

People often say that the emergence of a subculture - such as a gay identity or a gay culture - develops precisely because the sole point of departure (that of sexual preference) is unacceptable to the dominant culture. In their introduction to *Out In Culture*, a wonderful new anthology of *Gay, Lesbian and Queer Essays On Popular Culture*, Corey K Creekmur and Alexander Doty, confirm this, saying: "Out In Culture charts some of the ways in which lesbians, gays, and queers have understood and negotiated the pleasures and affirmations, as well as the disappointments and denials, of mass culture. ... Homosexual men and women have always had a close and complex relation to mass culture. ... But, like all marginalised minorities or (sub) cultures, gays and lesbians often found their cultural experience and participation constrained and proscribed by a dominant culture in which they are generally ignored or oppressed. ... Historically, however, gays and lesbians have also related to mass culture differently, through an alternative or negotiated, if not always fully subversive, reception of the products and messages of popular culture - and, of course, by producing popular literature, film, music, TV, photography and fashion within mainstream mass culture industries." They contest that: "... this queerly different experience of mass culture was most evident, if coded, in the ironic, scandalous sensibility known as camp - perhaps gay culture's crucial contribution to modernism". And camp is certainly one of the most discerning traits that sets us apart from our heterosexual brothers and sisters. Or is it?

Madeleine Rose and Kevin Rose went out to identify

How

Queer
is Gay Culture?

*You walked into the party like you were walking onto a yacht
 Your hat strategically dipped below one eye
 Your scarf, it was Apricot
 You had one eye in the mirror as you watched yourself Gavotte
 I had some dreams there were tears in my coffee, tears in my coffee and ...
 You're so vain, you probably think this song is about you, you're so vain.
 I bet you think this song is about you, don't you? Don't you?
 You're so vain*

Reading that, one could quite rightly presume I was trying to remember the words of the Carley Simon hit of years gone by, *You're So vain*. I'm not. I am sitting outside one of the top night spots in Johannesburg. Before my eyes pass some of the most beautiful bodies a man or woman could feast their eyes on. They strut, they preen, they prance. I could be watching a Peacock dancing before his prospective mate. I am not. I am people watching, and I am not sitting outside Caesar's Palace, Chillers, The Carlton Hotel or even the new Hyatt Hotel in Rosebank.





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IN CAPE TOWN BY ALEX MURPHY