horror on the other. The Indian woman, in contrast, was depicted from her upper body to her head. The framing and the softer lighting ensured symbols of her Indianess were visible to the audience: her hairdo; her costume; and the Tilak/Bindi, a distinctive spot on her forehead further identified her as a Hindu. The Muslim boy was also loosely framed. A small part of what looks like a school badge was visible on his jacket, suggesting the boy was wearing his school uniform. However, with the lighting pointed at the upper part of his head, one could not miss the white crochet taqiyah (aka ‘prayer cap’ in the West) that signified the boy’s Islamic identity.

Along with the carefully arranged visual treatments which contributed to the representations of non-White people through the advertiser’s gaze, it is also interesting to note the treatments of the gaze of the depicted racial Other in this series of posters. Matching their assigned professional status, the characters posing as dentist and headteacher were both depicted with an active gaze engaging with the audience (although the nature of each gaze is open to interpretation). Following the textual signifiers that were used as ‘hook lines’, as the industry calls it, the Black man’s gaze was more likely to be perceived as a sign of aggression, and the Indian woman’s gaze a sign of ignorance. But if these gazes were to be interpreted in light of the respective punch lines, then the Black man’s gaze could be perceived as a sign of concern, and the Indian woman’s gaze a sign of thoughtfulness. In the case of the Muslim boy, the absence of eye contact with the audience was compensated by the hook line which gave the character an active voice. Deferring from the other posters, the boy became an active rather than passive subject who had a degree of power.

Unlike the earlier Condone or Condemn campaign, this campaign took a humorous approach to the problem of racial stereotyping. According to the CRE, the objective of the campaign was to “make a mockery of negative stereotypes of black and Asian people” (The Independent 24 November 1998). To achieve this goal, prominent
headings in each poster acted as ‘hook lines’ that linked the individuals with a widespread negative stereotype typically associated with the ethnic group represented. The smaller punch lines then dispelled these prejudices by introducing ‘positive’ statements. Ultimately, however, this humorous approach still counted on the trick of ‘tease and reveal’. In the case of the ‘SCARED?’ poster, while the hook line played on the deeply rooted perception of Black criminality and savageness to mock the public preconception of Black danger, the punch line revealed him as a dentist – therefore the message in this poster was “If this Black man is to scare you – it should not be because he is Black but because he is a dentist”. Similarly, the IMPROVE YOUR ENGLISH hook line targeted the myth that Indians were less educated – and thus needed to improve their English. The punch line, on the other hand, introduced the character as a headteacher and thus the message in this poster was: “If you think this Indian woman has some relevance to improving English, she does – not because she is Indian, but because she is a headteacher”. In the same manner, while the NO-ONE RESPECTS ME hook line raised the presumption that Muslims were outsiders in British society and therefore did not command respect, the punch line introduced the boy as a football fan with the message being: “If this Muslim boy does not deserve respect, he does not – not because of his religion but because of the football team he supports”. The ads tackled racial stereotyping by demonstrating that despite being Black, the man was a doctor helping to improve people’s health; despite being Indian, the woman was a teacher contributing to the nation’s educational system; and despite being Muslim, the boy was a devoted football fan ‘integrating’ into mainstream British culture. The common message communicated by the three posters seemed to be: “Judge the racial Other on the basis of individual merit, not on the basis of stereotypical myths”.

Even with the intent of tackling racial prejudice towards the racial Other, and with the approach of attributing Britain’s racial Other with some desirable qualities, the campaign still attracted criticism. This was particularly the case for the ‘SCARED?’ poster, as the dangerous/Black man synonym behind the visual codes in the ad bore some traces of the colonial racial script of the ‘dangerous Other’ and this particular coding was familiar to the public. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, the General Dental Council objected to the poster, though not on the grounds of the potential damage to its profession, instead argued that it was “offensive in assuming that people should be either scared of black people or surprised to find them in a qualified position” (ASA official website). The British Dental Association did voice a complaint about
the poster’s stereotyping (of dentists) claiming it reinforced a connection between dentistry and fear (*The Herald*, 24 November 1998). While the ASA did not uphold the complaints, nonetheless it found the prominence given to the face in the poster to be ‘sinister’. Further, it agreed that the visual representation and the headline could “be seen as advocating the negative stereotype that black men should be feared”, while acknowledging that “They [the CRE] thought that by using the humorous and ironic stereotype about dentists they would dispel readers’ harmful and insulting stereotypes of ethnic minorities, black men in particular” (ASA official website).

5.1.3 A RISKY STRATEGY

Both CRE campaigns discussed above deployed stereotypical imagery of the racial Other for a social cause. Imagery of racial Others were used in these poster campaigns to tackle negative racial stereotyping. More specifically, these images racial Other were constructed in a stereotypical way, although the campaigns differed tactically and in tone. While the first campaign used shock tactics, the second campaign used humour. The first campaign confronted the audience, forcing them to consider their own personal attitude towards racism, and trying to provoke a preferred reaction such as complaint or condemnation. The second campaign lured the audience into recognising some of the prevalent racial stereotypes that ‘agreed’ with the headlines and the imagery of the characters, but then attempted to undermine and ridicule those same stereotypes by revealing ‘unexpected’ positive connotations. The first campaign used only Black citizens and ‘intentionally’ portrayed them in an insultingly negative way through juxtapositions of image and copy – portraying them as rapist, animal and loser – and only made public the punch line a few days later. The second campaign depicted not only Blacks, but also Indian and Muslim minorities, and while it showed restraint in its use of offensive visual texts, due to the ASA censorship imposed on the CRE, suggestive negative racial stereotyping was in play in the linguistic text. Even at the lower level of offensiveness – as in the second campaign – racial stereotyping can still perpetuate hurtful notions and racial Others are still very vulnerable. Even more problematic, in both cases, the intended counter-stereotyping messages could only be effective if the audience followed the advertiser’s ‘preferred readings’.
If the ‘teaser’ posters in the first campaign were, as the CRE maintained, designed to shock the public by deliberately representing Blacks in racially offensive ways with an intent to provoke emotions of anger and disgust that would lead to the action of complaining, the purpose failed given the ‘disappointing’ number of complaints. However, failure in this regard seemed to be a calculated one: backed by the evidence of the CRE market research that underpinned the campaign, the much publicised disappointment about the muted voice of complaint from the general public was expected and anticipated. If this was not the case, the ‘planted’ follow-up posters would have been unnecessary, and the CRE would not have been able to leverage the lack of public reaction as evidence of a collective passive attitude towards racism.

As to the second campaign, with a declared intent of mocking negative stereotypes of the racial Other, the posters first needed to hook the audience with an existing prejudice towards an ethnic minority, and then ridicule it with a punch line that contradicted the stereotype. To make the joke work, the advertisements deployed various tools of trade to highlight the Otherness of the chosen characters in terms of their facial features, costumes, religion and body language. Although the images in their isolation (with the exception of the questionable ‘SCARED?’ poster) may have seemed harmless, when viewed with their respective hook line, each contained at least one racist statement. Surely the racist comments were meant to be undone through the poster’s much less dominant punch line, but whether the racial stereotyping could be undone is highly questionable. Its uncertainty is due not only to the punch line’s subtlety, but also to the long persistant reality of societal inequality and deep-rooted racial ideologies that made it much harder for the audience to be convinced by the punch line. The crux is that while it is the audience, after all, who holds the power of interpretation, that power is affected (and somehow limited) by non-textural factors such as various forms of social and cultural training that predispose it towards certain normative forms of interpretation.
5.2.
INCLUSION OR ILLUSION

5.2.1 AN UNEXPECTED PROXY

In October 1997, the British Ministry of Defence (MoD) launched one of its biggest-scale national recruitment campaigns using print, radio and television media. The face of this campaign was a Black Army officer depicted using a Lord Kitchener’s signature posture of pointing his finger at the viewer with the familiar message: “YOUR COUNTRY NEEDS YOU” (Picture 5.6). The concept and layout of this poster were not new – they were based on a famous World War I British Army recruiting poster in the collection of the Imperial War Museum (Picture 5.7). However, unlike many others before it which had attempted to inject new meaning into this old masterpiece, the 1997 MoD poster delivered a remarkable new take on this piece of legendary wartime propaganda. Furthermore, given this recruitment campaign targeted a national audience (as opposed to an ethnic-specific audience as per some of the MoD’s later campaigns or those of the US Army and Navy near the end of the Vietnam War), not only was the use of a minority officer as the sole face of the campaign unorthodox, it as strategic in that it raised his status by using him to personalise the State and giving him a first person voice of the Army at a time it was under intense criticism and scrutiny for institutional racism. Indeed, the rhetoric and wisdom in the deployment of the imagery of the racial Other in this example bears the hallmark of institutional racial politics in the age of contemporary globalisation.
Before discussing the rhetoric and wisdom of basing a contemporary nationwide Army recruitment campaign on a 80+-year-old poster, and superseding the image of a prominent British World War I figure with that of an unnamed Black officer, we first need to appreciate the merit of the original. The 1914 poster on which the MoD recruiting poster was based on is iconic in several aspects. To begin with, it was one of the very first British army recruiting posters in World War I, originally designed by Alfred Leete – and arguably it is the most powerful. First appearing on the cover of the 5 September 1914 issue of the London Opinion, it was printed as a poster and circulated around the country as the centrepiece of a nationwide campaign soon after Britain declared war on Germany. In a desperate effort to overcome the country’s shortage of combat troops, the official poster made Lord Kitchener the face of this crucial recruitment campaign. As a national Boer War hero, Secretary of State for War and head of the British Army, Kitchener was himself an icon of the British war effort. Through his authority and status, with his stern face and finger-pointing gesture, a powerful direct appeal to the British people was delivered with the words: “BRITONS [image of] Lord Kitchener WANTS YOU”. To complete the recruitment pitch, a call for action: “JOIN YOUR COUNTRY’S ARMY!” and the phrase “GOD SAVE THE KING” – the title of British national anthem at the time – were set at the bottom of the poster.

In addition to its originality in creating an icon that personalised the State, and combining it with the use of a direct mode of address to the audience with the word ‘you’ and the gesture, and apart from it achieving its purpose of helping to boost troop numbers for the British arm effort, this poster was also inspirational in the field of poster design. If imitation is indeed the sincerest form of flattery, then its most famous flatterer was arguably James Montgomery Flagg, the creator of the US Army’s 1917 “I WANT YOU” recruitment poster which featured Uncle Sam. Flagg has reportedly claimed his design was “the most famous poster in the world”. His words aside, the US Library of Congress listed the poster in its collection under an unqualified heading: “THE MOST FAMOUS POSTER”. Assuming the claim from the US is true, the UK’s Lord Kitchener poster should be held as the father of the most famous poster.

To generate enthusiasm, and encourage enlistment, recruiting posters for the armed force were typically designed using authority, patriotism and emotional urges or rewards. The 1914 poster delivered all three effectively within a single non-cluttered layout: Lord Kitchener symbolised authority; the national anthem title called forth patriotism; the body language of Kitchener’s piercing eyes and pointing finger; and
with the prominent typographic treatment of the key words “BRITONS” and “YOU” left audiences in no doubt about their obligation and duty – the message that they were personally contacted, needed and wanted by their country to fight the war could be effortlessly decoded by its audience. In 2002, Campaign recognised this 1914 poster as the ‘best recruitment advert of all time’.

Given its success and iconic status, it is no surprise to see the old masterpiece is still being ‘borrowed’ by advertisers in both the public and private sectors. Over the years, the iconic image of Lord Kitchener has been used in its original form to convey a range of messages, from “YOUR COUNTRY IS STILL CALLING. FIGHTING MEN! FALL IN!!” by the British Government to help generate new recruits during the war, to “SHOP, DAMN IT SHOP, IT IS YOUR PATRIOTIC DUTY” by a London art gallery to boost consumption during the 2008 world financial crisis. So, what else made the 1997 MoD recruiting poster a remarkable new take on the old masterpiece? It was not because Lord Kitchener’s image had been superseded: the iconic image has been superseded many times in the genre of wartime poster alone – by Uncle Sam in the US and by John Bull in the UK (Pictures 5.8 and 5.9) to cite two famous examples. It was not because of its use of the imagery of the racial Other in a recruiting ad either. While it was extremely unusual to use imagery of the racial Other in recruiting posters in the West, it was not new – as shown in the ‘19 Weeks’ and the ‘You can be Black, and Navy too’ posters, both of which were part of the US Navy ethnic recruitment campaign between 1971 and 1972. This was a final attempt to boost troop numbers right before President Nixon ordered US troop strength in Vietnam to be reduced by 70,000 (Pictures 5.10 and 5.11). To appreciate the new take and the cultural work of this poster, I now turn to the extra-textural factors surrounding it.

Despite Britain having a 200-years history of employing overseas men such as Indians and Gurkhas to fight in its wars, and driven by the Victorian concept of
‘martial races’ where certain races were considered more ‘warlike’ and therefore
‘born fighters’ for the empire, ethnic recruits were not always welcomed. The
change in attitude towards ethnic recruits can be observed through several policy
changes that took place in the post-war era. The recommendation that “Men not
of pure European descent should not be allowed to enlist in UK regiments or corps
of the Regular Army”, in a 1946 Cabinet Paper entitled Post-war Regulations
respecting the Nationality and Descent for entry to the Army, is one such example.
This policy effectively drew a colour line based on Whiteness (pure European
descent) to exclude potential non-White applicants from the Army. In a 1961 official
document entitled Recruitment of Coloured Personnel, the Army Council made
its negative attitude towards ethnic recruiting even clearer: “The strength of the
British Army has always depended on the reliability of the individual soldier. The
reliability of coloured soldiers is not certain and therefore too great a dilution of
British units would be dangerous” (quoted in Smalley, 2006). Openly, a colour-bar
of no more than 3 per cent non-White personnel was established to prevent such
‘danger’. In 2005 a secret system of discriminatory and deceptive measures to
racialise and control non-White recruits within the force was revealed. Reviewed
by the BBC (2005), a 1972 confidential briefing paper, made available under the
UK’s National Archive’s 30-years rule, showed that Army medical officers had been
instructed to record the racial features of all new recruits since 1957 – not only to
identify “Asiatic or Negroid features”, but also to include more detailed descriptions
such as “Chinamen, Maltese or even swarthy Frenchmen”. The briefing outlined
the deception: “Officially, we state that we do not keep statistics of coloured
soldiers” but “In fact, we do have a record, resulting from the description put on
the attestation paper by the medical officer, of the features of the recruit”. As a
result, non-White serving personnel were designated as ‘D factor’ personnel.
Without explanation, the meaning of ‘D’ was open to interpretation: Dangerous?
Different? D Class? D Grade? The mysterious D factor may still have many
unknowns, but one thing is certain – it was an official (albeit covert) way of
‘Othering’ the coloured personnel in the force, purely because of their non-White
physical features. Evidently, the ideology of race was deeply rooted within the
culture of the force and racial politics were always in play around the issue of
recruitment – before, during and after the recruitment campaigns.

It was a radical move to use a Black officer – deemed a ‘D factor personnel’ only
two decades earlier – to front the recruitment campaign for a predominantly White
military. Just over 1 per cent of non-White personnel were serving in the combined
Army, Navy and Air Force in the year the campaign was launched. What was the wisdom of this rather unusual casting and what does the poster tell us about the sign value of the racial Other in the age of contemporary globalisation? Let us first look at the context in which campaign was created.

Several events occurred early in 1997. In March, about seven months before the launch of this recruiting campaign, the CRE ruled that the Defence administration had failed to address its problem of racism in the force. It exercised its statutory power to place the MoD on probation for the second consecutive year, with a threat of a Non-Discrimination Notice subject to review in the following year. Among the problems, the Household Cavalry (commonly known as ‘the Guard’) was accused of ‘institutional discrimination’ in its recruitment and transfer policies. In addition, a stream of allegations of racist conduct against non-White members of the force came to light, which included all forms of racial harassment and abuse. Among the cases of racist treatment, Mark Campbell, the first Black man in the Guard’s 400-year history, not only had his bed soaked with urine, and was constantly referred to as ‘nigger’, he also received hate mail such as a note stating: “There is no black in the Union Jack”. Campbell left the Army seventeen months after being invited to join the Guard in 1994, as the BBC later revealed (25 March 1997). The Army’s public image was further damaged in 1997, when the Office of Public Management released a damning report that found evidence of widespread racism in the armed forces.

The year 1997 also saw the Labour government begin a Strategic Defence Review (SDR) to reassess Britain’s military needs in a non ‘bipolar world’. The review identified the shortage of serving personnel as one problem for the country’s defence. As the Cold War ended, the British Armed Forces shrank from about 315,000 to about 215,000. Yet with the country’s increasing international commitments in Bosnia, Sierra Leone and East Timor during the 1990s, the military realised it was again facing the problem of ‘manpower’ shortages. Among other outcomes of the review, the SDR authorised the British Army to increase the number of its force. With the problem of an understaffed military, Black recruiting became a hot topic at the top. In March, Prince Charles summoned Britain’s top General to question why the Army was failing to take on Black recruits. “The Prince wants to see changes in both recruitment and the culture of the Services”, according to Ouseley, chairman of the CRE (Lewis, 1997). Adding to this political pressure, the then Prime Minister Tony Blair also launched strong criticism of the Army during his Labour Conference Speech in September, pointing to its lack of senior
Black officers. Clearly, the MoD found itself in a position where on the one hand it desperately needed an answer to the critiques accusing it of being a racist institution that discriminated against Black members of the force, and on the other it needed to persuade the Black population to join the forces to solve its manpower problem.

Having established the background that give birth to this 1997 army recruitment poster, I now move to the rhetoric of using the Black officer in this particular campaign. The Black officer was portrayed with confidence and dignity. Depicted using the exact same posture and gesture as Lord Kitchener, he looked at and pointed straight to the audience and conveyed the message with authority: “YOUR COUNTRY NEEDS YOU” (a phrase used in some variations of the same design). With his visual prominence, his direct gaze and first person voice, he was in effect speaking for the nation’s armed forces. But the similarity stopped in terms of its visual juxtapositions.

The authority assigned to the Black officer was not the same as that assigned to Lord Kitchener. To begin with, as an individual appointed by the then Prime Minster Herbert Asquith as Britain’s highest ranking wartime official, Lord Kitchener not only initiated the recruiting campaign because of his position, he also made himself the face of the poster. As an established and recognised hero of the Boar war, he personally urged Britons to join the Army and fight the war. The Black officer depicted in the poster, on the other hand, was unknown to the public. Reading the visual text, he was only immediately identifiable to the general public as a Black man, a racial Other in a White-dominant society. Only with an understanding of various cultural codes, cues such as his uniform, and a knowledge of the general requirements for serving in the Army, can he then be decoded as an unnamed and unranked Army officer, a British Army officer, and therefore a British citizen. As a matter of fact, the British media constantly used the terms ‘Black officer’, ‘Black soldier’ and even ‘Black face’ in some cases, when referring to the character in their campaign coverage. The Black officer, in fact, did have a name, a proper (albeit not superior) ranking, and a place in the Army: he was Captain Fidelix Datson of the Royal Artillery. Ironically, it seems that the Black officer’s authority established in this ad was not granted because of his government position, military ranking or social status, but because those in the position of authority decided to make him one of ‘us’, and put him in the spotlight as the face of Britain’s Army recruiting campaign.
On the surface, the symbolic power of an unknown Black officer may seem to be less than that of an iconic figure. For example, just by putting an illustration of Kitchener in prime position, the World War I recruiting poster could be read by its audience as: “LORD KITCHENER WANTS YOU” or “BRITAIN’S SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR WANTS YOU”. Conversely, if it using the same typographic treatment, the 1997 poster would be read by the general publics as “AN ARMY OFFICER WANTS YOU” or “A BLACK ARMY OFFICER WANTS YOU” – neither sounds convincingly powerful. This explains the need to compensate for this factor by adopting one of the alternative tag lines “YOUR COUNTRY NEEDS YOU” from other varieties of the original Lord Kitchener poster.

If we consider the sign value of the Black officer within the context which gave birth to this poster, it becomes clear that the symbolic power of his Blackness and his Otherness as a minority Army Captain represented a value unmatched by any better-known, higher-ranking, majority White officer for the MoD’s need to defuse the criticism of institutional racism and to solve its recruitment difficulties. On the one hand, the MoD desperately needed to convince the CRE that there was no further need for outside intervention (i.e. for the CRE to execute the Non-Discrimination Notice, allowing the Commission to dictate race policy in the Armed Forces). To achieve this, it needed to address its poor record that had led to the negative perception of it being a racist institution. On the other hand, the recommended personnel targets required the MoD to significantly increase recruitment. To achieve this, it looked to the underrepresented ethnic minorities for the answer, and to attract ethnic minority recruits, the MoD needed to rebuild its image as a modern defence force and an equal opportunity employer.

Taking these circumstance into account, while the imagery of a Black officer unknown to the public could not match the ‘recognition’ and ‘status’ factors of a celebrity who had acquired government, social and iconic credentials, to the advertiser being Black and being one of the highest-achieving in the defence force gave Captain Datson a unique edge. These sign values were precisely what were needed to address the problems facing the MoD at the time: a living proof that the accusations of a racist defence force were unfounded; and a mascot to beat the drum for the Army recruiting campaign, so that desperately needed troop numbers could be boosted from the non-White population. Taking advantage of the Blackness and Otherness embodied in the Black officer, this campaign represented a powerful strategy for politicians and officials in the politics of recruitment and
race relations. In addition, while it was a national campaign, using a character that appeared to belong to their in-group was more appealing and persuasive to the ethnic minorities in the UK. As such, the persuasive power embodied in the Otherness and Blackness in Captain Datson was, for the purpose of this campaign, not less than, not equal to, but greater than the sheer celebrity power of Lord Kitchener and the like.

The strategic deployment of the Black officer in this campaign is significant. From being the unwanted and undesired to being the wanted and needed, from being the ‘Other’ to being part of ‘Us’, from being questioned for their ‘reliability’ and associated with ‘danger’ to being elevated to represent the public face of the British military, the sign value and group identity of the Blacks (and other members of ethnic minority communities for that matter), shifted dramatically from D grade to A grade through the visual representation of this MoD poster. Commenting on the Army’s new approach to ethnic minorities, Col. Rory Clayton, head of officer and recruit marketing admitted that: “We need to own up to the fact that we have got it wrong in the past. Big institutions like this wake up and find the world has changed and they have been overtaken” (Quoted in Gilligan 1997). While the poster, as the major promotional vehicle of the campaign, does not in itself express Clayton’s message, the elevation of a Black officer to the status of a British wartime icon, showed the institution’s changing attitude towards the racial Other and sent a persuasive message to its target audience (chiefly the CRE, but also other pressure groups) in a more effective and convincing way. As a result, the image of a Black officer – a member of the very group traditionally undesired by the force – was used and assigned with new meaning: as a symbol standing for a changed, non-racist and non-discriminatory British military. Through the deployment of this Black officer in this poster, the MoD was trying to convince its critiques and its potential recruits that the Army was now an equal opportunity armed force, that it needed ethnic members and that they could have a bright future in the force.

It needs to be noted that this poster was a creation of a particular time as a solution to a particular set of problems for the advertiser, and that the deployment of the image of the racial Other was far from the norm among military recruitment campaigns in the West. For example, the same advertiser did not use any ethnic imagery in the double-page newspaper spread that formed part of the MoD’s first-ever ad campaign specifically aimed at recruiting ethnic minority officers in 1998. Despite both the deployment of imagery of the racial Other in military recruitment ads and senior ranking military officers from ethnic groups still being the exception
rather than the norm, the extraordinary length the campaign went to elevate and promote a Black officer to play the modern-time Lord Kitchener is phenomenal enough to indicate how useful the imagery of the racial Other can be for advertisers who want to prove a point, project an image and make persuasion look convincing.

5.2.2 COLOURING UP AND SPICING UP

These two posters were part of the British Council’s 1998 campaign to promote education, travel and culture in the UK to the world. The campaign targeted international audiences, with the posters distributed to the Council’s overseas branches in fifty-four countries.

Britain, it seemed had an image problem: the traditional aspects of the country were what usually sprung to people’s minds. This problem posed a dilemma for the Council, which had a mandate to promote a desirable image of the country to the world. On one hand, it did not want to trash Britain’s proud heritage; while on the other, it wanted to promote the attractiveness of modern-day Britain. Clearly aware of the dilemma, Chris Hickey of the British Council told the press that: “We wanted to show Britain with great traditional successes, but also as a contemporary, forward looking society” (1998). With this brief in mind, designer Michael Johnson revealed
his strategy: “... you couldn’t throw out the heritage. In fact you can’t do one without the other” (ibid).

The solution to the problem was a series of posters each comparing an old image of Britain on the left-hand side with a new one on the right. Perhaps to enhance the contrast of the old and the new, all posters shared the typographically treated heading ‘Britain’, with the first half of the word situated within the left-hand panel using a serif font to convey a sense of tradition, and the second half of the word situated inside the right-hand panel using a san-serif font considered modern in style.

The contrast between old and new was applied to emphasise a wide range of British cultural achievements, from sport to art to literature to music to people to food. It was in the departments of people and food that imageries of the racial Other were represented. Picture 5.12 is the poster that emphasised people, or the social makeup of British society. Contrasted with the monoracial social makeup of the old picture next to it, the ‘new’ panel was filled with a multiracial snapshot. Both depicting a group of innocent children, the picture on the left was presented in grey scale and looked dull and cold; the picture on the right panel was in colour, giving an impression of liveliness and warmth. Picture 5.13 is the poster that emphasised food or the way of life in Britain. A single plate of steak, potato chips and salad featured on the ‘old’ panel, while the ‘new’ panel showed a variety of exotic dishes from other cultures – most noticeably Italian and Asian cuisines.

The connotative messages from these two posters could be read as: Britain is no longer a monoracial society, her people are now multiracial and living together in harmony; and Britain’s cuisine is now exciting, diverse and embraces an international flavour. Both posters were aimed at tackling elements of Britain’s unfavourable reputation, by associating her with the new image of a multicultural Britain. To achieve the objective, elements of the Other – people of ethnic minority backgrounds and tastes of the exotic – were deployed.

It is just as pertinent to note the absence of the racial Other in the ten other posters, as their presence in these two. Essentially, in the areas where Britain was seen as having a lucrative heritage, the racial Other was absent. For example, in the poster featuring entertainment, Benny Hill’s image was chosen from the talent pool of old masters to symbolise the past glory of British entertainment, while Rowan Atkinson was the face of the current crop of high achieving entertainers. The message
conveyed by this poster (and the rest of the posters in this category for that matter) could be consistently interpreted as “Britain not only produced ___ in the past, but also possesses the greats such as ___ now”. This was significantly different to the “Britain is no longer ___ as in the past, but now___” rhetoric of the posters where Otherness was used.

With this difference in mind, it is reasonable to conclude that the presence or absence of the racial Other in this campaign depended on need. It seems that the Other only became useful where there was a lack, where the racial Other could serve to fill the gap or make amends: the ethnic faces of the children were needed to paint a picture of a racially inclusive society to shake the image of a racist society; just as the ethnic cuisines were needed to demonstrate a sense of richness and diversity, to compensate for the traditional lack of food culture. From this perspective, images of the racial Other were valued only when they could help to add colour to the snapshot for a society eager to be seen as what it was not. Similarly, the cuisine of the Other was useful only when it could help to spice up the national flavour of a culture appreciated for the lack of it.

5.3

THE MANY FACES OF ‘BENEFICIARIES’

5.3.1 A PLAY OF ‘SOFT POWER’

To celebrate the fifty-year anniversary of the establishment of the British Council, on 25 September 1984 the Royal Mail issued a set of four commemorative stamps, designed by Newell and Sorrell (Pictures 5.14a, 5.14b, 5.14c, 5.14d). Each of the stamps in the series was designed to promote achievement in a specific area of the Council’s core initiatives, namely: language and literature; technical training, promoting the arts; and education for development. Although they are items for sale, the humble postage stamp has been used by governments as an effective medium of promoting their messages to the domestic and international population
throughout history – indeed, messages communicate through pictures and slogans in the design of postage stamps and the event of official issue serve as a de facto public interest advertising campaign.

Answering to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the British Council is a non-departmental public body and a registered charity for cultural relations in the UK. Originally set up in 1934 as the British Committee for Relations with Other Countries, the name was later changed to the British Council for Relations with Other Countries, and in 1936 shortened to the British Council as we know it today. The British Council has been officially acknowledged as the brainchild of Sir Reginald Leeper who identified the importance to the national interest of promoting Britain abroad, deeming it a form of ‘cultural propaganda’ (The British Council website). Leeper’s vision in the 1930s of a British Council that could help maintain the UK’s position on the world stage through disseminate British culture, can perhaps be explained by Nye’s more contemporary concept of utilising a nation’s ‘soft power’ to influence others through its attractive resources such as culture, ideologies and institutions without having to resort to ‘hard power’ such as military threats and economic sanctions. In 1989, Nye wrote:

Soft co-optive power is just as important as hard command power. If a state can make its power seem legitimate in the eyes of others, it will encounter less resistance to its wishes. If its culture and ideology are attractive, others will more willingly follow. If it can establish international norms consistent with its society, it is less likely to have to change. If it can support institutions that make other states wish to channel or limit their activities in ways the dominant state prefers, it may be spared the costly exercise of coercive or hard power. (2004: 77)

While the British Council is proud of its reputation for ‘doing good’ through teaching English, providing libraries, laboratories, training and promoting British culture in developing countries, the Council is also sensitive to its critics, particularly the accusation that its activities are a forms of cultural imperialism. Heated debates
over the idea of a ‘New World Information and Communication Order’ (NWICO) within UNESCO, for example, reached boiling point in 1984. Developing nations and a number of developed nations, such as Canada, France and Finland, promoted the idea of a more equitable exchange of information and cultural materials between rich and poor nations. At the same time they condemned cultural imperialism in the media industry, particularly the one-way traffic of world news and the influx of print and audiovisual products from powerful Western nations that threatened the survival of the local culture of the vulnerable developing nations. On the receiving end of the criticism, the US withdrew in protest from UNESCO in 1984, with the UK following suit in 1985.

The tensions and criticism inevitably had an impact on the design of this series of stamps. Released in this context – in the year the US withdrew and the year before the UK withdrew from UNESCO – the use of the imageries of the racial Other and the construction of their relationship with ‘the Empire’ evidently was carefully managed.

Three of the four stamps in the series featured unambiguous images of Britain’s racial Other. With the caption of ‘language and literature’, the 34p stamp featured two men of Middle-Eastern appearance. The featured character in the foreground was not depicted in traditional dress, while the man in the background was. Both men appeared to be reading, within a backdrop of a library. Accompanying the caption ‘technical training’, the 31p stamp depicted two men of South-Asian appearance, both wearing safety helmets and Western style shirts. They appeared to be studying a building plan, within a backdrop of a construction site. Reflecting the caption ‘education for development’, the 17p stamp showed a Black woman wearing a local-style flora kerchief and a white coat. She appeared to be performing a medical examination of a Black baby – though the pattern of trees in the backdrop was not suggestive of a typical clinic setting.

With the help of captions, this set of commemorative stamps was designed to deliver messages such as “The British Council helps developing countries to improve their knowledge in English language and literature”, “The British Council helps developing countries to improve their technical knowledge through technical training”, and “The British Council helps developing countries to improve their life through developments in education” – in respect of the 34p, 31p and 17p stamps. Of the various visual constructs, the framing in this case is particularly interesting.
It was not unusual to see advertisements promoting the contribution of the ‘developed’ West to the ‘developing’ rest, and the ex-colonies were often on the receiving end. However, in the spirit of neocolonialism and under the influence of Rostow’s modernisation theory as discussed in Chapter Three, the racial Other was typically depicted in advertisements with the rhetoric of infancy and dependency, explicitly claiming that the modernisation of the poor nations was only possible with the help of the West.

Instead of featuring imageries of the initiative provider (typically the British), the stamps featured imageries of the recipients (typically the racial Other). Although visual clues of Britishness were present, they were strategically rendered subtly. The official silhouette of the Queen Elizabeth was set in the top right-hand corner of the template. The line that named ‘The British Council’ was placed quietly on top of each individual caption—using the same typography attributes and without any sign of the special treatment a ‘birthday boy’ deserves. Looking more closely at the stamps’ visuals you find that the passages of text on the book in the 34p stamp, the construction plan in the 31p stamp, and the scientific codes in the 17p stamp were all presented in English, without a trace of any local touches. Judging by the arrangement of the visual signs, the subject of the messages were relegated to the background through the subtle visual treatment and the somewhat understated representation, while the object of the message was brought to the fore by assigning visual prominence—from position to proportion to focal point to detail.

Apart from being visually prominent, the imageries of the racial Other were also presented in a positive way. In isolation, their body language connoted confidence, optimism and capability—almost a collective affirmation that “People in the developing countries are doing well”. However, when read in conjunction with the symbols of Britishness—as subtle as they were—considerable sense of dependency was attributed to the racial Other. With all the main characters positioned slightly below and facing toward the Queen, the design constructed a bond between Britain’s racial Other and the British Council. As a result, the collective message in this set of commemorative stamps became: “People in the developing countries are making progress, thanks to the help of Her Majesty and the British Council”. With the strategic arrangement of the visual signs, the imageries of the racial Other were literally represented as being ‘under’ the Queen, and being ‘looked after’ by the Queen.
The way in which the racial Other had been looked after by the Empire (via the Queen) in this case differed greatly from Frank Rippingille’s Oil Stove ad mentioned in Chapter Two. Compared with the tag line “ENGLAND’S GIFT A BLESSING TO ALL NATIONS” and the visual depiction and framing, the rhetoric conveying such notions differed significantly both in attitude and manner between the earlier stage of globalisation and the contemporary stage under discussion here. While in the earlier example the Empire was explicitly painted as the benefactor moderning the world’s population, it was charged with the dominant ideology in the era of High Imperialism. Designed within the context of contemporary globalisation, and amid intense debate about cultural imperialism, the implicit visual language used to construct the power relationship between the Empire and other nations in the example I am discussing here, reflected a carefully managed shift of ideology and the cultural paradigm.

Discourses are affected by the governing ideological frame of the time. In the 1930s, Leeper openly attributed the function of the British Council as ‘cultural propaganda’. In the 2000s, without overriding its lasting heritage and mission, the organisation has had to redefined and defended this much-publicised term. For example, in his short essay Cultural Imperialism? – a key article in the History section of the organisation’s official website – Taylor, the first historian to be allowed into the archives of the British Council, rebranded ‘cultural propaganda’ with the new term ‘cultural diplomacy’ as a conduct not only practised by the UK but also “by most developed countries”. Conceding that cultural diplomacy may be “a form of international propaganda on behalf of the value systems of the countries conducting it”, he argued that “if the objective is to inform, educate and entertain on the assumption that greater mutual understanding will result, then it can only be argued that this is propaganda on behalf of peace”. It is interesting to note that the power factor, or more precisely the ‘soft power’ factor, had been carefully neutralised in this discourse by the stated objectives of informing, educating and entertaining, as well as in the interest of peace.

On the eve of the British Council’s seventy-year anniversary, in an article on the Council’s official website, Richard Weight reflected on its achievements and offered this assessment: “[T]hroughout almost seventy years of activity, the Council has proved that cultural propaganda, sensitively managed, can help to create international understanding, and with it, a more peaceful world”. ‘Sensitively managed’ seems to be the keyword that relates so well to the design approach of the Council’s fifty-year commemorative stamps. Even without official confirmation
of this consideration, the observable representation strategy nonetheless signifies the advertiser’s consciousness of the need to avoid being seen as yet another example of cultural imperialism at a sensitive time, while still managing to deliver the message with carefully calculated subtlety.

5.3.2 MORE THAN A DOSE OF SHOCK

Within this sub-section, I examine the deployment of the imagery of the racial Other in charity advertisements using the cases of five different campaigns and their rhetoric. I begin with the visual language that constructed the racial Other as the dying, the dangerous and the victim in the first three examples, and the visual play on the ‘us and them’ relationship between the ‘charitable’ West and the ‘needy’ Rest in the last two examples.

As non-profit organisations, charities must utilise advertising as a vehicle to help advance their causes. On the one hand, charity ads are used to raise public awareness of the organisation, as well as their particular social cause, on the other hand, and ultimately, they are used to raise money through public and corporate donations to fund the organisation and its initiatives. It goes without saying that attracting donations is key aim of even those ads that look ‘purely awareness’ in nature. Charities operate in a highly competitive environment. For example, in 2010 there were 507,608 IRS-registered charities in the US according to National Centre for Charitable Statistics, and 160,274 main registered charities in England and Wales (Charity Commission website). In a battle to tug on the heartstrings of prospective donors and make them open their purses to a given cause, charities spare no effort to stand out from the crowd through striking advertising campaigns. Part of this effort is to create different strategies to represent the needy beyond the predictable, to maximise public awareness and attract donation.

The shock tactic is the most trusted strategy used to create international charity campaigns. It has been a tradition to depict an emaciated Black child or adult, and use these shocking imageries as the focal point of the ads to cause the desired emotion. Research into charity advertising posters which showed mentally handicapped people (Eayrs and Ellis, 1990), for example, confirmed that the images which elicited the greatest commitment to donate were those which prompted
feelings of guilt, sympathy and pity. Images of Black children with “skin stretched over ribs, enormous heads, pot bellies, wasted buttocks and sticks for arms and legs” typified the representation of Biafra as a place of humanitarian crisis in Oxfam posters (Warren, 1995: 17). This poster, produced by UNICEF and featuring a two-year old barefooted Zimbabwean boy named Kwasi with the tag line ‘CHANCES ARE HE WILL STARVE TO DEATH’ (Picture 5.15) typified the shocking images used to evoke the desired emotions. However, as the imagery of a poor (and often dirty and weak) African child with its hopeless gaze fixed on the viewer was overused to the point where it became a cliché, and as the focus on the ‘Third World problem’ shifted into overdrive, new approaches began to emerge in the 21st century.

Picture 5.16 is another UNICEF poster advocating for the welfare of African children, designed by Jung von Matt, Sweden. To complement the tag line ‘Bad Water Kills More Children Than War’, a Black African girl with a deadpan expression was depicted holding a water pistol and pointing it to her temple. Another poster, from the International Society for Human Rights (ISHR), showed a close-up image of a veiled woman wearing fashionably smokey-eye make up, with a touch of metallic highlight on her upper eyelids (Picture 5.17). Her black veil was visually manipulated to include five metal bars.

In these three ads, imageries of children and woman of colour were depicted as ‘victims’ using different shock tactics. While their respective tag lines stated each campaign’s different cause, their design attempted to raise awareness and engage the public’s emotion in different ways. In Picture 5.15, little Kwasi was pictured from above. As the viewer looked down at him, his body was noticeably disproportioned – a sign of mild nutrition further enhanced by the distortion due to the selected camera angle. Although Kwasi was the featured story in the ad, he

![Picture 5.16, UNICEF, 2007](image1)

![Picture 5.17, ISHR, 2008](image2)
was made a symbol for the poverty-stricken Africa continent at large, and African children in particular. The wooden fence behind him also contributed greatly to the story. The irregularity of the shape of the pieces and their arrangement not only connoted the Third World from the perspective of the West, it also provided an optical illusion that Kwasi was not standing stably on his own feet. More significantly, framed nearly in the middle of the layout, the visibly curved fence effectively separated Kwasi from the space on the other side – like a cage. Because neither side of the fence looked any better than the other, it did not matter if he was being fenced-in or fenced-out. What mattered for the advertiser was if the image of a poor and feeble small Black boy, and the frightening prospect of him ‘starving to death’, were powerful enough to prompt the public’s emotion to rescue the poverty-stricken African children from that symbolic cage.

To a large degree, the advertisers behind ads of this nature strategically constructed images of the racial Other in shockingly disadvantaged states to stir the ‘guilt complex’ of well-meaning White audiences. They offered them the satisfaction of taking the moral high-ground of ‘helping’ the African nations (symbolised by this helpless starving Black boy) through donating to the said charity. This genre of ads has been criticised as “an incorrect and damaging representation of people who live in poor countries” and that “it helps to perpetuate incorrect ideas of why these countries are in economic difficulty, obscuring the role wealthy nations play in the cause of their problems” (Warren, 1995: 18). The poster that depicted Kwasi, said nothing more than ‘a poor Africa is in need of charitable help from the rich West’. It did nothing to address the cause of the African problem which his tiny emaciated body was used to symbolise. In so doing, it made the ‘Third World problems’ seem as if just happened to be out there in the ex-colonies, and the historic and current roles the ex-colonist nations played remained masked.

A discussion of the cause behind this tendency is beyond the focus of this thesis topic. However, it has been pointed out that there is a “chain of power relations which exercises control over the public definition of the cause of poverty” in play in the West, preventing such discourse. According to Warren, in the UK:

If those actively seeking to help people in poorer countries have come to the view that the most important need is for changes in the policy of Western governments, in trading relations and regulations, in the activities of multinational companies and the exploitive activities of industries like the arms trade, it remains
that charities concerned to help people in poorer nations are forbidden by law to campaign for these ends. (ibid: 22)

The use of imageries of the racial Other in the next two ads shows a shifting emphasis in the persuasive function, from one that focused on evoking feelings of pity and sympathy to one that focused on eliciting anxiety and disgust. As I will argue, the situations used to elicit these emotions were carried via the constructed imageries of the racial Other, and were attributed to their own national problems – rather than the ongoing unequal socioeconomic power balance between ex-colonial and ex-colonised nations.

In Picture 5.16, we see a well-arranged studio shoot in which, against the white background, the Black girl was neatly dressed in a hijab made from good-textured garment. The public did not know her name, but according to the cultural code of her skin colour and her hijab, she was identified as an African Muslim girl. Judging by the smooth skin on her face and hand, the girl did not denote ill health or physical defect. And she was playing with a pretty decent looking toy. So, where did the shock come from? Visually, its source was the toy gun the Black Muslim girl was playing with. To begin with, it may disturb some audiences to see any girl playing with guns – the norm is, girls play with Barbies. However, because she was not just any girl – she was presented to the viewer as a Black Muslim girl – another level of anxiety was triggered at a time when the West was still at war in Iraq and Afghanistan, and at a time when the war in Somalia attracted some coverage in the West. With the vivid memory of images of child soldiers and suicide fighters frequently seen on their TV screens and in newspapers, audiences could be forgiven for associating this girl with those images as they tried to comprehend the unusual setting being presented to them in the poster. When this anxiety was triggered, the imagery of the girl carried different meanings. She was no longer a Black girl playing a water pistol but a sign of danger, of war, of hate and of self harm. Although the visual language dominated the space of the poster, the biggest shock was delivered by the subtly presented statement: “Bad Water Kills More Children Than War”. Why compare bad water with war? Yes, unsafe drinking water is a problem for humanity, and there is data to prove the seriousness of this global problem. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has reportedly commented: “More people die from unsafe water than all forms of violence, including war” (UN 18 March 2010). Although it is not clear if ‘war’ was mentioned as a highlight or an afterthought here, it is certain that war is only one example among many other forms of violence. Serena O’Sullivan of the London-based End Water Poverty used
other comparisons, stating that unclean water killing more children than malaria, HIV/AIDS and TB combined (IPS 19 March 2010). The choice of another natural or manmade comparisons, such as earthquake, epidemic, famine or genocide, would arguably have been more convincing and less controversial at a time of criticism of a controversial war still being fought. The problem is that, ‘playing it safe’ is often the last strategy charities choose for their advertising campaigns. Most of them deliberately walk a fine line and opt for being provocative and controversial to gain public attention and free media exposure. In this case and many like it, insult is added to the injury of the very victim the campaign is meant to protect.

Picture 5.17 is a 2008 poster designed by Germany’s Grabarz & Partner for the European public. A close-up of a black veil dominated the layout of the ISHR poster. With an in-your-face manner, two visual signifiers were presented to the viewer: the veiled woman and the metal bars. A veiled woman bears different meanings in different cultures and in different times. In Arabic societies, according to El Guindi, the veil “is about privacy, identity, kinship status, rank and class”. In his study of a 1910 postcard entitled Arab Woman depicting a veiled Egyptian woman, Young quoted El Guindi’s local perspective and further argued that: “for an Egyptian looking at the image in 1910, the veil would have symbolized the woman’s social rank” because “Woman of the lower class, particularly the peasantry in the countryside and the bedouin woman of the desert, would not have worn a veil at all” (Young, 2003: 88-89). Unlike the veiled woman in Young’s study, the veiled woman in this 2008 ISHR poster did not stand for the exotic Orient but for the oppressed victims of Islam. As if the overused image of a veiled woman in Western advertising was not by itself considered shocking enough to grab attention or to communicate ‘oppression’, a set of five metal bars were superimposed on the photo. The rusty bars blocked part of her otherwise uninterrupted vision, and the tag line stated: ‘Stop the oppression of women in Islamic world’. In so doing, the woman was not only ‘behind the veil’ but also ‘behind bars’. Symbolically, the rusty metal bars not only helped to convey the sense of imprisonment, but also unambiguously linked the otherwise equivocal nature of the veil to concepts such as backwardness, patriarchy and control, among other oppressive measures. With the call to ‘Stop the oppression of women in Islamic world’ and with the metal bars implanted on her veil, the Muslim woman behind the veil in this poster no longer needed a name, an ethnic identity, a culture or a history – she had been transformed into a symbol of an oppressed object, namely ‘women in Islamic world’. This was a contentious ad filled with a range of controversial concepts. If the intended
reading was followed, the civilised and unveiled public in the West were expected to take due action to help the organisation behind the ad free the ‘women in Islamic world’ from the veil that apparently imprisoned them.

Besides generating new ways of delivering the shock effect, concepts of ‘us’ and ‘them’ have been tweaked in a number of charity ads in recent times. Here, I examine two advertising campaigns: one from Cordaid (Pictures 5.18a, 5.18b, 5.18c, and 5.18d), designed by Saatchi & Saatchi Netherlands in 2007; the other from Humana (Pictures 5.19a, 5.19b), designed by LoweDraftFcb Netherlands in 2009.

Through the Cordaid’s People in Need poster series, Cordaid appealed for cash donations via SMS to help it to help people in need. African women and men were used as models – not only as models in the general term, but actually in ‘modelling’ or mimicking professional models in the West. Their postures were directed in such a way as to make them look like the models for fashionable consumer items as seen in Western media. And yes, each of them had one such item in their hands – a handbag, a pair of sunglasses, a bottle of aftershave and a pint of beer – and each with the price tag in Euros. However, the similarities ended here. The models were not well-groomed, they had no make-up, no expensive hairdos, and they wore only so-called tribal accessories. They were bony, some appeared barefoot, some wore worn footwear, and their clothing was worn and torn. These accumulated visual signs spelt ‘poor’ if not ‘poverty’ for the Other of the West. These were the imageries of ‘them’, the poor and needy Africans – the ‘people in need’.

Where, then, was ‘us'? The imagery of us as people was nowhere to be seen among the posters in the campaign. Yet the invisible West was at once behind the campaign, at the heart of the campaign and in front of the campaign. To begin with, the Africans’ pose was directed by a European agency for the eyes of a European audience. Visibly uncomfortable, they were made to imitate the luring postures of Western models for us, so such unusual settings could attract our attention. The consumer items in their hands did not have much to do with their life, yet these
items were considered daily basics in our life, and thus connoted a kind of lifestyle and consumer culture we were accustomed to in the West. The West was there when the price of a humble handbag was eight times that of the African woman’s weekly food costs, when a pair of ordinary sunglasses was three times that of the African woman’s access to water, when a bottle of aftershave was more than five times that the African man needed to buy the basics for a new home, when the cost of a pint of beer could buy the African man 150 litres of fresh water. It is through the differences highlighted by the gap between ‘us’ and Africa, that the West finds its superiority – and its wholeness and trueness. This is a case of the labour of the negative, using Hegel’s term (Hegel, 1979), in which the self recognises its trueness by mediating itself in terms of its sameness with the Other on one hand, and constituting itself by its very difference to the Other – a negative of itself – on the other hand. In this poster series, both the sameness and Otherness were mediated mentally, visually and literally to fill the gap of our fractured ego. By texting ‘aid’ to 2255 and donating €1.5 to Cardaid, as the poster instructed, the self reacted to its Other, and for a moment, reclaimed its Ego-Ideal and its moral high-ground.

Humana’s ‘Let your 2nd hand clothes help the 3rd world’ ads also depicted only imageries of Africans against the backdrop of local conditions that had all it takes to connote the ‘Third World’. In Picture 5.19, four Black people were pictured standing in line facing a well. Their faces were unrecognisable because they had been poorly (if not deliberately) positioned against the harsh sunlight. Vaguely, these figures denoted two adults and two children, with their genders evenly distributed among age groups. They were standing still, with their hands placed behind their backs. In short, the only people – the Africans – depicted in this ad were arguably faceless and evidently motionless. While their faces could not be recognised, and with their relationship to each other also unidentifiable, they were nonetheless effective signs in this ad. Firstly, they could be denoted as Africans, or Blacks.

![Picture 5.19, Humana, 2009](image1.png) ![Picture 5.20, Humana, 2009](image2.png)
Secondly, they could be connoted with concepts such as needy, indigent, poverty-stricken, backward, lacking and above all, ‘Third World’ – a keyword in the campaign tag line. Thirdly, and on an ideological level, as they were used to symbolise the Third World, their apparent inaction, communicated via the ad’s depiction of idleness in their collective body language, was almost a visual version of Rostow’s development theory which suggested that the development of the Third World could only be possible with the help of the West/North.

In contrast to the stillness of the passive Third World people, the well and the white polo shirt became the centre of action in the ad. Visibly, water was flowing from the well into one of the plastic containers in the queue. What made this happen, the ad showed us, was the floating white polo shirt: its left sleeve was holding the pipe while its right sleeve was plumbing the water from the pipe to the bucket. On the first level, the dirty white polo shirt denoted second-hand clothes. On another level, it symbolised the helping hands from ‘us’ in the West. It stood not only for our second-hand clothes but also for our help to the poor nations – a give-and-take relationship clearly defined by the tag line as it made its appeal to the Western audience: “Let your 2nd hand clothes help the 3rd world”. As such, even with the absence of any Western faces or figures, the white polo shirt stood for the help provided, generosity offered and actions taken by the charitable West to the Third World.

With a focus on education, the other ad in the series (Picture 5.20) took the same approach. A dozen African children were depicted seated in a poorly equipped classroom. Again, although the Africans were the only people in the ad, their faces were not shown to the audience. Again, the local condition they were in spelt ‘Third World’ and the problems associated with it. And again, all of the Black characters were in a stock-still position. Therefore, these boys and girls were used to symbolise the passive backward Third World youth. In the same manner, the West was represented by a floating second-hand piece of clothing – this time a pink shirt – as a symbol of the helping hand from the West. Again, the only action was from the pink shirt. This time, the right sleeve was rising up, pointing at the blackboard to teach the English alphabet, for example ‘a A = ṁ apple’.

The imagery from both ads in the campaign were taken from a 60-second long TV commercial of the same title. A comparison of the motionless depiction the motionless depiction of the racial Other in the ‘still’ printed version against the moving TV version, left me in no doubt about the contrast between the inaction of
the local and the action of the West – indeed it became even more obvious. While strictly speaking not motionless, the Africans remained spectators while the second-hand clothes (signifiers of the help from the West) were the doers, performing all the work for the locals. Following the Humana truck, the first sighting of the locals was of two boys sitting on top of a broken wall. The second shot was of an expressionless Black male sitting on the ground in front of a petrol station. All did nothing other than watch the truck drive by. As the truck stopped, the second-hand clothes, led by a pair of blue jeans, readied themselves for a rush of action to help the locals: the pink shirt found its way to the school to get into its role as teacher by inviting the children to learn (the scene depicted in Picture 5.20); a blue shirt found its way to a football field, encouraging the children to play and found himself a role in the game as a gate keeper; the blue jeans walked into a hospital holding a Black baby; the Polo shirt struggled to drag a large water pipe with no help at all, while a long shot showed a Black boy laughing at its effort from a distance. The next thing we saw was the scene depicted in Picture 5.19 – the Polo shirt was pumping water for the locals using the very equipment it single handily delivered (and presumably installed) as the locals stood by watching. The commercial ended with shot of the very same broken wall, but this time it was painted with the Humana logotype.

In short, when it came to solving the ‘Third World problems’, be it water or education, as the ads showed the audience, only the West was in control and in action. The narrative and visual depiction of the ads in this campaign told a story about the differences between ‘us’ and the Third World, and told us about our place in the world. Although its stated purpose was laudable – to attract donations – it carried a familiar notion of the modernisation theory. Through the portrayal of the ‘Third World’ locals as passive people who took no action to help themselves, the campaign suggested even the second-hand clothes from the West could be the saviour of the Third World. Rather disturbingly, in the guise of the benevolent appeal “Let your 2nd hand clothes help the 3rd world”, I couldn’t help but imagine a recast Great Chain of Being for the contemporary age showing a hierarchical order like this: 1st world people, 2nd hand clothes, 3rd world people.
5.4 OLD CLICHÉS FOR NEW AGENDAS

5.4.1 RECYCLING ‘ANIMALITY’

Agricultural Rehabilitation Programme for Africa (ARPA) of the UN’s World Food Organisation launched a campaign in 2009 in an attempt to raise public awareness of the extinction of wild animals. Designed by DKP Brazil, the campaign contained three posters with the tag line “Their extinction is ours as well” appearing subtly above the ARPA logo (Pictures 5.21a, 5.21b, and 5.21c). All three posters were shot in a rainforest with the tone, shade and mood reflective of nature and ‘green’ (visually and politically). With the jungle surrounding as the background, each poster in the series featured a model aping an endangered animal: a crocodile; a panther; and a gorilla. A male model of African appearance was used to pose as the crocodile, a female model of African appearance was used to pose as the panther, and a male model of Latino appearance was used to pose as the gorilla.

All three models posed nude with their bodies exposed to the audience. Regardless of their different positions, their facial expressions were the same. Their mouths were tightly closed, their eyes were all sharply engaged with the audience as if they were pleading – perhaps on behalf of the animals they were imitating – to be protected and spared from the unwanted human intervention in their natural habitat. If this was the message, the models played the role of creatures who could not ‘speak’ for themselves, with their eyes effectively get the message across. The question is, could White models have performed the same role equally as well? Given that non-White models were still highly underrepresented in the ad world, why weren’t the more highly valued White models useful to the advertiser on this occasion?
Logic underpinning inclusion and exclusion aside, the role the Black and Latino models were playing in communicating the message becomes obscure when you read the small tag line: “Their extinction is ours as well”. Considering that their images were constructed as representations of animals, the question is: Are they the first person (‘us’ the human) or the third person (‘them’ the animal)? Despite the tiny tag line suggesting the former, the non-White models were undisputedly posed as animals, appearing nude like animals, pleading like animals, looking scared, and ready to escape and, more significantly, mute. The organisation of the visual signs makes it clear that the Black and Latino models did not own the tag line. The tag line was for the audience, while the objectified non-White models were merely the living props replacing real animals for additional attention and appeal. This effectively made them the awkward in-betweens – reminders of the all too familiar colonial racial script that linked people of colour (Blacks in particular) and animals, either by likeness or by ridiculing their relationship with animals. Take the crocodile as an example. While the first poster in ARPA’s campaign (Picture. 5.21a) was a contemporary play on the old Black animality script, deliberately constructing the Black model’s body to create a ‘likeness’ of a crocodile in-danger of extinction, the 1902 ad for the Stainilgo brand of soap (Picture. 5.22) was one of the many early ads that exploited imageries of Black children fleeing the fate of being the crocodile’s ‘prey’.

The imageries of the racial Other in the ARPA campaign were used in a way that was at once strategically familiar and different. Instead of using imageries of the endangered animals to construct the ad and make the appeal, the campaign opted for the human metaphor – and not just any human, but only the ‘coloured’ human. The blanket use of imageries of the racial Other, and the absolute non-use of White imageries associated with concepts of animality was a familiar phenomenon with a colonial logic. Quite clearly, through both its casting and construction the campaign recycled the colonial racial imagination, particularly the concept that likened the racial Other to that of subhuman and animal, as outlined in Part One of this thesis. This campaign essentially remodelled an old and officially redundant cliché of Black animality to communicate a new and popular political agenda.
5.4.2 THE LURE OF ‘DEFORMITY’

In 2008, Tourism Thailand launched its Amazing Thailand campaign (designed by JWT) to promote the country to the world. A set of five posters – Karen, Boxing, Monkey, Songkran, and Floating Market – formed part of the campaign. I discuss the first of these posters here for its theft of identity and for its new take of the ‘deformed’ body.

The poster entitled Karen (Pictures 5.23) depicted two young girls from the Karen-Padaung tribe in native costumes. While the headgear and the face painting on the girl on the right already expressed a sense of the exotic Orient, the neck rings they were wearing stood out as the ultimate symbol of exoticism. The neck ring had long fascinated the West, ever since Marco Polo reported the practice of neck stretching in his journey through China to Asia in the 13th century. For centuries the Karen-Padaung women had been wearing brass coils on their necks. However, they only became accessible to international tourists in ‘real life’ in 1989 when they fled from their homes in Burma into Thailand to escape the armed ethnic conflict between the Burmese government and the Karenni resistance groups. Before then, under Burma’s military regime, foreigners were not allowed to travel to the Karenni State where the Padaung people lived, and so they remained beyond the gaze of the outside world.

To use the Karen-Padaung girls as symbols of Thailand was far-fetched to say the least. The Karen-Padaung people were essentially the minority racial Other in the country. The population distribution of the Karen people was estimated to be 3,500,000 in Burma and 400,000 in Thailand. Of the Karen people living in Thailand, only around 500 were from the Padaung sub-tribe (Harding, 2008) whose women wear neck rings. Compared with the other Karen sub-tribes who settled in Thailand more than five decades ago, the Padaung was among the smallest and newest. Upon their arrival, the Padaung people typically settled in villages near the refugee camps in the country’s mountainous north. Tapping into the curiosity towards the Padaung’s ancient practice, and the mythical female body, some of
these villages were developed as fee-paying tourist attractions. To complicate the matter further, Thai Government and the United Nations refugee agency UNHCR were in dispute about the residency status of the Karen-Padaung people, and in January 2008 a UNHCR spokeswoman advocated a tourism boycott claiming the village was “absolutely a human zoo” and that the Karen-Padaung people were being trapped there (ibid).

Although the use of the Padaung girls to symbolise Thailand is challengeable for many reasons, there were very good reasons to deploy the imagery of the neck-ring-wearing Padaung girls to promote Thailand to the Western world. The ‘Long-necked hill-tribe villages’ as promoted by tourist agencies, had become a tourism drawcard, feeding the West’s fascination with the Padaung women (‘long-necked women’ or even ‘giraffe women’) by offering a close encounter with them. Reporting from Mae Hong Son in Thailand, the BBC’s Andrew Harding captured the West’s obsession towards the ‘long-necked women’ and the ways in which the Otherness of a deformed ‘abnormality’ (even animality) attracted the tourist gaze:

> It is hard not to stare. At the end of a dirt track, deep in the Thai jungle, a group of women sit in the shade, fingerling the coils of brass which snake tightly around their unnaturally long, giraffe-like necks.

> “It’s incredible”, says a Canadian tourist, snapping away with his camera, as the women pose – heads bobbing stiffly far above their shoulders – and try to sell him a few souvenirs from the doorsteps of their bamboo huts.

> For years the prospect of visiting one of three “long-necked“ Kayan villages in this remote corner of north-western Thailand, close to the Burmese border, has been a major lure for foreign tourists. (ibid).

Arguably, therefore, both in reality and in the ad, the ‘long-necked’ Karen-Padaung girls were used as the lure of exotic Thailand. Bearing the sign value of an ancient time and isolated lands, the charm of the unfamiliar and the seductive modified female body, the girls were used to attract, to seduce, to entice, to persuade, to brand and to sell the country to the outside world.

Although their identity was not as authentically ‘Thai’ as the kick-boxers, or the Songkran festival, or the pig-tailed macaques, or the Floating Market, the Karen-Padaung girls were deployed in the campaign to symbolise a country in which they
took refuge, beside these icons of local culture. This was, in effect, a form of economic inclusion – ‘abnormality’ was sold as exotic appeal, the ‘deformed’ body became an extra currency, and thus the use of Karen-Padaung girls in this campaign. If there was any doubt about the nature of exoticism in this poster and its attempt to tap into the appetite of the Western tourist, consider the very pronounced yet highly peculiar tag line, which read: “WEARING MY RING AROUND YOUR NECK” – STILL THE No.1 ELVIS SONG IN THAILAND. This identity game unambiguously attempted to appeal to and tap into the West’s fetishism towards the racial Other. While the deployment of the ‘long-necked’ Karen-Padaung girls, through a twist in the complicated process of Othering, added value to Thailand’s attractiveness as a tourist destination, the key selling point – the neck rings – still needed the West’s seal of approval. In this case, US cultural icon Elvis provided the endorsement.
6.1. 
REDEMPTIVE MAKEOVERS

This section examines three major makeovers of brand identities between the 1980s and the 2000s with a theme I argue to be typically redemptive in nature. While enjoying a high status in their respective industries (oral hygiene, sport, and confectionery) all three brands suffered from a common trait. That is, their existing trademarks and logos were historically marked by a racist overtone that had and could have further damaged the brand’s current reputation and business prospect if changes were not forthcoming. These makeovers represent different strategies to manage such pressing needs by make good their otherwise problematic branding images in the age of contemporary globalisation, and to tell the story that they have moved on and changed for the new era.

The earliest makeover of this nature was performed by Quaker on the Aunt Jemima logo in 1968, as mentioned in Chapter Three. At this time the brand was under intense pressure, through the threat of a product boycott, from Civil Rights groups because of its negative and stereotypical portrayal of Black women as mammy cooks. In 1989, the image of Aunt Jemima in the logo was further reshaped – she became much thinner, younger, and was fashioned with a perm, pearl earrings and a white shirt. The result of these changes has been well summed up by Jewell:
“Unquestionably, there have been changes in the traditional images of mammy, Aunt Jemima” yet “[t]he major changes that were made in the mammy image affected her physical characteristics more than her emotional makeup” (1993: 183). What prompted the following branding image makeovers was different, and the process and strategy in addressing the challenges were unique. What aspects of the existing racist branding images were changed in these makeovers, in what manner, and to what effect?

6.1.1 THE WHITENING OF DARKIE

The circumstances that triggered the need for a redemptive makeover of the Darkie Toothpaste branding were extraordinary. Originally owned by the Hong Kong-based company Hawley & Hazel, the English brand name ‘Darkie’ and its logo had been part of the ‘bilingual trademark’ of Asia’s most popular toothpaste since the 1920s (Picture 6.1). As the product was known by its Chinese brand name 黑人牙膏 (Black People Toothpaste), the image in the logo was denoted as a smiling Black man by the locals in its major markets of Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia. The local lacked the language and cultural understanding needed to detect the racist connotations of the word ‘darkie’ (which could not be found in the commonly used English/Chinese Dictionary of the 1980s, while its synonym ‘darky’ was described as meaning: ‘[俗] 黑人’ or ‘[Colloquialism] black people’) and for decades, the brand attracted no criticism for its racist representation in its Asian markets. It was not until 1985, when US giant Colgate-Palmolive brokered a deal to buy 50 per cent of the brand from Hawley & Hazel, that the racial slur inscribed in the company’s branding became public knowledge and attracted criticism in the US. Two years of growing public pressure in the US eventually led to Colgate’s 1987 decision to rebrand Darkie. However, the search for a new brand name took longer than two years to settle, and the modified logo did not reach the market until 1991.

This is a case of a brand whose identity was built for an Asian market on and around the concept of Blackness in the early 20th century, and a case of a rather reluctant and awkwardly long journey of redemptive rebranding by its new multinational owner amid domestic political pressure in the US in the late 20th
century. The far-from-voluntary decision to change the existing branding and the resulting strategy of ‘whitening’ the racial references in the original trademark speak to the complexity of this case. The examination of this case, therefore, involves both textural and contextual analysis that interrogates the design and redesign of the trademark considering the historical, cultural and commercial dynamics. Why and how was the word ‘darkie’ and the image of a Black man considered useful and used to brand the toothpaste in the first place? What triggered the makeover? In what manner was the makeover carried out and with what considerations? What was changed and achieved as a result? Through the window of the design and redesign of the Darkie brand, the different strategies used to deal with tropes of Blackness can be seen at different times and in different cultural contexts in the process of globalisation.

Hawley & Hazel have never offered an official explanation as to the origin of the design and rationale for the Darkie brand identity. However, according to Colgate-Palmolive, the Darkie name and logo were conceived in the 1920s after Hawley & Hazel’s Chief Executive visited the US and saw an Al Jolson show. The executive saw Jolson’s wide smile and bright teeth as an excellent image for a toothpaste logo (The New York Times, Jan 27 1989: D1). Another version of the story, however, disputed the visit to the US or the Al Jolson show. It claimed that, having resided in Hong Kong, none of the founders had actually met a Black person at the time, and that the logomark was based on photos they had found in magazines. The rationale for deploying the black faced imagery, however, more convincingly corresponds with the Colgate version. According to legend, the brand image was the work of an Irish-Englishman who helped to render the Darkie logotype, and transform the image of a black-faced Jolson into a logomark that became a registered trademark for the brand.

The Darkie brand consisted of both word (the brand name) and image (the logo). If we read into the historical roots of these original branding elements, there is no lack of racist references. Brand-name wise, the word ‘Darkie’ denoted a person with black or dark skin in dictionary terms. However, when taking into account the word’s association with the historic institutional, cultural and economic abuse of Blacks in the US, ‘Darkie’ was indeed a derogatory cultural term with extremely offensive connotations for African-Americans. Logo wise, the inspiration of Al Jolson imagery (be it firsthand or mediated) in establishing the Darkie name and imagery linked it to the iconic and degrading images typically seen in minstrel shows. In these shows, non-Black entertainers darkened their faces and painted
their lips red, pink or white for their performances, mocking, ridiculing and degrading Blacks.

In terms of its visual components, the original logo (Picture 6.2) immediately denoted a Black man. The visual signifiers – the inky-black skin, googly eyes, pronounced thick lips and toothy smile – all came from and further reinforced the stereotyping of Blacks as portrayed and popularised by minstrel shows. Several record covers with Jolson’s iconic images in the 1910s and 1920s I found during this research back this claim, with The Best of Al Jolson perhaps the most significant one (Pictures 6.3). The face in the logo and the image of the famous Jolson on the record cover were almost identical.

While the resemblance between the logo and Jolson’s black-faced image was clear, the use of the black-faced Jolson was not total, as visual manipulation was also evident and should not be ignored. The addition of the top hat and the bow tie in the costume department is worth noting, as is the altered appearance of the mouth in the facial department. Both the top hat and bow tie were typical accessories in minstrel shows. In fact, Jolson himself was depicted on the cover of his Stage Highlights 1911-1925 album wearing a similar costume (Picture 6.4).

In terms of facial manipulation, a number of notable changes of expression between the logo and its identified source were made around the mouth area. In Picture 6.3, Jolson’s mouth was open in a way that suggested he was singing an ‘R’ note. In the logo, the Black character’s mouth was shaped in a way that suggested he was singing an ‘E’ note. This alteration enabled the maximum number of teeth (both upper and lower) to be shown in the logo, improving the existing image where only the upper teeth and tongue were visible. The other change worth noting is the transformation of the colour of the lips. Although subtle, the designer chose to darken the Black character’s lips – in marked contrast to Jolson’s tendency to paint his lips lighter than his face. By doing so, the Black man’s teeth were highlighted.
and the highest possible degree of contrast, namely black and white, was achieved. As we can see, while the design inherited a great deal of the visual elements from the Jolson reference, it was not simply a carbon copy. The designer picked and chose useful elements to construct an image that delivered the brand’s selling point: “Use Darkie and your teeth will be as white as a Black man’s”. In fact, the image of the Black man created for the Darkie brand reminds me as much of Bernier’s typology of Blacks during the colonial era (referenced in Chapter Two) as of the Jolson iconography. It begins with: “1. Their thick lips and squab noses” and ends with “finally, their teeth whiter than the finest ivory, their tongue and all the interior of their mouth and their lips as red as coral”.

Examining the way in which the image of a Black man was used in the original Darkie branding is crucial to appreciating the usefulness of such an image. It would be naïve to think that the Englishmen who established the branding identity used the image of a Black man because they worshipped Jolson to such an extent that they honoured him by linking his image with their product (like the gesture the US Postal Service made in 1994 when it issued a 29-cent postage stamp in his honour). In this case, the usefulness of the racial Other relied squarely on the colonial racial myth that Black people had the whitest possible teeth. Hawley & Hazel’s decision to choose the word ‘Darkie’ as their product brand name may well have been inspired by one owner’s experience of a minstrel show or by the worship of Jolson through the magazine coverage of such shows, but ultimately the choice was motivated by what the image and concept of Blackness could offer the company’s flagship product – toothpaste. In other words, the stereotypical and mythical beliefs associated with the word ‘Darkie’ bore the desired sign value – namely, its stereotypical and mythical association with whiter teeth – and Hawley & Hazel were astute enough to pick up on this and be associate it with the promotion of their product.

What attracted Colgate-Palmolive’s interest in acquiring the Darkie brand was a great deal of market exposure and the dominance the brand had enjoyed in Asia for decades. For example, Darkie toothpaste had dominated the market from the time Hawley & Hazel started manufacturing it in Taiwan in 1949, and was commonly described as 微笑的黑色巨人 (smiling black giant) in the local media. A government document titled Industry Forecast: Hygienic Product Industry, for example, stated that Darkie toothpaste had been a firm industry leader in Taiwan. The report’s author used the term ‘unshakeable’ to describe the brand’s unchallengeable market share (黑人牙膏在市場的地位屹立不搖). The golden
age for Darkie was the 1980s, before a number of multinational brands entered the local market. In Taiwan at that time, the brand’s market share was said to be about 80 per cent across the board and close to 90 per cent in rural areas.

Obviously, Colgate-Palmolive acquired Darkie because of its market position and the potential for cultivating even greater market share and profit. However, it would prove impossible for the US-based multinational giant to overlook the racist connotation of the brand’s very identity given the sensitivity of Black citizens at home to past racial injustice. If it had taken comfort in the fact that there had been no previous complaints or criticism of the brand’s racist overtones, then it had failed to understand the cultural reasons for this in Asia and, perhaps more significantly, failed to realise the degree of anger and reaction the brand would attract in its own backyard.

In its first year in the Asian market, the company’s $US50 million investment reaped annual sales in the double-digit millions. However, from 1986 its links with Darkie toothpaste began to attract attention and criticism in the US. The Interfaith Centre on Corporate Responsibility, a non-profit New York-based organisation of more than 240 church groups, led the protest, decrying the brand name as racist and its logo as demeaning to Blacks. It demanded that Colgate-Palmolive change both identity elements, or the brand would be seen to be “associated with promoting racial stereotyping in the Third World” (1986). Investors also campaigned, pressing Colgate-Palmolive to discontinue marketing toothpaste in Asia under the ‘Darkie’ brand name. In 1987, the company was confronted with a shareholder resolution calling for a change in the product’s “name and imagery” (Fortune 1988: 21). The General Assembly of Pennsylvania, for example, delivered House Resolution No. 318, publicly urging the Colgate-Palmolive Company to change the name and logo of ‘Darkie’ toothpaste, and transmitted this Resolution directly to the company’s corporate headquarters in New York. In it, the Assembly stated: “This repugnant name and logo is blatantly racist and deeply offensive to African-Americans” (1990). The developing controversy was brought to the attention of the American public through the media, including articles in the widely circulated *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal*, among others.

After years of pressure from Black activists, religious groups, politicians and stakeholders, in January 1989 the Colgate-Palmolive Company finally announced its decision to rebrand Darkie toothpaste by making changes to both its brand name and logo. Obviously, Colgate-Palmolive’s decision to change the visual identity was
long time coming and was far from voluntary. Facing the initial criticism in 1985, the company refused to change the marketing of Darkie toothpaste in any way, arguing that the Darkie name and the black-faced logo were not perceived in Asian culture as derogatory towards Blacks (Fortune 1988: 21). Making it clear that Darkie toothpaste was not going to be marketed in the US, Colgate argued that should that change, the company’s position “would be different” (The Wall Street Journal 25 February 1987: 1). However, as public pressure mounted, the company found itself caught in a dilemma between maintaining a positive corporate image in the US, and protecting its commercial interest in the newly acquired golden goose in Asia.

Reacting to its religious shareholders’ threat to introduce a tough resolution in relation to the company’s Darkie brand, in February 1987 Colgate softened its stance and signalled its intent to change the Darkie identity. Gavin Anderson, company director of executive services, announced: “We are attempting to find a way of naming and designing the package that might remove any inference of racial stereotyping” (ibid). In response to this gesture, three Roman Catholic religious orders agreed to withdraw the planned shareholder resolution challenging the company practice (ibid). In the following years, Colgate and Hawley & Hazel were said to be conducting research for new Darkie branding. However, given the longer-than-expected time it took to realise the promised rebranding, Colgate was criticised for dragging its feet over the issue.

What happened in the period before this point provides the context that led to the identity makeover, what happened after 1987 was a rather uncomfortable economic and political joust between its relationship with the public and its corporate bottom line. Colgate-Palmolive’s vice president for marketing, Michael Hoye, quite unusually publicised the objective for the rebranding. The challenge for the exercise, Hoye indicated, was to find a name and logo that eliminated the racial offensiveness yet was close enough to be quickly recognised by loyal customers (McGill, 1989). It went without saying that the desired outcome of the redesign, from the company’s perspective, was one that maintained maximum likeness to the original trademark for economic reasons on one hand, while escaping public criticism for racial stereotyping on the other.

Such a challenge proved to be a tough one. In terms of the brand name, the redesign started with the development of a list of all possible one-letter changes from the word ‘Darkie’. Several professional marketing firms were engaged to help suggest alternative names. According to one source, after rejecting names such as
‘Darbie’ and ‘Hawley’, Colgate and Hawley & Hazel began market-testing one from a shortlist of new names—‘Dakkie’—before finally settling on ‘Darlie’. No statement was made to explain why ‘Dakkie’ was picked in the first place, or why ‘Darlie’ ended up being the final choice. What we do know is that Colgate’s market testing of ‘Dakkie’ as the potential new name again got the company into trouble in the court of public opinion, being criticised as not seeing the light after such prolonged protest and struggle (Fortune, 1988). With the benefit of Hoye’s much-publicised rebranding objective, it is not difficult to understand the wisdom. ‘Dakkie’ was the first choice because of its maximum likeness to ‘Darbie’, in both visual and phonemic terms. The one-letter change looked close enough to the original name to foreigners’ eyes, and sounded like it to foreigners’ ears. The company may have tried to push their luck in the hope that ‘Dakkie’ would be socially acceptable because—unlike ‘Darbie’ or the cloned ‘Darbie’ for that matter, the spelling of ‘Dakkie’ was not on the list of existing racial slurs back home.

However, this was not the case. After pushing the limit and attracting yet another round of negative publicity, Colgate finally settled on ‘Darlie’. If the company had not been so desperate to maintain a likeness in both pronunciation and spelling, and if it had understood the cultural factors that dictated how the brand was recognised and uttered in the local market, it should have chosen ‘Darlie’ in the first instance. Not only because ‘Darlie’, like ‘Dakkie’, involved changing only one letter from the original brand name, but also because ‘Darlie’ did not sound like ‘Darbie’ and thus represented a more decisive move away from the problem. The reality is, either way, the change was not even noticed by the great majority of local consumers, as they did not recognise or utter the brand in English. The change of name attracted little if any meaningful attention in the market—particularly given that the Chinese brand name 黑人牙膏 remained intact following the rebranding, as one of my previous studies on this matter shows (Fu, 2000).

If it was challenging for the company to come up with a new name, it appeared to be even more difficult to come up with a new image to replace the black-face in its controversial logomark. When market testing the Dakkie solution, Colgate tried to get away with using the same black-faced logo and copped criticism (ibid). On 17 April 1989, a full-page newspaper advertisement from Colgate-Palmolive was published in Singapore’s English language newspaper The Straits Times, formally announcing that one of the most popular brands of toothpaste in South-East Asia was changing its name from ‘Darbie’ to ‘Darlie’. The disappointment was, as The New York Times noted “Colgate-Palmolive had said it would phase in the new name
and a racially ambiguous face under the top hat. However, the advertisement today in *The Straits Times* carried the same blackface logo” (18 April 1989: D25).

The absence of a new logomark in the advertisement was not a blunder by the company or its agency. It was explained as being the result of the difficulty the company encountered in changing the logo. The *Wall Street Journal* quoted Anderson: “We’ve done an enormous amount of work on the logo, but it continues to be a problem” (14 April 1989: 1). He elaborated on the cultural factors involved: “We thought the solution would be a lot easier, Darkie is so ingrained in the culture, particularly in Taiwan. There's never been a bleep about it [there]” (ibid).

With Colgate supposedly in the process of developing a non-racist logomark to calm the Darkie controversy, in 1988 the company launched another toothpaste in Japan under the brand name ‘Mouth Jazz’. Featuring an extremely similar logomark – a black-faced man in a top hat – the company attracted more criticism in the US, with ‘Mouth Jazz’ considered a Japanese version of ‘Darkie’. Answering its critiques, Colgate insisted ‘Darkie’ and ‘Mouth Jazz’ were unrelated. Anderson argued: “There is no reason to associate the two products. The name is totally different and the product bears no resemblance to Darkie” (ibid). In terms of the logomark: “I don’t think it is indicative of a minstrel at all. It is a black-faced person wearing a top hat” (quoted in Fortune 1989: 21).

So the search for that elusive fine line between a ‘minstrel’ figure and a ‘black-faced person in a top hat’ continued. While Colgate hinted that a racially inoffensive new logo would be released in early 1989, the new logomark was not revealed to the public until 1991. Picture 6.5 shows the much-anticipated new logomark. With the posture, expression, top hat and rest of the costume in the original logomark intact, the makeover logo looked almost the same as the original, except for its facial features and complexion. To silence the critics, the newly created caricature could no longer be described as having an inky-black skin, googly-eyes and exaggerated thick lips and looking like a grinning simpleton – like the stereotypical portrayal of blacks popularised by minstrel shows in the US. The face was slightly longer, the lips thinner, the eyes narrower, the bridge of the nose significantly higher and the nostrils smaller – converting the existing facial features typical of Black populations to those of the Whites. Although these alterations sound like a job for a cosmetic surgeon, the procedures were performed by the illustrator and the designer according to Colgate’s brief.
The face job was not complete without the whitening of the existing inky-dark face. Visual tricks involving switching drawing styles and rearranging light distribution were used to help achieve the whitening effect. The original even-toned caricature was replaced by a black-and-white silhouette. The change of drawing style coupled with the change of lighting distribution resulted in a face that reflected more of the white/light area than the black/shadow area. Like the two-year long game the brand played with the word, this four-year long game with the image was driven by public opinion and played with reluctance, hesitation and deliberate calculation.

Just as in the choice of name in the word game, the choice of visual style was less an aesthetic decision than a strategic manoeuvre: it carefully whitened the otherwise distinctive features typical of Black people to such an extent that was just enough to avoid the criticism of racial stereotyping, yet not quite enough to lose the brand’s iconographic heritage in its Asian market. It walked the line between difference and similarity.

Looking back, it took more than a year of intense social and economic pressure for Colgate to accept that the Darkie branding identity must change, two years of playing the ‘word game’ to change one letter in the existing brand name, and four years of playing the ‘image game’ to complete the cosmetic surgery needed to whiten the logo’s black-faced image. The Darkie controversy and Colgate’s strategy to manage it raises many more questions. But for my purpose in this section, it was clear that this makeover was involuntary in manner, inconvenient in practice, calculated in strategy and cosmetic in nature.

6.1.2 CASTRATING THE ‘SAVAGE’

For more than 100 years, an illustrated image of an Indian warrior had been used as a visual symbol for the renowned US brand Savage Arms. Founded in 1894 by Arthur Savage in Utica, New York, there had been several redesigns of the company’s logo throughout the century (Pictures 6.6, 6.7, 6.8). The strategically altered imageries of the Indian warrior, often referred to by the company as the ‘Savage Indian’ or the ‘Indian head’, provides a typical case of a measured makeover that transformed the original vicious-looking savage into a virtuous-looking savage. The move to tone down the racist overtones occurred in stages, making the continued use of a racially charged sign sound and look legitimate. As a result, it has remained free from criticism.
Looking into the origin of the Savage brand and its logo, there are discrepancies about when Savage Arms first deployed ‘Savage Indian’ in its branding material and as its logo. In *Symbols of America*, for example, the author states that the warrior symbol was introduced in 1906, the first logo in 1913, the first redesign in 1953 and the latest in 1984 (Morgan, 1986: 62). However, evidence indicates that the company’s mass promotional use of the Indian warrior image predated 1906. It appears from the cover of the company’s full-colour 1905 catalogue No.16 (Picture 6.9) that the warrior image was first used in that year, if not earlier. In addition, Savage Arms’ corporate literature states that the logo was first adopted in 1919 – not 1913 – as a result of a deal between the company and Chief Lame Bear (Picture 6.10). According to the company:

In 1919, Chief Lame Bear approached Arthur to purchase lever-action rifles for the Indian reservation and the two men struck a deal. The tribe would get discounted rifles and Savage would get their support and endorsement. It was at this time in the company's history, that Arthur Savage added the Indian head logo – a direct gift from the Chief – to the company name. (Savage Arms corporate website)

This official story neutralised the original idea of using the image of an Indian Chief to symbolise the company. As the story goes, the founder of the company named it after his family name – Savage, and that the Savage Chief image was “a direct gift from the Chief” to the company. While it can be argued that the brand name ‘Savage’ reflected the family name, Savage Arms had already used an Indian Chief image in its 1905 catalogue, and again in its 1915 catalogue (Picture 6.11). Given that Morgan’s research dates the first Savage Arms logo to 1913, the deal between Arthur Savage and Chief Lame Bear as a causal factor is questionable. According to the evidence, the company established its Savage/Indian synonym more than fourteen years earlier, and had made use of the Indian Chief image for years before the claimed 1919 ‘deal’ with Chief Lame Bear. In other words, ‘the
deal’ was at best a belated endorsement, and not the reason behind the Savage Chief logo.

In addition to creating an innocent and almost noble rationale for using the Indian Chief image, the deal in this official narrative also served to justify the consumption of indigenous imagery. The very essence of a ‘deal’ denotes an agreement entered into by the parties for their perceived mutual benefit. Claiming that the use of the imagery of an Indian Chief was the result of a ‘deal’ between both parties or, better still, the result of an event initiated by Chief Lame Bear himself, effectively suggested that ‘the logo was obtained by legitimate means and the tribe depicted was fairly compensated financially’. This framed an understanding that ‘the logo honoured, respected, and had the blessing of the native people’. However, history shows that the company felt free to exploit the image of the native people in a stereotypical manner before any apparent ‘deal’ was made.

In the absence of evidence as to the extent of the ‘discount’ Chief Lame Bear received on the rifles in exchange for the right to use his image and for the endorsement and support of his people, the fairness of the deal is open to question. The question of fairness may sound academic – after all, how can one put a price on the identity of a dignified individual, and how can the goodwill of an entire ethnic tribe be measured in dollar terms? This said, aside from whether or not it was financially a good deal for the Chief and his people, the existence of the deal in itself is significant. On the one hand, the claimed ‘deal’ suggested that the company, to an extent, morally recognised the sign value of the native people to its Savage Arms brand, while on the other it demonstrates that race politics was already a commercial reality – at least symbolically – at the turn of the 20th century.

An Indian per se does not denote ‘savage’ – an Indian is an Indian is an Indian. Conversely, the word ‘savage’ does not denote ‘Indian’ by itself. It denotes concepts of fierce; violent; uncontrolled; cruel and vicious; aggressively hostile; primitive and uncivilised. It is only at the connotative, ideological and mythical levels, that the
image of an Indian was constructed as a symbol of ‘Savage’, possessing the ‘savage qualities’. As mentioned in Part One, starting with Columbus, Indians have been historically depicted in both words and pictures as heartless, bloodthirsty and brutal savages in colonial cultural discourses. One of the most famous contributions to the idea of “what the Indians are” came from Roosevelt in a speech five years before he became President of the United States: “Reckless, revengeful, fiendishly cruel, they rob and murder…” (quoted in Dyer, 1980: 86). In the same speech, Roosevelt claimed: “I don’t go so far as to think that the only good Indians are dead Indians, but I believe nine out of every ten are, and I shouldn’t like to inquire too closely into the case of the tenth” (ibid). This reaffirmed the colonialist association between Indians and cannibalism, barbarism, and all things uncivilised. At times however, they were considered as useful, born warriors as I outlined in Chapter Two. Speeches like Roosevelt’s helped to create a social and cultural convention in which the concept of ‘Indian’ stood for ‘savage’ – society recognised the ‘savage Indian’ stereotype. Taking these conditions into account, the company and its designer were able to take advantage of the established Indian/Savage synonym, and make use of the image of a native people as its mascot. The Savage Indian was created as a symbol which not only stood for the name of the company, but also as a signifier of its desired quality – the ‘Savage Quality’ – the very quality the company built its reputation on. It astutely realised the usefulness of the Indian imagery to enhance this quality.

In the original logo, the Savage Indian was framed in an oval shape together with the logotype ‘SAVAGE QUALITY’ (Picture 6.6). The design was, by and large, based on the template of the painting on the front cover of the company’s 1905 catalogue, as seen above. The logo was a black-and-white line-art version of the painting featuring the image of a seemingly untamed Indian warrior in action – screaming while firmly holding a rifle in his hand. Looking further, we can see his eyes burning with aggression; his mouth wide open as if shouting. Apart from his facial expression, the character’s posture is also worth noting: the warrior’s head leans forward, and his hair and the feathers and beads on his headgear are being blown backwards suggesting dynamic movement towards an enemy. The black-and-white logo preserved the vividness of the original painting in a way that one could almost see the battleground, hear the sound of fighting, smell the gunpowder and blood, feel the wind blowing, and touch the warrior, the gun he was holding and the headgear he was wearing.
Over the years, the logo has undergone two major changes. The first redesign took place in 1953 (Picture 6.7), the second in 1984 (Picture 6.8). At a glance, one can see that while each of the redesigned logos still bore the image of an Indian Chief, the look was less ‘savage’ compared with its predecessor. The 1953 makeover was a major visual alteration from the original logo – and the changes were significant. The most notable change was the deletion of the arm and the gun, and the removal of the words ‘SAVAGE’ and ‘QUALITY’. Furthermore, the Savage Indian was no longer depicted in motion, and the character was semi-framed in a circle instead of an oval. In all, the Savage Indian was portrayed with a much softer touch: his expression looked tough yet not brutal, his posture appeared rather restful, and greater attention was paid to the detail of his headgear, such as the feathers, the braid and the beads.

Only subtle changes were then made to the 1984 version of the Savage Arms logo. The stillness of posture and composition remained. However, the fine-line drawing style was replaced with bolder strokes on one hand, while the Savage Indian’s facial expression was softened by reshaping his mouth – one can even find a hint of smile on his face – on the other hand. Framing the entire Savage Indian image inside a complete circle helped to eliminate the last remaining sense of movement.

Although no further changes to the Savage Indian logo have been publicly announced, the company’s Corporate [Identity] Standard Guidelines issued in 2009 show some related changes. One interesting development is the change of terminology in which the previous term ‘Savage Indian Head Logo’ has now become ‘Savage Medallion Logo’. Other than replacing ‘Indian head’ with the word ‘Medallion’, the guidelines also rule out the use of the logo in isolation. Despite these measured changes, however, the guidelines reaffirm the Savage-Indian Chief association in the first sentence under the heading SAVAGE MEDALLION LOGO in the guideline:

The Savage Medallion is a graphic depiction of an Indian Chief facing to the right. The Savage Medallion face may never turn any other direction than to the right. The Medallion logo may never be used as a stand alone logo. It may be used for design purposes, but must always be accompanied by the Savage Signature or Savage Logotype somewhere on the piece. Any placement of the Medallion with the Savage Logotype that departs from the corporate Signature is prohibited.
Compared with the Darkie makeover, the Savage Arms’ logo makeover was not directly prompted by negative public opinions. Unlike some logos in the US that still using Indian imageries and references, Savage Arms has managed public opinion well. In contrast for example, the logo for the popular Cleveland Indians baseball team has attracted media criticism, forcing a number of makeovers (picture 6.12). With its narrative of the Savage-Lame Bear deal as a shield, and with a series of proactive and sensitive actions to improve its brand identity – the company has been anxious to wash out the stink of racial stereotyping while protecting its valued legacy. The efforts to transform the Savage visual symbol and the imposing of restrictions on its application are in effect gestures aimed at neutralising the ‘savage quality’ – historically a desired selling point but a potential public relations disaster in a changing time. With the help of the mythical brand history and visual manipulation, the Savage Arms branding makeovers have been low key, without pressure and without the need to admit the very problem the brand quietly invested in solving.

In light of these changes, then, has the logo shed its use of dubious racist stereotyping? Fundamentally – no. On the surface, the consequentially updated versions of Savage Arms reduced the stereotypical ‘savage’ features represented in the original logo. It appears that the visual elements associated with the stereotypical Indian Chief have all been altered: the ‘Savage Quality’ wording has been deleted, the gun-toting arm has been removed, the sense of battle has been erased, the previously screaming and furious facial expression has been redrawn and refined to construct a less brutal, more tranquil character, and the originally untamed Indian Chief has been fully contained within a circle. However, as much as these changes represent a positive response to neo-liberal aspirations and sensitivity to anti-racist sentiments, the creative effort to make the Savage Indian less fearsome seems to stop short of going beyond a cosmetic and fashion makeover to address its inherent branding problem of racial stereotyping. As such, one fundamental remains: the Indian/Savage synonym remains firmly intact despite the play on word and image. After all the altering and fine tuning of the logo and its application,
none of the redesigns have attempted to break the stereotypical link between the concept of ‘Savage’ and the trope of an ‘Indian’, other than rendering the Indian non-threatening by way of a kind of castration which is both “a reactivation of the material of original fantasy…as well as a normalization of that difference and disturbance in terms of the fetish object” as a substitute (Bhabha, 1994: 74). Essentially, the transformation of a vicious-looking savage into a virtuous-looking savage in the Savage Arms branding makeover has produced a ‘castrated’ noble savage who is no longer ‘wild’, ‘ferocious’ and ‘dangerous’, but a ‘domesticated’, ‘assimilated’ and ‘tamed’ object of fetish.

6.1.3 SUGAR-COATING CONGUITOS

Conguitos is a popular Spanish brand of chocolate-coated peanuts owned by the LACASA Group. The logo, which also serves as a brand mascot named Conguito, features an armed dark-brown character (Picture 6.13). It was created in 1961 by Spanish designer Juan Tudela Ferez. The logo has undergone two makeovers, one in 1997 (Picture 6.14) and the other in 2009 (Picture 6.15). The company’s version of its heritage and the nature of the remodelling of the Conguito image have been communicated to the audience as:

Conguitos, roasted peanuts covered in chocolate, have been on the market for over 40 years. Their mascot, the Conguito, is a familiar and endearing character. Due to evolution and the changing times, our mascot has also evolved and slightly changed in order to adapt to the present day. (Conguitos corporate website)

What has been changed is not mentioned, other than the changes were ‘evolved’ in nature and ‘slight’ in scale. From the company’s perspective: “When the ‘Conguito’ was born in the sixties the mascot was perceived as a tiny character covered in chocolate and it has slowly evolved and been updated” (ibid). But was Conguito merely a tiny innocent character? And were the makeovers of the Conguitos logo an uninterrupted gradual evolution that just happened?

Looking back, the original construction of the Conguitos brand indicates that the tropes of Africa and Africans have been used to brand the product ever since it was first introduced to the domestic market. To begin with, the brand name can be loosely translated as ‘little Congo boys’ in the local language. But why the reference to the Congo? Apparently, the concept was driven by fashion as at the time the
Congo had just become independent, and according to its creator (Ferez, 2003) the company chose it for its exotic look. In the original logo, all three Conguitos were presented as chubby cartoon characters with uniformly inky skin, thick red lips and googly eyes – in a style that closely resembled the various portrayals of Little Black Sambo. The unique visual features of the Conguitos, such as the exposed belly buttons of the two front characters, the spears in their hands, and the thatched hut image in the background, all connoted the widespread primitive, wildish and backward qualities associated with Black people.

The Congo had declared its independence from its coloniser, Belgium, in 1960 – one year before the birth of Conguitos in Spain. However, it is worth noting that although it was still in the news by the time Conguitos was launched on the market, the Congo stories were no longer about independence, but rather about the civil war that had erupted in the poor yet resource-rich African nation. Obviously, the image of the Congo was not chosen to celebrate the decolonisation of a colony in Africa by a brand that operated within the cultural context of one of the most powerful existing European colonialist empires. So what then was the relevance of the imagery of the Congo to a brand that sold chocolate-coated peanuts? On the surface, and considering Ferez’s claim, the Conguitos did give the brand its desired ‘exotic look’ – they were Black, they were naked, they were from the jungle, and if these signs were not exotic enough, as revealed in one of Conguitos’ signature TV commercials, they were represented as pygmies!

The usefulness of the Congo trope, however, goes beyond the face value of exoticism. To appreciate the range of sign values the trope of the Congolese brought to the brand, the depiction of the Conguitos in the same animated commercial provides further cues. With the backdrop of a jungle, three Conguitos were singing and dancing next to a cooking pot – bodies swinging and eyeballs...
rolling with rhythm. One of the Conguitos was also stirring the chocolate-coated peanuts as he danced with the group. Vividly, the bubbly Conguitos brought a sense of fun and pleasure to the brand, giving the chocolate peanuts an attractive personality. The Congo had a reputation as a cocoa and peanut producing nation, and its people were renowned for their knowledge of these products. Given this, the use of Conguito cooks in action preparing chocolate-coated peanuts effectively produced a Congolese endorsement of the product and provided a perfect mascot for the brand. Strangely, these signifiers seemed to present the Conguito as a Spanish version of ‘jolly Sambo’ and ‘servile Sambo’ in Kern-Foxworth’s term (1994). The marked difference was that, unlike the US versions of the Sambo imagery which attracted fierce protest and were largely withdrawn from the market by the 1960s, there was no effective challenge to the branding of Conguitos in Spain. By the 1960s US consumers were no longer able to buy and eat Black Babies chocolate and the like. Conversely, Conguitos were conceived, born and grew in popularity in the same era, amid the post-World War II decolonialisation movement and the new anti-racism paradigm in world politics. The Conguitos branding image uninterruptedly carried its racial overtones until the late 1990s.

The remodelling of Conguitos logo tells the story of an identity makeover which was inevitable on the one hand, but the need for which was denied on the other. The racially charged brand name and the stereotypical visual languages deployed to construct the Conguitos visual identity (as the logo and mascot) seemed to be taken for granted in Spain, and for more than 30 years virtually no thought had been given to the racialised signifier and its connotations. Changes only became necessary as a result of the brand’s ambition to go global. What the company website referred as ‘the changing times’ began with the company’s stream of business acquisitions domestically and market expansion into other European countries such as France, Portugal and Argentina. Inevitably, and sensibly, the visual identity of Conguitos had underwent a major remodelling in 1997 to avoid possible criticism abroad. It hardly needs to be said that the brand was conscious that what was acceptable in Spain was not necessarily acceptable elsewhere in Europe. A redemptive makeover was needed before the overseas launch to safeguard the first vital step of its global venture. Two major aspects of the Conguito character were changed. Firstly, the Conguito was disarmed, with the spear removed. Secondly, the Conguito no longer appeared fully naked, as his belly button was reshaped into an oval stamp of the brand name (Picture 6.14). While he was still recognisable as
a ‘little Black sambo’ after the remodelling, degree of wildness had been toned down.

In Spain, the most publicised challenge to the logo was launched in 2003, when an academic from the University of A Coruña, criticised it as being racist and insulting to the African migrants living in Spain. Campaigning to have it changed, he argued that the logo “serves only to promote and perpetuate the negative stereotypes associated with African people” (El Periódico de Aragón, 13 April 2003). The company rejected the criticism outright. In response, it emphasised the fact that the logo had served the brand for forty-two years, and insisted that the mascot “respects everyone and is accepted and appreciated by an overwhelming majority”. The complaint also attracted a high level of governmental attention. On the day after the complaint went public, Arturo Aliaga, Spain’s Minister of Industry, Trade and Development, reportedly expressed concern about the allegation of racism against one of the country’s most popular brands which sold 30 million bags a year to forty countries worldwide. Aliaga stated: “[B]efore launching this type of critical messages, one should mediate and talk to the company because they can seriously harm your image or impair any part of the production or marketing”. He further expressed his fear that the negative publicity “could jeopardise both its international and financial results”, according to the Spanish Newspaper El Periódico de Aragón (5 March 2003). With this reaction and the muted public support for the campaign, predictably the logo remained unchanged in its domestic and international markets for another six years. Yet in 2009, without any apparent public pressure, the company moved on its own and made some significant changes to the logo.

In this round of remodelling, the Conguito character underwent major surgery: his thick red lips were dramatically reduced to almost invisible; his bug-eyedness was corrected, or normalised; and the oval brand name was positioned away from his body, thus removing any remaining trace of an imagined belly button (Picture 6.15). Clearly, this sugar-coating completed the unfinished business from the first round of remodelling. The changes significantly minimised the remaining racial references and the Sambo stereotypes embodied in the Conguitos logo. For a brand that was on track to grow its global market share, this latest round of remodelling was a major step towards avoiding the foreseeable negative publicity towards the branding imagery as it pushed to widen its international distribution.

Why the company or the country – the very same that ignited the famous Valladolid race debate in the 16th century – chose not to recognise the racial overtones
embodied in the Conguitos brand is beyond the scope of this research. Yet the unacceptable truth that the Conguitos logo has been rich in racial overtone and was racially offensive certainly have not been publicly acknowledged in this case. Instead of admitting the changes were made to right the wrongs, the company officially neutralised the changes by stating that the logo had merely “evolved and slightly changed in order to adapt to the present day”. This was a carefully constructed rhetorical discourse that conveniently left out the crucial factor behind the remodelling, namely to eliminate the logo’s existing racist connotations which were unacceptable in other potential markets (such as the US).

It is quite clear that the Conguitos logo remodelling did not ‘evolve’ naturally, but resulted from a series of strategies involving knowing without admitting, calculated inaction and action driven by economy necessity. The Conguitos logo was not just an innocent ‘tiny character covered in chocolate’, but a racially charged identity that made ‘eating the Other’ a normal part of daily life. Throughout the process, the Conguitos brand image was managed as if it has two identities – one local, the other global. The brand image had a near trouble-free run within its home market – and when trouble did arise, the brand had the power to defuse the challenge. But to become global, the company was conscious that Conguito would be measured through the eyes of the rest of the world and needed to be ‘sugar-coated’, so to speak. Furthermore, the small dark body of the Conguito also manifested as two identities, one that “respects everyone and is accepted and appreciated by an overwhelming majority” as declared by the company, and the other admitted into the cultural lexicon and used as a racial slur against Black people. One of the most publicised racist applications of the term ‘Conguito’ can be seen in a campaign against British Formula One driver Lewis Hamilton before his historic race in the 2008 Brazilian Grand Prix for the prestige World Number One spot. Among more than 16,000 racist messages addressed to him on a Spanish website, Hamilton was dubbed a ‘Conguito’ in hate mail (one threatening him with the message “Conguito, you are going to die”), alongside other more old-fashioned yet equally offensive slurs such as ‘nigger’, ‘half-breed’ and ‘monkey’ (The New Zealand Herald, 2 November 2008). It is from the social application of the term, the understated remodelling of Conguito while denying any problem, the continuing consumption of Conguitos as a candy, and the mutation of it into a 21st century racist cultural term – that we gain a taste (and aftertaste) of the ways in which branding imagery interacts with the ideology of the local and the global.
6.2.
FETISHISM AT WORK

In this section, I examine ads that are marked by a fetishistic imperative in their deployment of the imagery of the racial Other. I first interrogate the fetish for the feet of Black sport stars and models in a series of Pirelli ads. I then examine ads from four international brands, all of which depict the racial Other with sexual (some even erotic) overtones to promote the advertised product. Finally, I investigate the fetishism towards exotic cultural practices, through two cases that commodify ancient cultural practices and religious rituals, effectively making them speak for the value of the brands.

Used within anthropological discourse, fetishism refers to the belief that godly powers can inhere in inanimate objects such as in totems for groups or tribes. Marx first highlighted fetishism in capitalist societies in 1867 when he named “the fantastic form of a relation between things” as “the Fetishism…of commodities” (Marx, 2007: 83). He approached the concept from the relationship between production and consumption that led to a false consciousness type of desire. Freud’s fetishism (1927), on the other hand, was described as a castration complex of the male psyche – obsessively focused on one object that could be controlled in an attempt to reassert a sense of control and power out of the fear of the lacking of them – a false and proxy object of desire.

The concept of racial fetishism has been directly and indirectly an integral part of postcolonial studies such as Fanon’s notion of the ‘epidermal schema’ of Blacks – produced by a racist culture in which the White man weaves “a thousand details, anecdotes and stories” of the ‘Negro’ to define them (Fanon, 1991: 111). It is also reflected on Said’s ‘Orientalism’ where he refers to it as a Western style of dominating, restructuring and having authority over the ‘Oriental’. According to Said (1978), a distinctive aspect of being the Other was that one was the object of someone else’s fantasies, but not a subject with agency and voice. Extending from the Freudian concept of sexual fetish, Bhabha defined racial fetishism as a fixation on other races being not different but lesser, or ‘mutilated’ versions of the me and mine of the White male (Bhabha, 1994). Racial fetishism, like sexual fetishism, was a form of castration of difference: “in Freud’s terms: ‘All men have penises’; in ours ‘All men have the same skin/race/culture’… for Freud ‘some do not have penises’; for us ‘some do not have the same skin/race/culture’” (ibid: 74). Here, I draw on
this knowledge and Bhabha’s ideas in particular to explore the changes in advertising discourses that were designed to manage the anxiety toward racial differences and to protect the narcissism of the dominant culture.

6.2.1 SUPERHUMAN AND THE MIRACLE BLACK FEET

American athlete Carl Lewis was used as the face and figure for Italian tyre giant Pirelli in the brand’s 1994-1995 advertising campaign designed by Young & Rubicam London. The campaign comprised a 1994 print/outdoor advertisement (Picture 6.16) – the main subject of this case – and a 1995 TV commercial in which Lewis appeared running, bounding and flying across the New York cityscape barefooted. The 60-minute commercial was almost a ‘Lewis the miracle’ show except for a shot near the end when the imprint of a Pirelli tyre was seen moulded onto the bottom of his feet. This revealed a trace of the product to the audience, before Pirelli’s ‘Tyre Man’ jumped from the top of the iconic Empire State Building.

In the print advertisement, Lewis was depicted in a tight black bodysuit, and crouched in the track athletes’ starting position. Unlike real life, Lewis’s face was turned towards the camera and the reader instead of facing forward. The ad also contained two other major abnormalities – both associated with Lewis’s feet: a pair of red pointy high heels substituted for his running shoes; and the surface under his feet was wet and sandy unlike the texture of a typical racing track. Apart from the footwear and the ground, the metal fence and spectator stand indicated a site for another kind of racing. Thanks to the caption at the bottom of the advertisement – “Carl Lewis is a member of the Santa Monica track club” – we know that the photo was taken at the motor-racing track in Santa Monica, California. The headline, ‘Power is nothing without control’, together with the visual representation, appropriately established a relationship between high-performance cars and high-performance tyres. The logic of this advertisement seems clear: without control, power is nothing; without a reliable set of tyres, a fast car is meaningless. As the advertisement demonstrated through Lewis, without a proper pair of running shoes on his feet, even the fastest man in the world could
not run properly. True to this message, one level down in the information hierarchy, and with the brand’s logotype positioned in the lower right-hand corner of the advertisement, the tag line urged its audience: “If you’re going to drive, drive Pirelli”.

In his *The Spectacle of ‘the Other’*, Hall used this ad as an example to invite readers to consider “What is this image saying? What is its message? How does it ‘say’ it?” (1997: 233). Here, I intend to read the ad not only by decoding it in isolation but also by analysing it as a significant part of an old branding tradition and a moment of arise of an iconic contemporary advertising campaign strategy. It helps to develop a deeper understanding of the ad and the strategy of selecting a Black athlete (and other Black celebrities in subsequent campaigns) to promote the brand and its product, if I start with the unique Pirelli branding style. Established in 1872 and named after its founder, Italian tyre maker Giovanni Battista Pirelli, the Pirelli brand grew with the process of globalisation. By the turn of the 20th century, Pirelli had started manufacturing above and below-sea level telegraph wiring, and its portfolio now extend to include telecommunications, real estate and fashion. However, tyre manufacturing and communications cabling remain Pirelli’s core business.

American giant Groupe Michelin, considered the biggest tyre manufacturer in the world is Pirelli’s major international competitor and these two rivals took markedly different approaches to build their brand images. While Michelin chose to go straight to the point, depicting the quality and form of ‘rubber’ and ‘tyres’ in the company logomark and advertisements, Pirelli opted for a more sophisticated approach to its promotional material and advertisements. There is no better example of a public relations tool than Pirelli’s famously sexy calendar. A tradition dating back as far as 1964, the company commissioned some of the world’s leading photographers to produce a calendar featuring well-known female models. ‘The Calendar’ or ‘The Cal’ – as it was dubbed by the brand – was a free, limited-edition gift for a select group of 40,000 people, including members of the British Royal Family, the King of Spain, Paul Newman and Bill Gates (Forbes, 15 November 2004). It quickly gained a reputation as being “the world’s greatest official status symbol”. It served its purpose well. According to Gioacchino Del Balzo, Pirelli’s global calendar coordinator, for every $1 million Pirelli spent producing the Calendar it attracted $60 million worth of media coverage (ibid). With the anticipation of its elite recipients and the massive global media exposure year after year, Pirelli acknowledged that the company’s strategy of making the Calendar
‘exclusive’ was what “made the Calendar fantastically successful” (Pirelli Tyre Brochure 2005). Interestingly, the obvious strategy of using sexual appeal – executed in the making of the Calendar for more than half a century – was not even being mentioned let alone given the credit it deserved.

If Pirelli was proud of its Calendar project as a public relations exercise, the brand was also proud of the ‘Power is nothing without control’ campaign featuring Carl Lewis, valuing it as a milestone in the brand’s advertising. So much so, the campaign was specifically mentioned in Pirelli Tyre’s 2005 corporate literature as exemplifying one of the brand’s two continual concepts – ‘sport’. The Calendar exemplified its counterpart – ‘exclusiveness’. It is worth noting that the slogan, specifically designed for the Carl Lewis campaign, was so well received that it remains the theme for campaigns to promote Pirelli tyres. In 1997, the campaign was also granted the prestigious Gold Award in the UK for the best long-term campaign.

Why Lewis was selected for the ad may seem obvious. Dubbed the ‘son of the wind’, and being the winner of nine Olympic gold medals, Carl Lewis was arguably the world’s fastest man. Given his renowned athletic achievements as a champion sprinter and long jumper, it was no surprise to see Lewis as a symbol of speed and power. For Pirelli, a brand claiming to be the best-performing tyre in the world, and with a long history of associating its tyres with high-performance sports, the deployment of Lewis as its celebrity endorser (or ‘testimonial’ using Pirelli’s terminology) seemed to be a ‘natural’ choice. However, the question remains: Is the outstanding athletic quality and stardom acquired by Carl Lewis the sole value desired by Pirelli in its campaign? In another words, are there other hidden sign values that make Lewis useful for the Pirelli brand beyond the obvious?

To begin with, true to the brand’s well-established tradition of generating sexual and sensual appeal in its branding material, there seemed to be an element of sexuality in the use of Lewis in this ad. In fact, as the presence of the red stiletto heels unambiguously conveyed a sense of femininity, questions regarding Lewis’s sexual orientation were again raised in the media. Existing rumours about Lewis being gay were renewed – some pointed to his crouched posture, while others even saw the shape of the clouds pointing to his buttocks as ‘evidence’. Pirelli made no comment. For his part, Lewis made his position known through the Atlanta Journal-Constitution in two ways: (a) “Pirelli came with the idea to do an ad”; and (b) “[W]hen it all comes down to it, I did it for two reasons. No.1, it’s a commercial and they paid me to do that. Secondly, I like working with Annie [Liebowitz]” (quoted in Jet,
16 May 1994). For the record, Lewis said he was paid a six figures sum for the advertisement that was shot in less than half a day (ibid). Lewis’s response was not a powerful way to set the record straight, maybe the record was never meant, or needed to be set straight. After all, ambiguity of sexual orientation has made Grace Jones a Black cultural icon in the performing arts. More to the point, in advertising any publicity is good publicity – and Lewis’s sexuality was undoubtedly news-worthy and guaranteed to generate free publicity. While not necessarily quashing the rumour regarding his sexual preference that again surfaced following the campaign’s release, Lewis’s discourse does provide some valid points of interest to this study. The first part of his statement can be perceived as confirming the fact that Lewis was deployed in the ad because of the certain qualities he possessed. The brand desired these qualities and wanted to associate itself with them because they could add value to the product. Lewis’s second statement recognised the essence of his relationship with the brand on one hand, and with the creative agent on the other. By paying the right price, Pirelli turned Lewis into a commodity and used his desirable qualities – be they athletic, sexual or racial – for the brand’s own benefit. Conversely, Lewis may not have valued Liebowitz merely for her creative talent either. The idea of joining the celebrity photographer’s impressive list of iconic subjects, such as John Lennon, Mick Jagger and Arnold Schwarzenegger, and the like may have also influenced Lewis’s decision to take up the offer and his willingness to be ‘modelled’ by her.

While the Otherness of Lewis’s sexual preference may have attracted media attentions, there was a consistent yet often overlooked element of Black fetishism in this and two subsequent Pirelli campaigns that made up the three parts series. The campaigns appropriated the Otherness of the Black body and Black feet in particular.

After the success of the Lewis campaign, Pirelli released two more advertisements with the same slogan and design style. Both campaigns used sport celebrities who were, like Lewis, non-White and non-Italian. The 1996-1997 campaign featured Olympic gold medallist Marie-Jo Pérec of France (Picture 6.17). Pérec, the 200-metre and 400-metre duel gold medallist of the 1996 Atlanta Olympic had also won the 400-metre gold at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics. She was the first athlete, male or female, to retain an Olympic 400-metre title.
In the advertising campaign, she was depicted in explosive motion, escaping the clutches of monsters of ice, fire and water while barefooted. Brazilian megastar footballer, Ronaldo Luiz Nazario Lima was the face of the 1998-1999 campaign (Picture 6.18). Coming from a country where football is almost a religion, and dubbed ‘son of God’ by football fans around the world, this Brazilian megastar football striker and World Cup hero was featured wearing his famous number 10 jersey, arms spread, and with a tyre tread on the sole of his striking foot. With Ronaldo’s posture, the ad’s composition and the location on the spot of the “Christ the Redeemer” statue, the Ronaldo campaign was perceived as mimicking the figure of Christ which overlooks Rio de Janeiro. This angered the church and was criticised by Rev. Don Eugenio Salles of Rio as “an abuse that deserves disapproval by the church” (quoted from Advertising Age International, 13 April 1998: 11). Of the three campaigns, the Pérec campaign received the least of media attention, the Ronaldo campaign was the most controversial, and the Lewis campaign not only reached an iconic status, but also attracted worldwide attention.

Pirelli’s focus on Black feet continued following this three-part campaign. More than a decade after the Lewis campaign, and far from coincidently, Pirelli’s PZero fashion line used super models Naomi Campbell and Tyson Beckford as its ambassadors – both are of African descent and are non-Italian (Campbell is British of African origin, while Beckford is the son of a Jamaican father and Chinese-American mother). Again, brand’s 2005 campaign focused on their feet – with
little or no trace of any other clothing (Pictures 6.19, 6.20, 6.21) both Campbell and Beckford’s feet were highlighted in PZero shoes. This high level of consistency in Pirelli’s advertising campaigns provides proof that the deployment of Lewis and other Black celebrities was hardly coincidental and that a distinct flavour of racial fetishism was identifiable.

In general, the selection of the Black celebrity was one aspect of the strategic use of imageries of the racial Other, as it showed an observable condensation of the obsession of Blackness in corporate advertising. The Otherness of the Black body was constructed as ‘superhuman’ for the benefit of promoting the brand and its products. Despite the differences in their strength and specialties, Lewis and his fellow Pirelli ‘testimonials’ were constructed with mythical abilities in the ‘Power is nothing without control’ campaign. If the still images in the posters did not say enough about Black power, the respective TV commercials provided a richer source of visual cues. The Lewis commercial showed him running across water, sprinting up the Statue of Liberty and jumping between skyscrapers. The Pérèc commercial showed her escaping the clutches of monsters of ice, fire and water. The Ronaldo commercial featured the international football sensation scoring goal after goal in major matches before assuming his Godlike posture. In short, through the visual language of advertising, all three Black sport celebrities were portrayed in such a way that they were no longer real-life superstars. They were divine, mystical, powerful – effectively superhuman – a seemingly new trope for the racial Other in the visual language of advertising.

As flattering as it may sound, the portrayal of the racial Other as ‘superhuman’ is very much a contemporary version of the colonial concept of ‘subhuman’, in which Blacks were perceived as freaks of nature, and the belief that they possessed some kind of mythical power was widespread. As outlined in various sections of Part One, much of the Black fetishism was grounded in the premise that Black people were different to humans were closer to animals in their biological make-up than to humans. Attributed with animalistic powers, Africans were stereotyped and mythicised as objects with inherently superior sexual and athletic power. While these perceived powers were highly desired, the ‘Black power’ (so to speak) was also feared and held as a threat to the systems of White supremacy in general, and White patriarchal hegemony in particular. The newness of the superhuman stereotype, however, lay in appropriating Black identities and presented them in ads as glorified and romanticised objects of desire.
Furthermore, in Pirelli’s tyre and PZero campaigns, the particular obsession with Black feet became even more pronounced. Collectively, the three commercials featuring Lewis, Peréc and Ronaldo all ended with a tyre tread revealed on the soles of their feet, although due to the framing of the posters, this treatment was only visible in the Ronaldo campaign. A decade later, the feet of two Black supermodels — Campbell and Beckford — were again utilised, this time to promote PZero shoes. Such focused attention in Black feet is particularly interesting here as it not only reminds us of the Victorian sexualised foot fetish but also its displacement. In Chapter Two, among the measurements, anecdotes and stories about the Black body in general and Black feet in particular, the Black physique was mostly associated with animality and the subhuman state. At best, as in the series of Sanitary Commission studies, Blacks were seen as born fighters. As for Black feet, some considered the foot as the only physical deformity of Blacks as soldiers. At least one examiner considered the “large, flat, inelastic foot…almost splay-footed” as an advantage in marching over rough terrain (quoted in Haller, 1971: 31). The use of Black feet by Pirelli in its ad campaigns shows the work advertisers do to create a magical object for their own use – by emptying the historically known meanings and filling them with desirable sign values to suit the taste of the dominant culture.

In imprinting Pirelli tyres on the feet of Lewis, Peréc and Ronaldo, and attaching PZero shoes to Campbell and Beckford, the company established a close bond between the ‘Black Testimonials’ and the Pirelli products. The Black feet of the sports and model superstars became miracle ‘Pirelli feet’. Put simply, depicting the Black Testimonials as superhuman with miraculous feet in these Pirelli ads was a vivid, memorable and persuasive way to use the Black body as a fetish to help claim the ‘super tyre’/‘super shoes’ status for Pirelli. As such, the miracle Black feet in the ads discussed here were transformed from a Victorian sexual fetish to a modern day commodity fetish through these advertising discourses.

6.2.2 THE EROTICISED EXOTIC BODY

In this sub-section, I draw on multiple cases from contemporary advertising to explore another side of racial fetishism – one that paints erotic pictures on, uses, or is suggestive of the exotic bodies of the racial Other.
The Refreshingly Brazilian advertising campaign was designed by Jung von Matt Alster of Germany and circulated during 2007 and 2008 to promote the newly introduced beer Bit COPA. COPA was a new addition to the existing Bit family which already owned two popular beers: Bit SUN, a light beer; and Bit PASSION, a blend of beer and pomegranate. Ingredient wise, Bit COPA was created with an exotic taste in mind, being a hybrid of German beer and Brazilian cachaça. As a product, it was marketed with an emphasis in foreignness – from the product’s attributes to the serving experience. In an official press release entitled “Bit goes Brazil”, the company introduced its new kid on the block as being “sparkling, fruity lime inspired looks more to the famous Caipirinha cocktail and is always served with a fresh slice of lime” – an exciting alcoholic drink that was exclusively “refreshing and with a real Brazilian cachaça” (Bit-World, 15 March 2007). The Otherness of Brazil and Brazilian women became more vivid and sensual as soon as one looked at the ads (Pictures 6.22, 6.23 and 6.24). Each poster featured an almost naked, tanned female body. No faces were visible as the ads were all framed below the neck and above the upper-thighs. The colourful and naughty body paintings, the dark background colour, and the sparkles, bubbles and decorative flora in the foreground not only enhanced the sex appeal of the coloured bodies, but also suggested an exotic carnival atmosphere. The known Brazilian cultural event was also put to work to invite spectators to a new reading of the spectacle – one which involved the hybrid German beer.

Despite the heavy use of exotic female bodies and atmosphere, the campaign was not set up to sell the exotic Other. The agency was not commissioned to promote Brazil (or Brazilian women for that matter), but to sell Bit COPA. The trope of
Brazil was deployed here because (a) part of the Brazilian drinking culture was appropriated in the making of the product; (b) other signs of Brazilianness were identified as being useful to the brand and able to be appropriated as selling points for the product. One of these sign values was ‘refreshing’, which was expressed via written language in the campaign headline, and via visual language in all three ads (such as the lime-coloured headline and tag line; the sparkle, bubble and flora references; the dewdrops on the Bit COPA bottles; and the different experience of consuming a drink held in the hands of a sexy woman with nails painted pink on one hand and unpainted on the other). In addition to ‘refreshing’, the tag line spelt out another selling point – ‘exciting’ – with the claim “a Bit more exciting”. In a profession that often practises the rhetoric of exaggeration, this tag line may sound like an unusual understatement, but it was a cleverly calculated approach. There is little doubt that the exotic female bodies depicted in the campaign could deliver the desirable effect of excitement (if not astonishment) and link it with the product. With confidence in the visual’s ability to excite its audience, the brand could afford to be more humble with the tag line. While appearing to be modest, however, the brand name ‘Bit’ was tactfully but cleverly embed into the phrase as a pun.

Equally impressive was the visual treatment that maximised the usefulness of the exotic female bodies in this campaign. The three different shapes and forms of the exotic nude bodies not only attracted attention each also carried a story about the consumer and Bit COPA. Three different market segments of consumer were painted on the nude bodies – on each pair of breasts we first saw the faces of a flirting middle-aged couple, then a groovy young couple, and in the third ad a pair of future customers (too young to drink alcohol legally, but watching the boozy clown, who was served with a bottle of COPA, with envy and eager anticipation). At all points of interaction within these relationships, the Brazilian female body was in service: The tanned skin provided a ready-made canvas on which the relationships were painted; the breasts provided a 3D platform for rendering the characters; the hands were holding COPA bottles in a servile posture (both to the characters painted on the body as well as to the audience facing the ad); and even the woman’s belly button in the third poster was used as the clown’s mouth, sucking COPA from the bottle through a straw. The strategy of adding a strong Brazilian flavour via the Carnivalesque of Brazilian carnival and putting the exotic bodies of Brazilian women in these theatrical representations and attaching them to the branding of a German brand of beer, exemplified the creative effort invested to combine the exotic racial, sexual and cultural appeals of the product by maximising
the use of Brazilian female bodies, turning them into fetish and painting them with erotic imageries to further ‘sex up’ the advertising campaign.

It would be much mistaken if the Bit COPA campaign leads to a perception that racialised sexual fetishism is only performed on the female body. Exotic male bodies are also frequently deployed in advertisements to sell products in contemporary advertising, albeit in a more carefully managed and often muddied way. One example is the use of a totally naked Black male body in a 2005 ad for the Italian fashion brand DIESEL (Picture 6.25). Designed to sell female leather boots, this globally circulated ad was banned by the ASA in the UK on 8 March 2006 – after its last run in the market. According to the ASA description: “The ad showed a naked man from the rear with three pairs of women’s legs straddling his body” (ASA, 2006). Of the twenty-eight complaints received:

The complainants objected that the position of the women’s legs around the man’s body overtly suggested sexual behaviour and was therefore offensive. They were also concerned that the image was unsuitable in a magazine that might be seen by children. One complainant, who believed the man in the ad was black, objected that the ad was racist. (ibid)

The ASA upheld complaints about the “overtly suggested sexual behaviour” and its possible exposure to children and, as a result, the ad was belatedly banned. However, the advertising watchdog dismissed the complaint of racism as it considered that “the use of a male model with dark skin was intended to create contrast with the light skin of the women’s legs and was unlikely to be seen as racist” (ibid). But was that the only useful sign value for deploying a naked Black male body in this ad?

The use of the Black body indeed delivered the effect of contrast – but it did so in more than one way. On the surface, the use of a naked Black man certainly did help to create a contrast with the legs of the White women in this ad. But it was the
racial Otherness of his Black skin (not any other objects with a dark colour tone) that was fetishised to deliver the desired contrast with the White women’s legs; On a connotative level, the deployment of a naked Black man also established a contrasts between Black masculinity and White femininity. The deployment of the Black male model also helped to deliver two contrasting mythical stereotypes – the Black man as a sexually potent ‘scorpion’ (the title of this ad) and the White women as the predatory sexual figure of a ‘black widow’; Last but not least was the contrast between the interpretations of the Black man himself in the ad. On the one hand, his racial Otherness was exaggerated not only by his skin tone but also by his physique and the colonial interpretation of these signifiers as the dangerous hyper-sexuality. On the other hand, however the ad attempted to reproduce these signifiers as a non-threatening and fully controllable object ready for consumption.

Like the Diesel scorpion ad, racialised and sexualised body imageries in commercial ads often muddy rather than clarify the message. Nevertheless, the confusion generated draws attention to and sells the brand and its product in a profound way – by being visually suggestive or explicit. For example, in a 2004 Magnum advertising campaign, the agency McCann Erickson Paris arranged the chocolate-coated icecream bars in such a way that the resulting imagery resembled part of a Black body. One of the two ads in the campaign showed a close-up image of the product (Picture 6.26), depicting the icecream bar with bites taken out in a way that was suggestive of the waist of a Black body. The second ad used a mid-range shot, with three of the icecream bars arranged to form the buttocks and upper legs of a Black body (Picture 6.27). The campaign deliberately created an association between the Magnum and the Black body, inviting the audience to ‘bite into’ a
racialised sexual fantasy through the sexual attractiveness of the Black body shapes and the seductive poses. However, the gender of the Black bodies was left to the audience’s imagination. If the gender of the sexy Black bodies was vague, the rule of ‘opposites attract’ applied, and the brand could tap into more market segments. For an extremely explicit use of the exotic Other in ads, consider Picture 6.28. Designed in 2003 for the Snowboard School in Switzerland, this poster left nothing to the imagination. It picked up the imagery of the Kama Sutra and turned the erotic private sexual positions of an Indian man and woman at their space into an attention-grabbing visual statement that was put on public display. While the Kama Sutra position had nothing to do with the sport of snowboarding or the courses offered by the school, the Orientalist obsession with the Kama Sutra continued. Imagery of the Orient was picked up by the West, and used to speak for the West – in this case, the mythical bedroom techniques of India were used to back up the claim that “GOOD TECHNIQUE IS EVERYTHING”, for the benefit of promoting a European Snowboard School.

6.2.3 ORIENTAL AND RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS

In an award winning 1992 Levi’s ad designed by McCann Erickson Italiana, a man’s buttocks and upper legs dominated the layout (Picture 6.29). The man was naked except for a pair of blue jeans used like a G-String to cover his private parts, but fastened in the back with a tight knot. Although no facial features were shown, the figure’s size and posture gave away his Japaneseness. Although the average audience member may not have been able to name the way in which the jeans were arranged as mimicking the ‘mawashi’, the transmission of foreign imageries in the age of contemporary globalisation meant it should be easy to identify the featured body as a Japanese Sumo wrestler.

The ad used the Japanese cultural tradition of Sumo wrestling, visualised via the highly recognisable Sumo body build, dress code and posture, in an in-your-face display to the audience. At first glance, there appeared to be not much in common
between Sumo and Levi’s. The Levi’s brand a well-recognised American symbol, The first blue jeans had a humble beginning among Californian miners and went on to become a fashion must-have in wardrobes across the world – regardless of gender, race, occupation or social status. More specifically, Levi’s 501®, the product advertised in this ad, is the pride of Levi Strauss – the original, the authentic, the real thing of the ‘blue jean’ as we know it today. So what was the wisdom behind the US multinational fashion icon picking up this rather isolated ancient Japanese sport that began in the Edo period and is still only practised professionally within Japan?

From when the brand was conceived during the Californian gold rush, Levi’s jeans have been consistently promoted for their craftsmanship and quality. Their consistent selling points are durability and toughness. In the visual language of advertising, there are different ways to spell durability and toughness. Historically, the tough-guy characters of iconic Hollywood cowboys such as Gary Cooper, Tom Mix and John Wayne wore Levi’s on the silver screen in the 1930s, and imageries of American cowboys were heavily used in Levi’s ads to convey these qualities circa 1900. Ads for Levi’s 501® have stuck with these selling points into the 21st century. In a 2005 Levi’s ad, the product itself was used to convey durability and toughness. The image was a close up of a back pocket with the red Levi’s tag on the right-hand side of a pair of blue jeans. While this small section of the product was sufficient for the audience to identify the brand, the ad counted on a tag line which read: “1¾ yards of Denim, 213 yards of thread, 5 buttons, 6 rivets” to deliver the message and persuade the audience about the quality of craftsmanship.

The use of the imagery of a Japanese Sumo wrestler as a persuader is different from these common approaches. Unlike the Americaness expressed by the cowboy imagery, the Sumo wrestler signified Japaneseness. Unlike the product oriented Levi’s ads that signified a modern and mass produced product, the mawashi signified a pre-modern cultural practice. Being an ancient heavyweight and full-contact sport, Sumo wrestling in itself already connoted the desirable sign values such as ‘heritage’, ‘tradition’ and ‘toughness’. But the mawashi (replicated by the 501® jeans) offered an even more fitting sign value of ‘durability’ for Levi’s, as it needed to withstand the fierce attack of the opponent and stay securely in place. According to the rules of the game, if a wrestler’s mawashi comes off during a bout, he is automatically disqualified. This said, if we compare this 1992 ad with the above-mentioned 2005 ad, it was not hard to judge which approach is more persuasive and effective in selling durability for Levi’s. Without the needing to spell
out the little known facts that the mawashi is typically made of silk or cotton, is about 9.1 metres long and 0.6 metres wide, and weighs between 3.6 and 5 kilograms, the audience already had some idea about the toughness of Sumo wrestling and the quality required of garment (without knowing the name ‘mawashi’ or the rules of Sumo). Visually substituting a pair of 501® Levi’s for the durable mawashi on the Sumo wrestler’s body conveyed a playful and powerful message that the jeans were so tough that they could literally substitute for the mawashi and could endure fierce attacks from an opponent. While Eastern cultural practices such as Sumo were made the fetish in this ad, by way of association and the play of symbolic power, it contributed to a commodity fetishism that imagined the Original 501® as capable of taking part ‘in every experience’ as the tag line claimed, and the imaginative benefit that may come about with the consumption of the product.

This is a situation in which fetishism was at work to create an association between the iconic modern tradition of a mass-produced fashion that originated in the US and then spread across the globe, and an iconic pre-modern tradition of an ancient sport that originated and is still only practised in Japan. Despite the contradiction, the ad both managed the difference and generated the sameness of a desirable quality. By wrapping a pair of 501® jeans around the exotic body of a Sumo wrestler in action, this ad established a different kind of fetish that was rarely seen in early advertising. It was based on the Otherness of a cultural practice both known and foreign to the West, rather than on the Otherness of skin colour or exotic body that had attracted most of the attention and criticism in current literature.

The use of exotic cultural practices in commercial ads is not isolated to this Levi’s ad, or limited to Sumo wrestling. The phenomenon of commodifying exotic cultural practices and rituals began to emerge in contemporary advertising and branding in the late 20th century. Marketing campaigns have used exotic cultural references to the extent that even sacred religious and spiritual practices of the East have been appropriated to name a product and shape its branding image. For example, renown French beauty house Guerlain used the Hindu concept of ‘Samsara’ to name a perfume, while the Buddhist concept of ‘Zen’ has been used to name products ranging from Creative’s internationally marketed MP3 players to the chic apartment building in downtown Melbourne. Even ‘novelty’ golf balls, listed as ‘Buddha Balls’, were on sale through Time magazine’s pre-Christmas internet shopping guide (13 November 2006). As well as the name, ‘Zen-like’ language was used – “The self says: I am” “The ball says: You are nothing” was printed on one side of the ball
and, in a rather unthinkable way to treat any religious icon, an illustrated image of the Laughing Buddha (a.k.a. Fat Buddha in the West) was featured on the other side of the ball – ready to be hit by ‘enlightened’ golfers in the US and beyond.

The increasing presence of religious and spiritual references of the East in integrated advertising is not complete without the participation of print advertising. The ad for Wasa Light Rye (Picture 6.30), designed by Euro RSCG Chicago in 2007, provides an example of an approach in which a visual reference to a Buddhist deity was appropriated to promote the company’s crispbread. Wasa was a leading Swedish brand with an 80-year history until it become part of the Italian Barilla Group in 1999. In many aspects, Wasa was a unique brand. It carried the North European tradition of preserving crops over the region’s long and cold winters. Its brand name ‘Wasa’ was “associated with the name of the Swedish King Gustav Vasa and was picked to create an easy recognizable brand for all Swedes” according to official source (Wasa corporate website). Today, Wasa prides itself as “the world’s largest baker of crispbread. In one year people enjoy 60,000 tons of crispbread in 40 different countries” (ibid.). Despite its rich Northern European cultural tradition, and authentic and unique taste and style readily available to be developed into fitting and unique selling propositions, the advertiser chose to poach from the religious cultural stock of the East and play with the fetish of the remote and sacred to promote its product.

With some modification, the ad’s overall layout mimicked the style of a Buddhist deity scroll painting. The model in the centre of the ad was seated in a ‘lotus posture’ with a Gyan mudra, a halo formed behind her, and rays of light shining from her mythical surrounding into the blue sky. The ad clearly put the racially ambiguous girl in the role of a Buddhist deity. The connection between the deity figure and Wasa Light Rye, was the packaging and a few pieces of the product featured in the lower part of the frame. On both sides of the box, the mirrored image of two feminine hands resting on their upper legs appeared, each holding a piece of the crispbread in a Gyan mudra manner. Although seating in the same posture as the deity figure, these two legs appeared naked. While it may be that the presence of
part of these two female bodies serves to suggest some kind of divine duality, it is equally likely that these imageries were constructed simply to further ‘sex up’ the ad. Interestingly, the Gyan mudra is known to bring about benefits such as mental peace, concentration, sharp memory and spiritual feelings. If the ad meant to use the fetish of a exotic hand gesture to add a flavour of healthiness and energy to the product, a Pran gesture – the mudra that energises the body and improves its vitality – should have been depicted instead.

Given that there was no connection either between the brand and Buddhism or between the crispbread and the deity, it seems the use of the imagery was grounded in a desire to be exotic. The mythical deity scroll painting was not only ‘Other’ to the origin of the brand, but also appealed to a “desire for the absolute other” (Levinas, 1979: 34). The ad’s intent may have been to use the deity reference for its extreme Otherness, hoping the fetish would help grab attention, stand out from the crowd, or give the product a mythical quality. However, while artistically pleasing, the deity scroll paintings are sacred artefacts used in Buddhist practices. The devotional images are the centrepiece of rituals and ceremonies, as well as mediums for prayer and meditation. Despite the artistic effort to paint the product as divine and magical, as capable of transcending the consumers through the reference to an Eastern religious artefact, such an association was far fetched, unconvincing, misleading and, needless to say, lacking in cultural sensitivity and respect.

In short, this Wasa ad signified an emerging phenomenon in which the use of the racial Other in advertising went a step further by making use of their religious practices and symbols to appeal to new-age minded consumers and boost consumption of the product being advertised. This ad worked to commodify fetishism by generating a false consciousness type of desire for the product in Marxist terms (the Wasa Light Rye), and a creating a fetish for a spurious, surrogate object of desire in a Freudian sense (the Buddhist iconography). The exploitation of religious symbols in contemporary advertising was inspired, and made possible, by a global commodity culture. As Anderson put it: “Never before has a society allowed its people to become consumers of belief, and allowed belief – all beliefs – to become merchandise” (Anderson, 1990: 188). It is taking advantage of a growing number of Westerners’ desire for “an attractive way to distance themselves from the stresses and uncertainties of the contemporary world” (ibid: 195).
The cases studied in this section all play with earlier stories, icons, hierarchy and myth, turning elements of an existing highly discriminatory racial relationship into selling points in product advertising. Imagery of the racial Other have been deployed with references to their historical roots. In the first two sub-sections, I first analyse the ways in which leaders of racial struggles, such as the iconic Chief Joseph (leader of the bloody Nez Perce Indian War of 1877 between the indigenous people and White military in the US) and Nelson Mandela (one of the African National Congress (ANC) leaders who led the movement against South Africa’s apartheid government), are used as proxy endorsers for Timberland shoes and M&M chocolates. I then examine the different uses of the classic colonial racial script about the subordinate place of Black and Asian people in society and the myth of native cannibalism in contemporary culture to generate the ‘X’ factor for the French high-fashion brand Louis Vuitton’s luggage and for Australia’s Southwark White Beer.

Advertisements only have meaning within a system of meaning which, according to Williamson, “must already exist … and this system is exterior to the ad – which simply refers to it, using one of its components as a carrier of value” (Williamson, 1978: 19). The imageries of the racial Other, be they leaders of past racial struggles or oppressed labourers or mythical cannibals, deployed in the ads in question all carry certain historical currencies. These currencies are useful for the sign values they carry and their potential adaptability to the product being advertised. As Williamson put it: “Currency is something which represents a value and in its interchangeability with other things, gives them their ‘value’ too” (ibid: 20).

The main focus of my investigation in this section is the different manners in which the story of past racial injustices are retold, iconic fighters in racial struggles commercialised, racial hierarchies re-articulated and myths recreated within this contemporary time to serve the global commodity culture and build image and add value to the brands.
6.3.1 RETELLING A NATIVE STORY

Designed by Leagas Delaney of London, this 1989 newspaper advertisement for the US leading footwear brand Timberland used the image of an American Indian – referred to as ‘Red Indian’ in the copy – to promote the brand and its leather boots and shoes (Picture 6.31).

Contrary to the conventional image-driven approach in newspaper advertising, this Timberland advertisement was predominantly copy driven. To begin with, unlike the ‘short and sweet’ approaches such as Nike’s “Just Do It”, BMW’s “Shear Driving Pleasure”, and Absolute Vodka’s “Absolute Perfection”, the tag line in this Timberland advertisement contained sixteen words – two complete sentences. Set in a bold sans-serif typeface occupying close to half of the layout, it read: “WE STOLE THEIR LAND, THEIR BUFFALO AND THEIR WOMEN. THEN WE WENT BACK FOR THEIR SHOES.” A well-researched body copy the length of a mini essay flowed across three columns underneath the tag line. As much as it is tempting to explore the copy writing further, for the wit and words used to turn an uncomfortable piece of US history into a selling point for the brand, I will concentrate on the tag line and the imagery, given my focus on visual language.

The first sentence of the tag line was constructed in a ‘confession-like’ tone in which the ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ relationship was emphasised through the ‘WE/THEIR’ binary. Unmistakably, ‘us’ indicated the dominant White establishment – as the guilty party and the offender; while ‘them’ signified the American Indians – as the victim and the offended. The offence was to steal a list of ‘items’ from the American Indians – their right (land), their property (buffalo), their people (women). Although using the same rhetoric, the second sentence “Then we went back for their shoes” is more open to interpretation. Following the previous sentence, it could be interpreted as doubletalk suggesting the White establishment also stole their shoes – with ‘shoes’ more of a metaphor for ‘smaller items’ compared with the others mentioned. But
taking into account its context as an ad for Timberland shoes, and the copy, it becomes clear that the ‘we’ in the second part of the confession was more about Timberland than about the White establishment, and that the act of ‘going back for their shoes’ was more about virtuous cultural borrowing than the crime of stealing possessions. Through this switch, the ad could also be read as “We, the Timberland company, returned to the traditional Native way and wisdom of making shoes, namely the moccasin, and offer the world Timberland footwear that is worth every cent of its ‘heap big price tag’”. This clever spin turned an admission of establishment sin into a promotion of the brand’s attitude towards racial respect, cultural adaptation and unique product selling points.

Only three small-scale images shared the column space with the ad’s body text – an American Indian man, a waterproof casual shoe and moccasin, and the Timberland logo. The size of the images reduced in this respective order, confirming a visual hierarchy designed to put the American Indian in the foreground. The American Indian man was represented portrait-style, in greyscale, in what appeared to be an historical photograph. Although the visual treatment was low key, the racial identity of the man was unambiguous: he was presented to the reader wearing traditional American Indian headgear and accessories. He was directly facing the camera with a sombre expression and the portrait was positioned in the middle of the layout at the top of the middle column – a position commanding attention. Every visual element of the ad was treated with a basic approach, from image, to typeface, to layout. This no-frills approach was strategic. It, and the accompanying audacious statement, effectively drew the audience’s attention and directed the eyes to follow the visual hierarchy from the tag line to the American Indian, to the story of Timberland shoes with its references to the ‘Red Indians’. It ended with a Timberland logotype being de-bossed on a piece of leather, working like a full stop.

In several ways, this Timberland ad was both successful and controversial. As a creative effort, the ad won a Silver Pencil in the prestige D&AD award in the year of its release. As a marketing effort, it took the pulse of its targeted demography and cashed-in on the sign value of the American Indian in a tailored sales pitch. The brand’s target audience was identified as people who “seek authenticity and heritage, a taste that borders on the nostalgic, wanting to feel the brands they choose stand for something” (American Demographics, January 1999). Through denouncing racial oppression, and depicting people and products that symbolised native people and culture, the brand sensitively tapped into this ‘class habitus’ – to use Bourdieu’s
(1984) term. On the product level, the American Indian man served as a proxy endorser for Timberland outdoor footwear, taking advantage of the sign value of his authenticity, heritage and wisdom – ingredients of ‘the real thing’ specifically desired by the target audience. On the branding level, Timberland continued the visual bonding between it and the oppressed racial Other following this ad. For example, its 1992 ‘Give Racism the Boot’ press ad showed a single Timberland boot under the tag line to declare the brand’s support for diversity and against racial oppression, enhancing the brand’s reputation for corporate responsibility. Projecting such corporate image had its economic rewards. By 1993, the Timberland’s classic waterproof boot had reportedly overtaken Nike’s Air Jordans as a fashion statement for both urban youth and professionals, and the Timberland share price increased 400 per cent in ten months. One of the reasons for this success was attributed to the brand’s stand against racism, as described by the *Time* magazine: “‘Give Racism the Boot.’ That politically correct advertising slogan, combined with environmentally conscious products, has turned Timberland Co. of Hampton, New Hampshire, into a hot marketer and a torrid stock” (Greenwald & Fallon, 1993).

Ironically, the controversial aspects of the ad came from both ends, with both objecting to the use of the American Indian for different reasons. At one end, as Delaney recalled, his agency “even had Americans calling the office to say how offended they were” about the ad for retelling the story of oppression (Delaney, 2007). Yet at the other end, complaints from the advertising industry claimed the ad ‘contain[ed] racist nuances’, with the character in the portrait referred to as “a sombre American Indian”, according to a feature article in the *New York Times* (Rothenberg, 1989). Besides the choice of imagery, some parts of the main copy, such as the opening sentence “The Red Indians were an ungrateful lot.” and the use of offensive terms such as ‘squaw’, must have also raised some eyebrows, despite the ad’s attempt at satire.

To put the controversy into perspective, the ad in question was not designed to condemn the past sins of the US for its treatment of the native people, despite the tag line that may have left such an impression. I have examined the other five less noticeable ads in this six-ad series. Although identical in style and tone, this was the only ad that engaged with racial issues in the US. Tag lines such as “OUR SHOES OUTLAST THE MEN WHO MAKE THEM.”, “YOUR EYES ARE FROZEN. YOUR SKIN HAS TURNED BLACK. YOU’RE TECHNICALLY DEAD. LET’S TALK BOOTS”, and “TIMBERLAND GIVES YOU BACK THE COAT FOUR MILLION YEARS OF EVOLUTION TOOK AWAY.” provide a feel for
the campaign’s provocative tenor and unique story-telling sales approach. Indeed, each of these ads was “a story about the mythology of boots and their role in the development of America” as Delaney himself later explained (Delaney, 2007). Conversely, the ad was not designed to snub the American Indian and paint the native people in a negative way – given that the ad, through its copy, forcefully tried to link Timberland’s shoe-making method with the native culture’s famous moccasin. As for the imagery of the ‘American Indian’ (as he is known to most, even the journalist of the New York Times, as in the above-mentioned article), I do not regard that it in itself had a racist nuance. The man in the portrait was not just any sombre ‘Red Indian’. He was Chief Joseph – the leader of the Nez Perce people who were forced to fight their way to freedom against the larger and better-equipped White military during the bloody Nez Perce Indian War of 1877. His sombre-looking face, captured in the portrait, tells a story of indigenous struggles for land, for life and for freedom.

While I am not convinced that the ad was on the one hand an ideological statement condemning the US’s racist past or, on the other hand, that it should be condemned for having a racist nuance in its imagery, I do believe it is a classic example of the use of the trope of the racial Other for commercial gain. It cashed in the currency of the American Indian on at least two fronts: the currency of a tribal leader of a hard-fought racial struggle, for the sign values of freedom, justice and equality; and the currency of a piece of North American indigenous culture – the famous moccasin – for the sign values of authentic design, natural living and rugged durability. The issue is not then that Chief Joseph was sombre looking in the portrait used in the ad. If one knows how he and his people were betrayed by the establishment, and if one reads of his heartfelt surrender speech, the man had every reason to look sombre. The issue is that we need to realise that his expression captured in the portrait reflected his loss of land and people, telling of early racial struggles between the indigenous people and the White establishment. It was not meant for the purpose of endorsing Timberland shoes in a commercial ad. Through the power of visual and written language, imagery and clever ‘myth building’, the advertiser has hijacked, commercialised and consumed the story of the racial Other.
6.3.2 CASHING IN ON THE ICONS

Although the Timberland ad discussed above is in itself a modern classic, it is not the first or the last to hijack and commodify the imagery of leading figures of racial struggles in branding and advertising campaigns. US confectionery brand M&M’s 2007 ad, designed by BBDO Cape Town (Picture 6.32) is one of the more recent examples of such an approach. In an apparent birthday greeting, the M&M’s ad featured the image of a smiling Nelson Mandela constructed from yellow, orange, red, blue, green and brown button-shaped chocolate candies, with the line “Happy Birthday, Madiba”. On face value, it was a nice and literally ‘sweet’ way to celebrate the internationally recognised icon of political struggles for his upcoming birthday. However, as in the Timberland case, this ad was not merely a very expensive birthday card, but was commissioned to sell the brand and its product through mythical construction cashing in the historic sign value of a Black leader – Mandela.

Under the ‘sweetened’ portrait of Mandela, the ad showed two different M&M packs in the lower right corner, complete with the standard sales pitch “The milk chocolate that melts in your mouth, not in your hands”. Beyond this predictable visual reminder of the product and its Unique Selling Proposition (USP), known to the market since 1954, the tag line went a significant step further to force a link between M&M’s and Mandela: “Thanks for encouraging us to embrace all our [M&M’s] colours”. One may wonder, how and indeed if indeed Mandela had anything to do with encouraging the brand “to embrace all our [M&M’s] colours”. Looking into M&M’s history from the company’s official website, one finds that the brand was built on colour from the very beginning. M&M’s were originally made as a high-energy field snack for US soldiers in 1941. Even during World War II, when they were sold exclusively to the military, the patented button-shaped candies were produced in five colours to a tube – red, yellow, brown, green and violet. In the late 1940s, violet was dropped and replaced by tan and in 1976, red was dropped and
replaced by orange. The official explanation for elimination the colour red from
the M&M mix was health concerns about the dye amaranth following Red Dye No.
2 being banned by authorities. Given that the banned dye was not used in red
M&M’s, and given that having been excluded for nine years during the Cold War,
red M&M’s returned to the family in 1985 to coincide with the Soviet Glasnost and
Perestroika, this claim is open to question. Perhaps red M&M’s were sent into exile
as a reaction to the political climate and the Cold War ‘red phobia’.

The changes to M&M’s colours that have followed have been continuously driven
by the brand’s marketing campaigns. In a 1995 campaign searching for a
replacement colour for the soon-to-be-discontinued tan M&M’s, blue, the only
missing colour from the unique hue in the M&M mix at the time, was finally
included. In the 2005 Mpiere campaign, to “tie in with the Star War’s Episode III
Revenge of the Sith movie release, M&M’S® were offered in a dark variety for the first
time” – using the company’s words – complemented by the theme ‘Mpiere Strikes
Dark’. In 2008, 20 colours were made available for the MyM&M’s line in which
you could personalise the chocolate buttons with your own image or message.
Effectively, you no longer had to be a Mandela to have M&Ms linked to your face
– the rule of the game in a consumer society is that, as long as you are willing to
pay, you can have the satisfaction of having your face printed on your favourite
coloured M&M. It does not matter who you are, or what colour your skin is. This
is a very well played game of consumer citizenship: you are led to think you are
empowered with choices and the right to choose, without realising that you are
given only one ‘choice’ – M&M’s.

Among its well-executed colour plays, the cultivation of colour in the creation of
M&M’s very own ‘spokescandy’ characters is also worth noting. Throughout
M&M’s history, it is interesting to observe that while every other colour in the mix
has been assigned a ‘spokescandy’ in the brand’s advertising campaigns, brown has
not, despite being a foundation colours from day one. In another words, while the
advertiser created a red M&M mascot called ‘Red’ for the original milk chocolate
variety, a yellow M&M mascot called ‘Yellow’ for the peanut variety, a blue M&M
mascot called ‘Blue’ for almond, a green M&M mascot called ‘Miss Green’ for
peanut butter, mint and dark chocolate, and an orange M&M mascot called
‘Orange’ (aka ‘Crispy’), for other types of M&Ms, no suitable role has been found
for a brown M&M mascot in nearly seventy years despite many varieties being
produced and marketed. What is the problem with being brown, what has prevented
the birth of a mascot ‘Brown’?
Evidently, M&M’s embraced colour from the very beginning of their journey. Obviously, the wisdom of patenting the colour-coated button-shaped chocolate candies in 1941, and creating a series of colour-oriented campaigns emerged without Mandela’s encouragement. While M&M’s were busy playing the colour marketing game, Mandela was locked up for twenty-seven years by South Africa’s apartheid government. At the time this ad was circulating and until mid-2008, Mandela and his fellow South African leaders remained on the US terror watchlist, and by law he and other ANC members “could travel to the United Nations headquarters in New York but not to Washington DC or other parts of the United States” according to the BBC (1 July 2008).

Yes, Mandela does connote ‘colour’ as a Black man and a Black icon in South Africa’s struggle for racial equality: He fought a lifetime battle against apartheid, a system of segregation based on race devised by the all-White National Party to oppress the Black majority, and to build a multiracial democratic nation. But having Mandela’s image constructed with M&Ms was like putting ‘Yellow’’s famous line “Eat Me!” into Mandela’s mouth – making him and his history of racial struggles endorse a commercial product without consent. Similarly, as illogical as it sounds, Renault has made Che Guevara endorse a flash convertible in this 2007 ad (Picture 6.33).

Yes, the M&M colour mix has been growing and will continue to grow in number. But the growing number of available colours of M&M’s on the market was unambiguously driven by a competitive market environment and a marketing and advertising campaign strategy to keep the brand in the media spotlight, to keep the M&M image fresh and alive in consumers’ minds, and to stimulate demand, increase market share and improve the profit margin in the cut-throat yet lucrative candy and snack food sector. Ultimately, we know it was the brand’s historical arch-rival Hershey Kisses who really forced and ‘encouraged’ M&M to “embrace all our colours”. Despite this inconvenient truth, Mandela’s iconic stardom, his sign value
of being ‘coloured’ and his historical relationship with the ‘colour line’ were conveniently picked up, consumed and spun into a kind of visual M&M’s pun to forge a marketable brand image on both the product and mythical levels.

6.3.3 CARRYING ON THE TRADITION

At odds with the Louis Vuitton (LV) tradition of depicting the rich and the prestigious, two of the brand’s 1984 advertisements differed markedly, instead depicting non-White labourer Penny Toys. One ad for LV luggage featured an African man transporting a pile of LV luggage on a 19th-century style gig (Picture 6.34). Another in the same campaign featured two Asian men transporting a single LV carrybag on top of an oriental trunk (Picture 6.35).

For more than one and half centuries, Louis Vuitton has been making luggage and bags for a privileged clientele ranging from royalty to superstars. Its target market is the luxury segment. With each of its products a designer piece and globally recognised status symbol, the brand has a cult-like following. Louis Vuitton’s efforts to cultivate the sign value of prestige is evident through its consistent use of superstars such as actresses Jennifer Lopez, Scarlett Johansson, Chloe Sevigny, Uma Thurman and Christina Ricci, and supermodels such as Gisele Bundchen, Kate Moss and Naomi Campbell in its advertising campaigns. Given this pattern, the strategy in these two ads of using visual elements of non-White labourers as substitutes for the celebrity endorsers is interesting.

The tag line “always the unexpected, since 1854” is a good starting point from which to view these ads and appreciate the strategic wisdom of a brand focused on the luxury market depicting the underprivileged racial Other in one of its major advertising campaigns. With the key concept ‘the unexpected’, it is obvious as to
why the superstars and supermodels were not featured in this campaign – they were too predictable and were clearly the ‘expected’. Conversely, the use of the non-White labourer Penny Toys was guaranteed to be effective, as they were the least predictable endorsers for a LV campaign and were therefore the ‘unexpected’. In other words, the depicted characters in these two ads were chosen for their absolute Otherness. Such Otherness was not merely about their respective skin colours, but the historical meaning attached to these skin colours – their cultural identity and their place in the society. If the superstar and supermodel endorsers for LV were selected for their collective sign values of affluence, eminence and fame, the African gig operator and the Asian porters were everything but. They were the ‘have-nots’, the ‘under-privileged’, and had no name other than ‘servant’ and ‘cooler’. Therefore, being the direct opposite of what LV symbolised, their lack of wealth and status gave the racial Other that highly desirable ‘X’ factor.

Acquiring the ‘X’ factor is one thing, converting it into a selling point is another. In this regard, the play of visual signs pushed the commodification of the racial Other even further to make them deliver more than a mere visual surprise. For example, with the history of slavery, the African servant could be serving his affluent masters anywhere, but the ostrich driving the gig and the mark ‘KAMERUN’ on the carriage signified the place was a West African country of Cameroon (also known as Cameroun in French) which was ruled by Germany from 1884 to 1916, and by the French and the British until the early 1960s. Similarly, while there was no specific reference to place in the other ad, the visual clues all seemed to point to China. The porters’ pig tail is a stereotypical Western visual symbol for ‘Chinaman’, while the rest of their costume from head to toes also spelt Chineseness and subordination with Orientalist references. The unexpected spacial shift came with an unexpected temporal shift which transcended the contemporary to the pre-modern, and the Occident to the African Safari and the Orient. Instead of private jets and limousines, the advertisements deployed a 19th-century styled gig driven by an African man to transport the famous Monogram Canvas case, and a personalised lacquered oriental trunk dating back to at least the 16th-century carried by two Asian men to transport the prestige Epi leather bucket bag. As a result, imageries of the racial Other were used to shift the place of the brand’s European origin to its exotic Other; of its time from the age of contemporary globalisation to the era of colonialism and high-imperialism. In so doing, a colonial relationship between the coloniser and the colonised/semi-colonised was managed and consumed to generate nostalgic appeal.
In short, elements of the humble racial Other were used in this campaign instead of glamorous and/or successful celebrities because the meanings attached to the racial Otherness could help fill the gap that celebrity lacked. In this case, imageries of the racial Other not only helped to enhance the unexpectedness which the campaign was explicitly set up to convey, but, at a deeper level also served as a feel-good factor feeding the nostalgia of the brand’s privileged clientele. The ghosts of yesterday’s masters behind the private gig and the personalised oriental trunk reminded the audience of a superior-inferior/master-servant relationship, through the presence of the ultra-luxurious LV products and the absence of their owners who were obviously freed of the burden of handling the luggage. Instead, the house chauffeur and porters were left to carry on the tradition of catering to the superior few.

Apart from the nostalgia for the colonial relationship, the colonial myth is also being re-staged in contemporary advertisements. A 2007 advertising campaign promoting Southwark White Beer (Pictures 6.36 and 6.37) is one such example. Designed by Ogilvy & Mather Australia, the campaign used the imagery of dark-skinned people – named as ‘the natives’ in the ad – to promote the brand’s White Beer. Both ads in the series were presented to the audience as framed etchings, each capturing a horrific scene of torture carried out by the dark-skinned people against White people. The first ad depicted a native-chief character cutting open a White man’s chest and pulling something out, assisted by five others to stop the prey’s struggle. In addition to the suffering White man, three White women were seen tied up, shocked and horrified. Under the etching, the ad’s copy was presented as a caption which read: “Although sceptical at first, the natives soon grew fond of the unique taste of white”. In the same fashion, the second ad had a group of native people violently subduing a White man and forcing a sheaf of wheat into his mouth. This
time, the caption read: “After much debate, the Engai agreed it was the subtle addition of wheat that gave the whites their distinct taste”.

Clearly, the campaign made a pun of the word ‘white’ and played with the concept of ‘White race’ and ‘white beer’. However, the pun itself was only a play between words and meanings – and was not yet a sales pitch. To promote the selling points of White Beer, the Self needed its Other in order to have meaning. Exploiting the Other concept of ‘white’ provided the solution, and imageries of the racial Other were chosen to complete the pitch. Imagery of the racial Other was extremely useful here. Without staging some ‘natives’ kidnapping, dissecting, and presumably tasting the flesh of the White man, the advertiser could not claim “the unique taste of white” for the product in such a memorable fashion. Furthermore, without scripting the ‘natives’ in the act of torturing the White man by violently stuffing wheat into his mouth, the ad could not vividly convey the “distinct taste” of wheat so desperately desired in the White Beer.

There is more to the obvious sales messages than the use of imagery of native people to help ‘prove’ the unique taste and attributes of the product. In a settler colony, with a contemporary Hensonistic racial ideology still lingering, a number of hidden statements from the familiar stocks of the colonial racial script are apparent. ‘Cannibals’, ‘wild beast’, ‘barbarian’, ‘primitive’, ‘uncivilised’ are just a few racial signifiers of ‘natives’ easily evoked in this campaign. Therefore, on a deeper level, the behaviour of the ‘natives’ depicted in this campaign sent an ideological-based sales pitch: “You know how good the White Beer tastes when even the uncivilised barbarians like it, and can’t have enough of it”.

In short, the way in which the White Beer was promoted continued the tradition of a colonial racial imagery that carried with it the colonialist racial ideology. Like the African man and the Asian men in the Louis Vuitton campaign before it, with a traceable colonial script the native people’s inferiority was put on show and transformed into the ‘X’ factor that was useful to promote Southwark White Beer. The fact that the campaign was designed for a new product for the mass market of beer drinkers in a settler colony indicates that you do not need to run a campaign that claims ‘always the unexpected’, you do not need to be a brand that associated with the long journey of colonialism, and you do not need to have a nostalgic prestige clientele – like Louis Vuitton – to turn to the stock of colonial tradition for inspiration and advertising solutions. The Other is always useful to make sense about the Self.
A STRANGE GAME AT PLAY

In this final section, I identify some of the contemporary, left-field approaches to deploying the racial Other using the classic colonial racial script, experimenting with new versions of the script, or utilizing taboo racial stereotypes. While all push the envelope, the ads were constructed in a highly unexpected manner. It appears, “those strange strategies and power relationships” (Foucault, in Martin et al Eds, 1988: 15) were in play. With visual imageries, advertising images was able to assume and tap into a pre-existing body of knowledge. As Williamson put it “to decipher and solve the problems we must know the rules of the game. Advertising clearly produces knowledge…but this knowledge is always from something already known” (Williamson, 1978: 99). Within the context of contemporary globalisation, were these left-field efforts breaking free of the existing colonial racial script, or were the apparent ‘newness’ and ‘coolness’ generated by these efforts still haunted by the ghost of colonial racial ideology?

6.4.1 MIMICKING THE TRIBAL

Designed by Saatchi & Saatchi London in 1998, a advertisement for the UK’s Habitat retail chain promoted the launch of a new product line named ‘Tribal’ (Picture 6.38). The copy below the main image read: “We’ve travelled all over the world for ideas for Habitat’s new tribal collection. Drop by if you haven’t got too much on your plate”.

With a product line named ‘Tribal’, we all know which series of image will jump out from the cultural reference system of our minds. But it was not to be in this ad. The ad denoted a young Caucasian woman and a plate. Although on the face value, it may not seem like an advertisement that deploying the imagery of the racial Other, but what the ad
really communicates is indeed the concept of Ethiopia and the Otherness of her native people, customs and artefacts. As we further explore the details, we can see that significant alterations have been made to the White model’s appearance to give her a ‘tribal look’: her blond hair has been dreadlocked; and her natural eyebrows, eyelashes and eyelids have been dramatically darkened at a time when ‘smoke eyes’ were not yet in vogue. Styling and makeup have to an extent transformed her original fair facial features and her Whiteness, but obviously not quite enough. More extreme, surgical-style visual intervention has been used to manipulate the model’s lower lip into the shape of a plate, mocking the ‘Lip-Plate woman’, typically from Ethiopian tribes such as the Mursi and Suri. Evidently, an extreme makeover has been planned and executed on the Caucasian model, mixing her Whiteness with the Otherness of a tribal woman. Strangely but necessarily, in a study about the use and usefulness of imageries of the racial Other in advertising, here I am facing questions as to why the imagery of a ‘real’ tribal woman was not used, and why instead the advertisers went to the trouble of using a White woman to mock a tribal woman?

What drove the omission of the tribal woman and the resulting imagery is complex, involving the discursive sign value of the Lip-Plated women and the politics of consuming Otherness for the benefit of the advertiser. To begin with, the Lip-Plated women are well-known to the West and are, arguably, one of Ethiopia’s main attractions. The fact that fascinated Western tourists spend considerable time, money and effort to make a tough three-day journey from Addis Ababa to the Omo River Valley just to get a glance of the Lip-Plated women attests to the commodity value of these tribal women. A 2006 government report found that most tourists to Ethiopia come from the US, followed by the UK (National Coffer No 17). According to a review of the Ethiopian tourism: “Among the most visited group is the Mursi, renowned for the huge clay lip plates worn by the women” (Mail and Guardian, 2002). In the age of globalisation, images of these women are also available to the masses who cannot afford to travel such distances to see them first hand – through TV documentaries broadcast internationally (e.g. Global Village on SBS TV in Australia and The Tribe on the UK’s BBC 2), and travel literature ranging from tourist brochures to Lonely Planet publications.

It also needs to be appreciated that the Lip-Plate has historic, economic and cultural significance for the Mursi/Suri people. Historically, it connotes bitter resistance to against colonialism – used as a measure to discourage slave traders from kidnapping their women. According to Thaw and Thaw: “This form of disfigurement was
begun centuries ago to discourage slave riders, the French Administrator told us” (Thaw & Thaw, 1938: 357). In The Tribe, Bruce Parry suggested that the Lip-Plate is also an economic signifier – according to his Suri host the size of the Lip-Plate is somehow indicative of the bride’s value. However, real life examples seem to contradict the widespread bride wealth theory. Using the perspective of the locals, Turton concluded: “When one asks a Mursi woman why she stretched her lip, she usually replies, simply and predictably, with a version of the phase ‘This is our custom’” (Turton, 2004: 4). In this regard, the Lip-Plate serves as a powerful visual marker of Mursi identity for the local men and women. Although the interrelationship between the Lip-Plate and bride wealth remains contestable, there is little doubt that the Lip-Plate has been turned into an economic asset in the age of globalisation. For the Ethiopian government, it is the major drawcard that attracts Western tourists and their money. For the Western tourists and the people who consume the Lip-Plate phenomenon, Lip-Plates and the Lip-Plated women are objects of fetish – the plates as souvenirs and the women as subjects of tourist photos – as in a thoroughly commodified global world, they are hard to find and still seem authentically not-modern, driven by a desire for ‘the absolutely other’ borrowing Levinas’ (1979) term. Closer to home, for Habitat, the Lip-Plate is a famous fascinating signifier for the absolute ‘tribal’, is an exotic and eye-catching way to display a product line, and enables the advertiser to play word games in the copy – “Drop by if you don’t have too much on your plate”.

The desirable sign values of the Ethiopian Lip-Plate women make the advertising strategy even more puzzling. Why take the trouble to mock an Ethiopian Lip-plated woman instead of deploying her like the rest of the ads analysed in this thesis? The politics of consumption are at play here. Firstly, while used as a visual symbol for Ethiopian attractions by tourist promoters, the Lip-Plated women also connote concepts of inferiority, backwardness and wildness in the minds of the outside world. Even in Ethiopia, the use of the Lip-Plate – as a symbol of Mursiness and Mursi autonomy – has been under constant pressure from Ethiopian governments past and present. The Lip-Plate has been branded by politicians as an ‘uncivilised custom’ and a ‘harmful traditional practice’, and calls for it to be abandoned have come with government threats, including that “any girl who decided to stretch her lip would have her lower lip cut off entirely, to make an example of her” (ibid: 5). However, given the contribution tourism makes to the country’s economy, that the Mursi Lip-Plate is arguably on top of the international tourist’s must-see list, and the fact that the Mursi remain autonomous, the threats seem to be no more than
empty rhetoric. Furthermore, it is also worth noting that the Mursi/Suri people are held by the Ethiopian Government as its Other. For example, on the government’s official tourism website, under the heading ‘Ethiopian Cultural Attraction’ the Mursis, unlike the dominant groups who are introduced by their ethnic/tribal identities, are labelled as ‘Fascinating People’ and there is no mention of the Lip-Plate. Evidently, while the government is using the Mursi identity to attract international tourism revenue, it is ashamed of the existence of the Otherness embodied in their cultural traditions. Such a love-hate relationship is also reflected in Westerners’ feelings toward the Lip-Plate. While feeling disdain, shock, and disgust, nevertheless they travel great distances to enthusiastically photograph them, and showing off these pictures back home as trophies. It seems that the Lip-Plate is at once desired and loathed by Westerners, and this contradictory sentiment obviously had implications for the ad’s strategy of non-representation and presentation.

Consequently, although the Ethiopian Lip-Plate women are highly sought after photographic subjects for Western travellers, and the Lip Plate is identified and made fetish by the advertisers, the imagery of a ‘real’ Lip-Plate woman is too dangerous to be consumed as a whole – she needs to be consumed in part; the part that is magical and desirable but not real or controversial. What needs to be taken from her is her symbolic backwardness and a racial identity that represents the opposite of civilisation which is incompatible with the Western audience.

The merits of Othering the White model also involved strategic consideration. Firstly, we need to recognise that the image of the Lip-Plate was not only used in this advertisement as a source of wit, it was also used as a source of shock. The procedure used to create a Lip-Plate was known to the West as an ‘extremely painful ritual’, among other tribal customs such as scarification and stick fighting. A Lip-Plate appearing on the face of a White woman compounded the cultural ‘shock’ factor. As the model was recognised as one of ‘us’, she was able to bring the shock closer to home where the audience was more likely to ‘feel’ for her – even though the procedure performed on her by the agency was a painless one: involving digital manipulation. The ‘real thing’ involves body modification using procedures such as piercing the lower lip, excising two (or more) lower front teeth, and years of inserting plates and stretching skin. As such, the Othering of a White model delivered an image that was unexpected, was capable of eliciting a stronger emotional response and in turn made for a more unique and memorable advertisement. The advantage does not stop here. After the less intrusive makeovers,
such as the sophisticated styling techniques used to make her hair look dreadlocked, and her face exotic, her seemingly exciting facial expression and wide-eyed gaze delivered a ‘Look at me’ factor with the unspoken “I feel exotic!”,” “Look at the plate!” . The underlining sales message is rather obvious: “You can get this feeling if you buy Habitat’s tribal collection”, or better still, “Transform your identity profoundly through purchasing Habitat’s tribal collection”. Any of these messages was highly desirable from Habitat’s point of view, and the advertiser evidently believed that this sounded more persuasive from an identity considered a member of the in-group rather than the out-group – thus the need to ‘tribalise’ the Caucasian model.

In Woodhead’s 1991 documentary *The Land is Bad*, some rarely heard local voices recounted the unequal and uncomfortable relationship between Western tourists and their Lip-Plated photographic subjects: “Do they want us to be their children, or what? What do they want the photographs for?”; “We said to each other, ‘Are we here just for their amusement?’”. As the Mursi people have already questioned the motive behind the consumption of their identity and value, and expressed their agitation toward the unequal economic and power relationship imposed on them by Western tourists, I cannot help but wonder what would they feel about the use of the Lip-Plate as part of an extreme makeover, and its juxtaposition on the face of a White model. I can only imagine this would be even harder for them to comprehend, and even more bitter for them to swallow – as the opinions of the tribal Other are rarely heard given their voices have been by and large muted. In this strange play of racial representation, it is the advertiser who holds the means and power to consume, the tribal Other, essentially, is only there to provide.

This Habitat ad differs from the rest of the cases examined in the thesis because the main signifier of racial Otherness – the Lip-Plate – was taken from the face of a ‘backward’ tribal woman and implanted onto the face of a ‘cultured’ Caucasian model. While this kind of calculated and highly manipulative approach in the visual mimicking of the racial Other helped to maximise the ad’s impact, it is a new addition to the multifaceted visual rhetoric of appropriating and consuming the racial Other in contemporary advertising. It represents a drastic way to appeal to the ‘class habitus’ by consuming the imagery of the racial Other in part through visual dispossession and with the help of digital technology.
6.4.2 THE ECCENTRIC EXPLOITATION

A 2000 ad, designed by TBWA Johannesburg to promote US multinational Sara Lee’s She Bear label, featured three fully veiled people who appeared to be Muslim women (Picture 6.39). At the time Sara Lee also owned famous lingerie brands such as Playtex and Wonderbra. She Bear is an upmarket lingerie line which, like the more well-known sister label Wonderbra, is internationally recognised in the world of high fashion. While Wonderbra is famous for its ‘push-up’ effect, with an emphasis on enhanced functionality, She Bear claims it ‘celebrates women’, with a luxurious and sexy appeal promoting a sense of femininity.

The ad’s tag line read: “WEAR IT FOR YOURSELF”. It was typeset in a subtle manner on the top left-hand corner of the layout, followed by the She Bear logotype. An otherwise stylish building that appeared in bad shape dominated the background. Not only was there a big hole in the sidewall and significant damage on the corner of the retaining wall, the window and the door were also in a state of disrepair. In the foreground, three Muslim women in black chador were depicted walking from the right of the picture down a sloping street. Two could be seen holding white shopping bags bearing the She Bear logo. Strategically, the presence of the shopping bag provides the only clue given to the reader that these women are buying and using lingerie products.

This ad used a highly unconventional approach to promote a lingerie line in general, and a ‘sophisticated’ brand in particular. There was no sign of familiar imageries of beautiful faces, perfect bodies, sexy lingerie and romantic surroundings – a typical formula for almost every ad in this category. Instead, the advertisement showed models with their faces concealed and bodies fully covered. The only visible garment was the black chador, and the background was a visibly devastated street. Reading into the imageries, the chador served as a symbol to identify the three models as Muslim women, implying that the wearers were following certain cultural practices under Islamic teachings. The cultural practice most relevant to this ad is the preservation of modesty through...
concealing the body. This appears to be a mismatch with the advertised product. The She Bear label stands for femininity. Its entire identity is designed to make a feminine statement – from the label’s name to the logotype that manipulates the initials ‘S’ and ‘B’ to suggest womanly body curves. Yet the chador made it impossible to show the models’ curvaceous figures or the sexy She Bear bra the ad was designed to promote.

Although the use of imageries of Muslim women, who are known for their conservative dress code, to promote a lingerie line built on sexiness and feminine appeal is a puzzle, it may have served an ironic purposes. The ad may have been set up to sell its feminine image by deliberately using visual language that normally signified the opposite. Because the design was the antithesis of the normal visual rhetoric, it performed the magic to attracted greater attention, elicited surprise and became more memorable – and the black chador and the women who wore it became the fetish to deliver this effect. In addition, this type of irony can at times be even more thought-provoking. Even with the tag line ‘wear it for yourself’ to guide the ad’s interpretation, it could still be read as a double-ended satire – either aimed at the perceived ‘backwardness’ and Otherness of the particular Muslim way of life; or at the extrinsic value system within the consumer culture and the patriarchal society; or both. Furthermore, it could also be decoded as giving the brand a feminist attitude, or even as presenting a moral claim to free the ‘oppressed’ women (as in the case of the ISHR poster discussed in Chapter Five). There can be many other interpretations, all subject to the audience’s background.

If casting fully veiled Muslim women to sell sexy lingerie in the She Bear ad was somewhat eccentric, other ads can appear to be totally incomprehensible. A 2009 ad for Mangaloo juice, designed by Rust Prague from the Czech Republic is an example of these extremes (Picture 6.40). The ad featured a Black boxer as the dominant image against a dark grey background. His face, together with his black leather EVERLAST headgear, occupied more than half of the space, with his naked upper body occupying the rest. Judging from his facial expression, the boxer was still in the mood to fight, however, an unpeeled orange appears to have been forcefully squeezed into his mouth. The tag line “Freshly squeezed juice” was typeset in a relatively small font and floated in the middle of his chest. On its right the orange juice was identified by the logo as being Mangaloo.

Dictated by the tag line, ‘freshly squeezed’ was the key phrase in this ad. One may wonder in what way a boxer with an orange squeezed into his mouth helped to
convey the selling point that Mangaloo orange juice was freshly squeezed. Was it a visual pun on the word ‘squeeze’? But how was juice squeezed from a boxer’s mouth – or anyone’s mouth for that matter – a selling point rather than a turn-off for the audience? The ‘freshness’ of the juice, through an imagined ‘natural’ process, only brought attention to the sweat and saliva visible on the Black boxer’s body and mouth. Furthermore, if the boxer was chosen for his stereotypical strength to be the best ‘squeezer’, why was he Black, given that boxers come in all shapes, weights and races and given that the racial makeup of the juice’s country of origin was predominantly White? Was it because Blackness connoted greater physical strength and the aggressiveness needed to perform this ‘primitive’ way of squeezing? Or was it because Black skin provided the best background to accommodate the White coloured tag line and orange-coloured orange and packaging (like using a Black man’s naked body to provide the contrast to the White women’s legs, as in the ASA’s ruling on the Diesel Scorpion ad in Section 6.2.2)?

I am using these two cases to suggest a new way of using imageries of the racial Other in contemporary advertising discourses – in which elements of racial Otherness are utilised and constructed as a paradox or riddle device. The realisation of this new found usefulness is at least partly due to the contemporary cultural context in which the concept of the racial Other has become more fluid, and its tropes more plastic. In other words, it is likely that the more unstable the concept, the more vulnerable the imageries of the racial Other are to being manipulated by advertisers to grab attention, provoke thought and maximise advertising return. As the two ads interrogated above show, the balance between an ad’s ambiguity and process outcome is crucial, or the rhetoric can turn against itself.
This thesis has examined examples of the strategic deployment of imageries of the racial Other in print advertising and branding campaigns within the context of contemporary globalisation. It posed the question as to whether the concept of the ‘racial Other’ deployed in print advertising and branding campaigns has changed its colonial script within the context of contemporary globalisation and, if so, in what ways.

By interrogating advertising data to examine the use and usefulness of imageries of the racial Other within the context of contemporary globalisation, and with reference to the genealogy of racial tropes in early advertising discourse, this research offered a snapshot of popular culture to understand whether the world has moved-on to a ‘colour-blind’ era where ‘race’ is no longer relevant or, conversely, whether race issues linger in 21st-century minds and the once pervasive racial politics continue to be in play. The use of imageries of the racial Other in a range of public interest and commercial campaigns suggests the currency of race and the commodity-sign value the racial Other possesses continues to hold and even grow.

This research has also shown that the debunking of the science underpinning the colonial concepts of race, the official condemnation of racism, the politics of multiculturalism and the proclaiming of a colour-blind era have not – allowing some exceptions – prevented the colonial racial script from continuing to function and shape racial representations in advertising discourses. At best the post-World War II struggles continue: post-colonial racial politics and acceleration of globalisation have resulted in a condition whereby the ticket for overtly racist representations in advertising are no longer valid or permitted. Similarly, shifting racial demographics and consumer segmentation have also driven adjustments in the manner and tone of racial representations to make them appear more ‘enlightened’ – so to speak – although patronising language can still be detected in some instances. At worst, some of the overtly racist stereotypes considered taboo
in written and spoken language in the age of contemporary globalisation, are still being articulated either implicitly or explicitly through the visual language of advertisements and branding materials. Some of these ads receive public complaints and are eventually banned by regulators – some of them receive praise from their peers and win major international awards.

The matter of subjectification adds to these contradictions. Due to the increasing fluidity of the concept of race within the context of contemporary globalisation, imageries of the racial Other are more vulnerable to being more highly manipulated, appropriated and consumed. They are used at will to prove a claim or statement, as brand or campaign mascots, as inspirers of emotions ranging from disgust to fear to guilt to humour to nostalgia to desire. In all cases, they are used to persuade and to influence by a cultural industry that is still typically dominated by White male professionals and perspectives. Amid all the chaos and hype, the racial Other is still only there to provide. While the global commodity culture may have democratised consumption, the same has not eventuated in representation.

At a cursory level, the representation of the racial Other in print advertising and branding campaigns from the 1980s onward, has to some extent differed from earlier ads. As this thesis has demonstrated, in terms of the themes in which imageries of the racial Other are utilised, a ‘redemption theme’ has appeared in both public interest and commercial campaigns. In terms of the social roles assigned to the racial Other and consumed, the emerging ‘proxy’, ‘us’ and ‘victim’ roles can be seen in public interest campaigns. The racial stereotypes being coded in advertising language are also more fluid and vulnerable to manipulation, with wild oscillations in stereotyping evident across the board. The analysis demonstrates that the legacy of colonial racial stereotypes continues and has been recaptured and/or remodelled.

All of the new themes, roles and the somehow altered stereotypes have arisen out of the political and commercial challenges and needs of advertisers. Even those affirmative messages about race that ads have intend to communicate to audiences have still by and large been constructed with historically developed negative stereotypes at both the conceptual and visual levels – which worked like a double-edged sword. The effort to reinvent new looks and new codes so as to make new the old ones was pithily summarised by Thomas Jefferson in a different 19th-century US context: “The new circumstances under which we are placed call for new words, new phrases, and for the transfer of old words to new objects” (in Shapiro, 2006: 394).
Overall, the contemporary advertising, branding and public information examined in this thesis reveals more similarities than differences with existing racial representations. Significant residual traces of the colonial racial script have been identified among contemporary advertising and branding materials. In terms of the themes in which imageries of the racial Other are utilised, traditional ones (with the exception of slavery ads) such as the appropriation and commodification of a quasi-logical racial hierarchy and the range of racialised metaphors and depictions that have a long history of exploiting imageries of the racial Other, not only continue to exist but have also, in a sense, been renewed and remodelled within both public interest and commercial campaigns. In terms of the social roles assigned to the racial Other and consumed, Part One of this thesis demonstrates that the social roles assigned to the racial Other in advertising during the post-slavery period are more diverse than has been commonly acknowledged in advertising literature. I do not consider that contemporary commercial advertising and branding campaigns have assigned social roles unseen in earlier advertisements to the racial Other. This said, I do find that the trend in which casting once considered ‘left-field’ in early advertising has now become more commonplace – albeit it is still far from the norm – within the context of globalisation. In terms of the stereotypes being coded into the visual languages of advertising, I identified two varieties of racial stereotypes which are co-existing. On the one hand, the legacy colonial racial stereotypes, such as barbaric and disgusting behaviour; deformed, animalistic and supersexual body forms; non-White features and skin tones; criminal and evil tendencies; the White man’s burden; and subservient, sambo, clownish and illiterate bizarreness have been, in one way or another, inherited by advertisers in contemporary advertising discourses. While most of them have been remodelled to some degree, some are easily identifiable and some appear in disguise. On the other hand, the romanticised breeds include those stereotypes that can be traced from the ads of the era of High Imperialism (such as noble savage, the mythical and magical, and the authentic/natural) as well as the newer ones that belong to the age of contemporary globalisation (such as the exotic-tradition and the superhuman). Although appear less offensive in manner and present as seemingly harmless or even admirable imageries, romanticised colonial racial stereotypes share the same origin as the legacy colonial racial stereotypes – albeit the overt racist connotations may have been adjusted into undertones, and the cruel expressions may have been hidden behind the highly neutralised language of advertising.
In conclusion, based on the findings of this research, I find the concept of the ‘racial Other’ deployed in print advertising and branding campaigns has not substantially changed its colonial script within the context of contemporary globalisation – despite some visible differences in appearance.

Change requires commitment – which is needed but remains elusive. Repetition leads to cliché – which echoes the past but can help to persuade. Variation breeds distinction – which is manageable yet still can appear avant-garde. To me, these are the cruxes of the contemporary dilemma for the deployment of imageries of the racial Other in contemporary advertising and branding campaigns. They result in a range of racial representations that appear to be at once different from, yet similar to, those early advertisements constructed more overtly with colonial racial scripts.

With institutions and corporations commonly denying the evidence of the existence of deeply rooted racism within their ads (even when those overtly discriminatory racist eyesores are being fixed in redemptive advertising and rebranding campaigns) the inconvenient commitment needed to make substantial change is lacking. Unless society and the advertising industry truly commit to change, the phenomenon of struggle, chaos, manipulation, hype, and contradiction captured in this thesis is more likely to be replicated through variation rather than substantially changed.


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