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"Queering the City"

The Politics of Intimacy, Sex and Liberation in Lourenço Marques (Mozambique) 1961-1982

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Abstract

Historians of Lourenço Marques/Maputo, the capital of Mozambique, have written at length about the origins and development of the city's vibrant and cosmopolitan urban culture since the early 20th century. Based on archival and oral history research, this paper intends to *queer* this literature by situating same-sex sexual, practices, desires, and affects in the context of the dynamic urban culture of the late colonial period, especially the notoriously rich nightlife of *Rua Araújo*, a strip of bars, nightclubs and cabarets located downtown. I articulate the local scale of the urban with the transnational circuits of tourism, migration, and circulation of cultural forms cutting across the city and its bohemian world. To do so, I follow four sets of actors who were consequential to the Lourenço Marques nightlife culture and its sexual geographies: "transactional lovers", soldiers, *travestis*, and tourists. I then proceed to examine the transformations this urban scene underwent in the immediate aftermath of decolonization. My goal is to present a multifocal, albeit necessarily incomplete, history of how various gay men – or men who engaged in same-sex sexual acts – both inhabited the city and transformed its urban cultures in particular ways.

Keywords: Lourenço Marques/Maputo (Mozambique); urban life; same-sex sexuality; intimacy; transnational culture; decolonization

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The capital of colonial Mozambique, Lourenço Marques, has been renowned for its cosmopolitan culture and modern amenities since the early 20th century.[2] While for most of its early history it was little more than a frontier settlement, the mineral revolution in South Africa had the spillover effect of catalysing its urban growth and development. From the late 19th century onwards, the railway link to Johannesburg buttressed the expansion of the city, whose port throve with the influx of South African business.[3] As it consolidated its status as a regional port city, Lourenço Marques also diversified its urban network to service, accommodate, and entertain the growing numbers of both transient visitors and long-term dwellers.[4] As historians Vlademir Zamparoni and Andrew MacDonald have argued, this leisure-driven "tavern economy" flourishing around the city's bars, taverns, and *cantinas* was crucially constitutive of Lourenço Marques' still incipient urban culture.[5] For various reasons, and constrained by different colonial hierarchies, men and women, white and black, were seduced by the city's promise of pleasure and entertainment – as well as by the economic opportunities associated with them.[6]

By the mid-century, a mixture of public and private investment, economic growth and a policy that facilitated Portuguese immigration prompted the modernization and expansion of the city space.[7] From 1950 onwards, a significant increase in the volume of white settlement and international tourism further boosted the leisure infrastructure and urban cultures that this population demanded and patronized.[8] In the 1960s and 1970s, Lourenço Marques had acquired a reputation as a city of amusement, earthly pleasures, and indulgence of the senses. For those who could afford it – or who could find their way into it by other means – this pleasure economy was full of possibility. This was especially true of the (in)famous *Rua Araújo* (Araújo Street), a strip of cabarets, bars and nightclubs, that effectively worked as the centre of the city's bohemian world. This was a space where people from various walks of life – "intellectuals, tourists, sailors, performers, artists, dancers, and sex workers" – congregated for many reasons: for "work, entertainment, music, drink, dance, and a good time"[9]. *Rua Araújo* was also a street of "sin" and "ill repute"[10], a well-known theatre of sexual trade and solicitation.[11]

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[2] MacDonald Andrew (2012). *Colonial Trespassers in the Making of South Africa's International Borders 1900 to c. 1950*, PhD Thesis, University of Cambridge.

[3] Katzenellenbogen Simon E. (1982), *South Africa and Southern Mozambique: Labour, Railways and Trade in the Making of a Relationship*, Manchester, Manchester University Press.

[4] MacDonald A., *Colonial Trespassers…, op. cit.*

[5] MacDonald A., *Colonial Trespassers…, op. cit.*; Zamparoni Valdemir D. (1998). *Entre narros e mulungos: colonialismo e paisagem social em Lourenço Marques, c. 1890-1940*, PhD Thesis, University of São Paulo. "Cantinas" refers to small commercial ventures, often owned and run by Indians. Though they also offering typically Indian goods, such as textiles, Zamparoni notes that in Lourenço Marques the cantina's main source of income was the selling of alcohol and sex with African women.

[6] Zamparoni V., *Entre narros e mulungos…, op. cit.*

[7] Morton David (2019), *Age of concrete: Housing and the Shape of Aspiration in the Capital of Mozambique*, Athens, Ohio, Ohio University Press.

[8] Penvenne Jeanne M. (1995), *African workers and colonial racism: Mozambique strategies and struggles in Lourenço Marques, 1877-1962*, London, James Currey, p. 102.

[9] Havstad Lilly (2019), *"To Live a Better Life": the Making of a Mozambican Middle Class*, PhD Thesis, Boston University, p. 191. See also: Filipe, Eléusio P. V. (2012), *"Where are the Mozambican Musicians?": Music, Marrabenta, and National Identity in Lourenço Marques, Mozambique, 1950s-1975*, PhD Thesis, University of Minnesota.

[10] "Rua do Jano", *Notícias*, 18 January 1966.

[11] Isaacman Barbara and Stephen June (1980), *Mozambique: Women, the Law, and Agrarian Reform*, Addis Ababa, Economic Commission for Africa, p. 127.

Figure 1: "Rua Araújo: all embraces shine more under the neon light" (1970)[12]

In the last two decades, the urban history that I am outlining here has been amenable to a productive reframing, which has embraced gender as a valuable analytical concept.[13] Compelling studies have suggested that normative sexuality is – just like gender roles – historically contingent, socially constructed, and mediated by power relations.[14] Yet, research on same-sex sexualities and desires has, by and large, tended to respond to contemporary concerns, rather than seriously or consistently engaging with the historical record. This is surprising in light of important studies stressing the centrality of sexuality to (post)colonial histories.[15] The notable exception is Francisco Miguel's recent doctoral dissertation, which follows the historical construction of male homosexuality in Southern Mozambique. Based on archival research, literary and print media analysis, and ethnographic interviews, Miguel's study contributes to a broader debate on the genealogy of same-sex (henceforth homo) sexual identities in the Global South. It traces how modalities of colonial knowledge, legal discourses,

[12] Photo by Ricardo Rangel. Courtesy of Centro de Documentação e Formação Fotográfica, Maputo.

[13] Havstad L., *To Live..., op. cit.*; Penvenne Jeanne M. (2015), *Women, Migration and the Cashew Economy in Southern Mozambique, 1945-1975*, Suffolk and Rochester, James Currey; Sheldon Kathleen (2003), "Markets and Gardens: Placing Women in the History of Urban Mozambique", *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 2/3, pp. 358-395.

[14] Arnfred Signe (2011), *Sexuality & Gender Politics in Mozambique: Rethinking Gender in Africa*, Suffolk, James Currey; Sheldon Kathleen (2002), *Pounders of grain: a history of Women, Work and Politics in Mozambique*, Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann; Katto Jonna (2020), *Women's Lived Landscapes of War and Liberation in Mozambique: Bodily Memory and the Gendered Aesthetics of Belonging*. London, Routledge.

[15] McClintock Anne (1995), *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context*, London and New York, Routledge; Stoler Ann L. (2010), *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*, Berkeley, University of California Press; Lugones María (2007), "Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System", *Hypatia*, 22(1), pp. 186-209.

networks of sociability, and forms of political mobilization had the cumulative effect of producing homosexuality as a legible identity in Southern Mozambique.[16]

In this paper, I dialogue with this work but want to make two additional interventions. Firstly, I want to situate this history of sexuality in the city and its urban cultures. This is important because colonial cities have been privileged spaces in which the tensions of sex and gender, of normative and dissident desires, were able to unfold, under both colonial rule and postcolonial state power.[17] They have been theatres of homo sexual encounter and experimentation, too. Cities offered anonymity, relative personal freedom, and the physical spaces where bodies could meet, find each other, and where dissident sexual cultures could flourish (bar, nightclubs, etc.).[18] At the same time, colonial cities' global entanglements demand that we think transnationally.[19] In this paper, I want to show that in Lourenço Marques, as in other highly connected port cities, the geographies of sexuality unravelled through various routes and scales.

Secondly, I want to *queer* the social history of Lourenço Marques. The term queer has been used in different ways. On the one hand, it is an umbrella term used to denote "non-heterosexual and non-gender binaried people", including those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender.[20] On the other hand, it relates to the "critique of identity politics itself[21]" by challenging the idea that sexual and gender identities are universal, stable, and coherent. In this second sense, scholars working on (post)colonial contexts have called for a reading of sexuality that avoids essentialism, focusing instead on a multiplicity of homo erotic and sexual arrangements, desires, and affects.[22] To *queer* the history of Lourenço Marques, then, is less an exercise in mapping out how "gays" or "lesbians" inhabited the urban space, than it is an enquiry into the historical processes and mechanisms of power by which particular forms of intimacy, desire, and sex were rendered non-normative, invisible, and secluded within certain spaces or situations. In what follows, I intend to queer Lourenço Marques by looking at four types of actors who were consequential to its sexual subcultures: "transactional lovers", soldiers, *travestis*, and tourists. I will then examine the transformations of this urban scene in the immediate post-independence period.

This paper is based on archival research, on autobiographic and fictional writings, and on oral history interviews with four men who lived in Lourenço Marques/Maputo: Eduardo Pitta

[16] Miguel Francisco (2019), *Maríyarapáxjis: Silêncio, exoginia e tolerância nos processos de institucionalização das homossexualidades masculinas no sul de Moçambique*, PhD Thesis, University of Brasilia.

[17] Ivaska Andrew (2011), *Cultured States: Youth, Gender, and Modern Style in 1960s Dar Es Salaam*, Durham, Duke University Press.

[18] Aldrich Robert (2004), "Homosexuality and the City: an Historical Overview", *Urban Studies*, 41(9), pp. 1719-1737. Of course, this is not to say that homo sexual behaviours or subjectivities did not exist in rural spaces, but simply that the city provided more opportunities for visibility and, as a consequence, for their inscription in the archive.

[19] Oswin Natalie (2015), "World, City, Queer", *Antipode*, 47(3), pp. 557-565.

[20] Matebeni Zethu, Monro Surya, Reddy Vasu (2018) (eds.), *Queer in Africa: LGBTQI Identities, Citizenship, and Activism*, London, Routledge, p. 1.

[21] Rao Rahul (2020), *Out of Time: the queer politics of postcoloniality*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, p. 27.

[22] Tamale Sylvia (2011) (ed.), *African Sexualities: A Reader*, Cape Town, Pambazuka Press; Nyanzi Stella (2014), "Queering Queer Africa", in Z. Matebeni (ed.), *Reclaiming Afrikan: Queer perspectives on sexual and gender identities*, Cape Town, Modjaji books, pp. 65-68; Epprecht Marc (2004), *Hungochani: The History Of A Dissident Sexuality In Southern Africa*, Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press; Khanna Akshay (2007), "Us 'Sexuality Types': a critical engagement with the postcoloniality of sexuality", in B. Bose and S. Bhattacharyya (eds.), *The Phobic and the Erotic: The Politics of Sexuality in Contemporary India*, London, Seagull Books, pp. 159-200; Dankwa Serena O. (2021), *Knowing Women: Same-sex Intimacy, Gender, and Identity in Postcolonial Ghana*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

(white, born in 1949), Guto (black, born in 1965), Essa (mixed race, born in 1963), and João (black, born in 1956).[23] While I intend to avoid essentialist labels, my interlocutors were all familiar, to varying degrees, with the modern language of sexual identity and, therefore, used the terms homosexual and gay to refer to themselves and others.[24] I use the same terms interchangeably, and only in relation to individuals who identified as such themselves, or who were described as such in interviews. I also use the term *travesti*, which has historically been employed to refer to various practices of cross-dressing and gender dissidence. While the term is today used in parallel with transgender,[25] the notion of gender non-conformity was not yet available to people who employed it at the time I am writing about. Lesbians were mentioned briefly in my interviews, but in this paper I focus on men because they are the interlocutors I had access to, so theirs is the history I am confident telling. This speaks, of course, to a general challenge in doing historical research on same-sex desiring women. As scholars have argued, patriarchal structures and phallocentric cultures have had the effect of rendering female homo sexual practices particularly invisible in the archive.[26]

"Transactional Lovers"

By the mid-20th century, Lisbon hoped to modernize its colonial policy by promoting economic development, public investment in infrastructure, and European settlement in its African territories.[27] While the majority of the newly arriving settlers joined the ranks of the urban middle class,[28] this period also saw an influx of working class and unskilled whites coming from the metropole.[29] In Lourenço Marques, they competed with Africans for jobs and housing opportunities in the "city of *caniço*" (reed), the impoverished areas in the urban periphery.[30] At the same time, racial boundaries were being crossed further by a growing middle-class of

[23] João is a pseudonym.

[24] Some of them have also used the slang terms *paneleiro* and *bicha*, in Portuguese, and *moffie*, in Afrikaans, which all refer to male homosexuality, often implying effeminate behaviour.

[25] On the contemporary uses of *travesti* in Mozambique, see: Mugabe Nelson A. (2021)**, "**Mapeando as autoidentificações, a construção das identidades e as subjetividades das 'manas trans' da cidade de Maputo"**,** *Anuário Antropológico*, 46(2), pp. 171-197.

[26] Blackwood Evelyn and Wueringa Saskia (1999) (eds.), *Female Desires: Transgender Practices Across Cultures*, New York, Columbia University Press; Almeida São J. (2010), *Homossexuais no Estado Novo*, Lisboa, Sextante Editora.

[27] Bandeira Jerónimo Miguel (2018), "Repressive Developmentalisms: Idioms, Repertoires, Trajectories in Late Colonialism", in A. Thompson and M. Thomas (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook on the Ends of Empires*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 537–554; Castelo Cláudia (2014), "Developing 'Portuguese Africa' in late colonialism: confronting discourses", in J. Hodge, G. Hödl and M. Kopf (eds.), *Developing Africa: Concepts and practices in 20th century colonialism*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, pp. 63-86; Castelo Cláudia (2007), *Passagens para a África. O povoamento de Angola e Moçambique com Naturais da Metrópole (1920-1974),* Porto, Afrontamento.

[28] Castelo C., *Passagens…, op. cit.* The white population in Mozambique, according to the official censuses, was: 17 842 (in 1928), 23 131 (in 1935), 27 438 (in 1940), 31 221 (in 1945), 48 213 (in 1950), 65 798 (in 1955), 97 245 (in 1960), and 162 967 (in 1970). In 1970, around half of the white population (83 480) resided in the district of Lourenço Marques.

[29] Simões de Araújo Caio (2020), "Whites, but not quite: Settler imaginations in late colonial Mozambique, c. 1951-1964", in D. Money and D. van Zyl-Hermann (eds.), *Rethinking White Societies in Southern Africa: 1930s-1990s*, New York, Routledge, pp. 97-114; Castelo Cláudia (2012), "'O branco do mato de Lisboa': A colonização agrícola dirigida e os seus fantasmas", in C. Castelo *et. al.* (eds.), *Os Outros da Colonização: Ensaios sobre o colonialismo tardio*, Lisbon, Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, pp. 34-43.

[30] Penvenne Jeanne M. (2011), "Two Tales of a City: Lourenço Marques, 1945-1975", *Portuguese Studies Review,* 19(1/2), pp. 249-269.

urban and mobile Africans, either black, assimilated, and/or multi-racial.[31] Rural Africans were also migrating to the city in unprecedented numbers, adding to its booming population.[32]

Figure 2: Partial Aerial View of Lourneço Marques[33]

The class inequality taking root within both the settler and African populations shows that these were not homogenous communities, but were internally fractured along lines of gender, class, and sexuality.[34] In Lourenço Marques as in other colonial cities at the time, opportunities for inter-racial conviviality co-existed with segregated spaces and colonial racism.[35] These frictions obviously played out on the urban nightlife scene and in its sexual cultures. Particularly downtown, in *Rua Araújo*, various life-worlds collided, met, and renegotiated their terms of engagement. While the male middle class – white, black and multi-racial – made the bulk of the clientele to the pleasure economy of the businesses of the night, this urban scene was diverse. Black female sex workers have been commonly remembered as emblematic figures in late colonial urban life, even if some historians have suggested that their presence in the city has been at times exaggerated in the literature.[36]

[31] Morton D., *Age of Contrete…, op. cit.*, Havstad L., *To Live a Better Life…, op. cit.* "Assimilated" refers to the legal status conferred to a small number of Africans under the *Indiginato* system, which operated in Mozambique from 1917 until 1961. The system regulated the acquisition of citizenship by Africans through the legal mechanism of "assimilation", whereby they had to prove to be well assimilated into Portuguese culture and "civilized" society, a process measured in terms of level of education, language competence, religious observance, and professional occupation.

[32] Penvenne J. M., *Women…, op. cit.*

[33] Mozambique Photographic Archive, Armário C, Prateleira 2, Caixa 56, Icon 4737, 1974.

[34] Thomaz Omar R. (2012), "Duas Meninas Brancas", in E. Brugioni, A. Sarabando and M. M. Silva (eds.), *Itinerâncias: Percursos e Representações da Pós-colonialidade*, Ribeirão, Edições Húmus; Stoler Ann. L., *Carnal Knowledge…, op. cit.*

[35] Havstad L., *To Live a Better Life…, op. cit.,* p. 33.

[36] *Ibid.,* p. 200-201; Filipe, E. P. V., *"Where are the Mozambican Musicians?…, op. cit.*

A fundamental challenge in researching this issue is that the complex ways in which the trade of sex operated in colonial Africa resists easy legibility and categorisation.[37] Terms such as "prostitute" or "sex worker" imply a somewhat fixed professional identity that may not always be factually accurate and culturally sensitive[38] In Mozambique, these categories were also deeply gendered: in public discourse the prostitute was necessarily female.[39] Of course, this view needs correcting. I want to move away from "prostitution" to consider instead transactional sex as a more flexible category, in which sex is understood not only in terms of its material value, but also in relation to the various meanings attached to it.[40] I also want to make the obvious but unacknowledged point that men, too, engaged in transactional homo sex in Lourenço Marques. I deploy "transactional lovers" as a provisional and imperfect term, to avoid pushing these men into either side of the homo/heterosexual binary.

This is important because the pleasure economy of Lourenço Marques was inviting to various forms of same-sex encounter: sexual and affective, transactional or not. And these were not confined to a single space either. While *Rua Araújo* gained notoriety as the major hotspot for the trade in pleasure in the city, urban sexual geographies were more diffused and unevenly distributed.[41] Gay-identifying white settlers with financial and social capital could recruit potential lovers by mobilizing their networks, without necessarily having to resort to known cruising spots.[42] Likewise, men who sought monetary gain from sex – both white and black – had their own networks, through which they gained access to possible patrons.[43] These encounters happened discretely, out of the public eye, in the secrecy of private spaces all over the city.

> For those men who had no knowledge of this covert sexual economy, *Rua Araújo* was a favoured cruising space[44]. This was the case of some black men with few professional prospects, who saw transactional sex as promising economic opportunity. João first heard of *Rua Araújo* when he moved to the Malanga neighbourhood, an area adjacent to the Railway Station and within walking distance of the heart of the downtown nightlife. He was only sixteen or seventeen years old at the time and, because of his small body frame, was deemed to be too young to cross *Avenida da República* into *Rua Araújo*.[45] The only black youngsters allowed, he recalled, were those who sold peanuts and other snacks to the crowds of party-goers. Yet João accompanied his older friends to the very edge of the nightlife zone. Inside its limits, they cruised for potential partners, usually white men. Once they found a suitable match, they could hire one of the hotel rooms

[37] White Luise (1990), *The comforts of home: prostitution in colonial Nairobi*, Chicago, Chicago University Press.
[38] Standing Hilary (1992), "AIDS: Conceptual and Methodological Issues in Researching Sexual Behaviour in Sub-Saharan Africa", *Social Science & Medicine*, 34(5), pp. 475-483.
[39] Jones Eleanor K. (2016), "Discipline, Disease, Dissent: The Pathologized Body in Mozambican Post-Independence Discourse", *Journal of Lusophone Studies*, 1(2), pp. 205-221.
[40] Hunter Mark (2002), "The Materiality of Everyday Sex: Thinking beyond 'prostitution'", *African Studies*, 61(1), p. 101.
[41] Penvenne J. M., *Women…, op.cit*, pp. 144-149; Morton D., *Age of Concrete…*, *op. cit.*, p. 42.
[42] "Cruise" or "Cruising" refers to the practice of finding anonymous sexual partners in public spaces. The role of social capital and networks in allowing white settlers access to potential partners is well documented in Guilherme de Melo's novel, *A Sombra dos Dias*, to which I will refer below in more detail.
[43] Guto, Interview conducted on 31/01/2020, in Maputo, by the author.
[44] See in the same issue Botes Jonathan (2021), "The Pink Inner-City. Creating Queer Spaces in Hillbrow, Johannesburg, during apartheid", *Revue d'Histoire Contemporaine de l'Afrique*, 2, online. URL: https://oap.unige.ch/journals/rhca/article/view/02enbotes.
[45] Today, *Avenida 25 de Setembro*.

available in the area precisely for that purpose. Alternatively, they could take their partner back home by hopping into one of the taxis stationed on adjacent streets, waiting to drive people up and down the city throughout the night.[46] Even if this sexual economy remained diverse during the late colonial period, in the 1960s a particular set of actors gained greater visibility: soldiers.

Soldiers

The turn to armed struggle in Angola, in 1961, led to an expansion and modernization of the Portuguese military in Africa.[47] In Mozambique, the number of troops recruited in the metropole jumped nearly three-fold, from 8,209 in 1961 to 23,891 in 1973.[48] The literature on the war has recently started to explore the intimate and gendered lives of the men involved.[49] Historians have argued that, in Portugal as elsewhere, military service was entangled with ideas of respectable, patriotic manhood, which suffused the conservative culture of the *Estado Novo*.[50] The hegemonic masculinity that military experience promised to inculcate in Portuguese youth was oriented towards heterosexual marriage and the nuclear family as national institutions.[51] Yet, while some women chose to follow their husbands to Africa, especially from the late 1960s onwards, the majority of the recruits arrived on their own.[52]

Even if many of these men were ultimately stationed in rural areas and in other cities throughout the country, they arrived in Lourenço Marques and often took their leave there, thus becoming a constant presence in the city.[53] The sudden influx of this population of young men, uninhibited by any family oversight and free from commitment to female partners, had a significant impact on local gender relations and the urban social scene, particularly as concerned the sex and nightlife economies.[54] Yet, with a few exceptions, the literature has been oblivious to same-sex sensibilities. This is surprising if one considers that a fictional and memorialist literature on this subject matter already exists.[55] This includes, most notably, Guilherme de Melo's autobiographic novel *A Sombra dos Dias*, which was published in 1981, and widely praised for its unprecedented exploration of the homosexual theme in Portuguese literature.[56] Born in Lourenço Marques in 1931, Melo was a journalist and author who worked

[46] João (pseudonym), Interview conducted on 05/01/2020, in Maputo, by Nelson Mugabe.

[47] Cann John P. (1996), *Portuguese Counterinsurgency Campaigning in Africa (1961-1974): a military analysis*, PhD Thesis, King's College, London. The so-called "colonial war" was a military conflict opposing Portuguese armed forces and liberation movements in Portugal's African territories. In Angola, Guiné, and Mozambique, the conflict started in 1961, 1963, and 1964, respectively. In African countries, it is referred as "liberation war."

[48] Cann J., *Portuguese Counterinsurgency…, op. cit.,* p. 176.

[49] Campos Ângela (2017), *An Oral History of the Portuguese Colonial War: Conscripted Generation*, Cham, Palgrave Macmillan.

[50] Ribeiro Margarida C. (2004), "África no feminino: as mulheres portuguesas e a Guerra colonial", *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais*, 68, p. 11.

[51] Cascais António F. (2019), "Masculinidades debaixo de fogo: homossocialidade e homossexualidade na guerra colonial (1961-1974)", *Journal of Lusophone Studies*, 4(1), pp. 136-138.

[52] Ribeiro Margarida C. (2007), *África no Feminino: as mulheres Portuguesas e a Guerra Colonial*, Porto, Edições Afrontamento, p. 17.

[53] Penvenne J. M., *Women…, op. cit.*, pp. 187-188.

[54] Thomaz O. R., "Duas Meninas Brancas…", art. cited., p. 415.

[55] Cascais A., *Masculinidades…, op. cit.*

[56] Brandengerger Tobias (2014), "Olhar Moçambique: A Sombra dos Dias de Guilherme de Melo", *Limite*, 8, pp. 185-206; Valentim Jorge (2010), "Armários Devassados: Homoerotismo e Resistência na Ficção de Guilherme de Melo", *Terra Roxa e Outras Terras: Revista de Estudos Literários*, 18, pp. 78-88. For an careful analysis of de Melo's work, see: Miguel F., *Maríyarapáxjis…, op. cit.*

for more than two decades at the daily *Notícias*, the main newspaper in Mozambique. He was also one of the most prominent openly gay men living in Loureço Marques.

In the book, Melo writes at length about sexual proclivities in the military, a topic he knew very well. Among the local network of gay-identifying white settlers, he was famously known for hosting parties in which Portuguese soldiers willing to engage in homo sexual relations were the main attraction, carefully selected beforehand to meet the physical preferences and sexual expectations of the guests.[57] Melo's narrative also suggests that soldiers actively engaged in the trade of sex, mostly targeting local men as patrons. As Melo describes:

> Soldiers [offered] themselves to any homosexual walking downtown looking for an adventure. These were the men who managed to escape headquarters to market their bodies when the weekend approached: looking for some cash for a better Sunday, at the beach, with a seafood lunch at a restaurant by the beachfront.[58]

This is not to say, of course, that these soldiers self-identified as gay. It is more likely, indeed, that most of them did not, especially considering that homo sexual practices between men who identify as heterosexual are common in military spaces everywhere, just like in other environments of masculine confinement, such as prisons or hostels.[59] The term "situational homosexuality" has been commonly used to underscore the both ephemeral and circumstantial nature of such arrangements.[60] On the one hand, Portuguese soldiers in Lourenço Marques were indeed responding to a specific set of circumstances in their sexual choices. Often coming from a rural or working-class background in Portugal, and having no connections or relatives in Mozambique,[61] these men explored their erotic value to their own advantage, either for monetary gain or to obtain a social capital that they lacked. At the same time, transactional sex with other men could be a means to gain access to women, as soldiers could seek male patrons precisely to earn the necessary cash to pay for (mostly black) female sex workers themselves.[62]

On the other hand, the diversity of situations on the ground alerts us to the dangers of generalization. Pitta noted that even if transactional sex was a widespread occurrence, soldiers could also engage in homo sexual relations for their own pleasure, seeking no financial benefit in return.[63] Social life in military barracks in Lourenço Marques or across the country was not devoid of opportunities for same-sex intimacy, friendships, or even romantic attachments. These permutations of desire blur the lines between the transactional and the affective and thus invite us to consider a wider range of possibilities than the idea of situational homosexuality allows for. Homoerotic life in the military was complex, and still deserves further research. The retired major Mário Tomé, for instance, noted that same-sex relationships were

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[57] Eduardo, interviews conducted on 19/02/2020 and 02/03/2020, in Lisbon, by the author.

[58] Melo Guilherme (1981), *A Sombra dos Dias*, Lisbon, Bertrand and Círculo de Leitores, p. 331.

[59] Hartenstein Christiana and Gonsiorek John (2015), "Situational homosexuality", in P. Whelehan and An Bolin (eds.), *The International Encyclopedia of Human Sexuality*, Hoboken, Wiley, online. URL: https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118896877.wbiehs486; Heinecken Lindy (1999), "The silent right: homosexuality in the military", *African Security Review*, 8(5), pp. 43-55.

[60] Kahan Benjamin (2013), "The Walk-in Closet: Situational Homosexuality and Homosexual Panic in Hellman's Children's Hour", *Criticism*, 55(2), pp. 177-201.

[61] Thomaz O. R., "Duas meninas...", art. cited, p. 415.

[62] *Ibid.*

[63] Eduardo, interviews conducted on 19/02/2020 and 02/03/2020, in Lisbon, by the author.

common in the barracks during his service in the early 1970s, a time also marked by moments of sexual experimentation. This included "parties where men danced with other men, some dressed as women"[64]. Elsewhere, in the city, too, a cross-dressing culture was being staged.

Travestis

While Brazil had been politically and economically independent from Portugal since the first half of the nineteenth century, links between the country and its former metropole did not disappear completely, but persisted in various ways.[65] In the 1950s, Brazil and Portugal turned to each other in a bid to consolidate diplomatic ties across the Lusophone Atlantic with the inauguration, in 1953, of a Luso-Brazilian community, albeit loosely defined.[66] At the same time, Brazilian cultural forms found strong resonance in Portuguese colonial society. This included the circulation of culinary and musical tastes, and the mobility of public figures on both sides.[67] Brazilian intellectuals, politicians, soccer teams, and musicians visited Portuguese Africa, sometimes receiving much praise and attention from local publics and the press.[68]

In the late 1960s, Brazilian *travestis* also mobilized the same transatlantic networks to their advantage. The ascending actress, singer, and performer Rogéria was perhaps the best-known example of this. Described by the popular magazine *O Cruzeiro*, in 1967, as "one of the best *travestis* who ever stepped on Brazilian stages"[69], in 1970 she spent seven months in Luanda, Angola.[70] The success of her shows in that Portuguese colony got her an invitation to perform in Mozambique, first in Lourenço Marques, and later in Beira, where she landed a temporary job in the prestigious nightclub *Moulin Rouge*.[71] Her short stay in Lourenço Marques left quite an impression. Pitta recalls that Rogéria – and others whose names he could not remember – performed dance numbers and lip-syncs, and quickly rose to prominence on the urban scene.[72]

Rogéria's rise to fame and her international projection onto Portuguese Africa need to be situated within broader transformations in urban entertainment cultures on both sides of the Atlantic. In Brazil, the figure of the *travesti* as a cultural agent started to take shape in the 1950s, as many of these performers found in show business (theatre, radio, and film) a means to carve out a social and symbolic space for themselves.[73] By cultivating an aesthetics of glamour and a hyper-feminine persona, *travestis* consolidated their art form as a valuable

[64] São José Almeida, "Guerra Colonial: Sim, havia maior liberdade sexual, mas um oficial matou-se na parada", *Público*, 17 July 2009, online. URL: https://www.publico.pt/2009/07/17/sociedade/noticia/guerra-colonial-sim-havia-maior-liberdade-sexual-mas-um-oficial-matouse-na-parada-1392263.

[65] Thomaz Omar R. (2002), *Ecos do Atlântico Sul: representações sobre o terceiro império português*. Rio de Janeiro, Editora UFRJ.

[66] Dávila Jerry (2012), *Hotel Trópico: Brazil and the Challenge of African Decolonization*, Durham, Duke University Press.

[67] On culinary and musical influences, see: Havstad L., *To Live a Better Life..., op. cit.*; Filipe E. P. V., *Where are the Mozambican Musicians..., op. cit.*; Sopa António (2014), *A Alegria é uma coisa rara: subsídios para a história da música popular urbana em Lourenço Marques (1920-1975)*, Maputo, Marimbique.

[68] On soccer teams, see: Cleveland Todd (2017), *Following the Ball: The Migration of African Soccer Players across the Portuguese Colonial Empire, 1949-1975*. Athens, Ohio University Press; Domingos Nunos (2017), *Football and Colonialism: Body and Popular Culture in Mozambique,* Athens, Ohio University Press.

[69] "Um Homem e uma Mulher", *O Cruzeiro*, 48, 1967, p. 28.

[70] Paschoal Marcio (2016), *Rogéria: uma mulher e mais um pouco*, Rio de Janeiro, Sextante, p. 99.

[71] *Ibid.,* pp. 101-102.

[72] Eduardo, interviews conducted on 19/02/2020 and 02/03/2020, in Lisbon, by the author.

[73] Soliva Thiago B. (2016), *Sob o símbolo do glamour: um estudo sobre homossexualidades, resistência e mudança social*, PhD Thesis, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, p. 67.

cultural commodity.[74] In Brazil, the appeal of *travesti* shows to the general public had to do with their glamorous quality, which local audiences associated with a cosmopolitan urban modernity.[75] In Lourenço Marques, the reception of this art form assumed a similar expression. As Melo put it, "in the most expensive night clubs in town, [the *travesti*] shows, with sequin dresses and feathers, became a commodity that the entire high society desired"[76].

A cross-dressing culture also featured in the Carnival celebrations that gained traction in Lourenço Marques in the late colonial period. While sporadic festivities had taken place in the city since at least the late 1930s, in the 1950s and 1960s they became a more prominent element of its urban culture, as street parades and private parties gained space and popularity with local publics.[77] By the end of the 1960s, Carnival balls also hosted *travesti* competitions. As Miguel has noted, cross-dressing practices during the festivities could have been simply moments of entertainment for heterosexual men, in ways that did not subvert the homo/hetero binary.[78] Yet, for gay-identifying men, this could also be a time for playfulness and experimentation. As Green has suggested for Brazil, Carnival afforded gay men a space to experience their sexual dissent or gender non-normativity in a manner that was both public and intensified.[79] This seems to have been the case in Lourenço Marques, too. If until that point the local cross-dressing culture had been secluded to the confines of private parties,[80] by the late 1960s it could exist more openly. Pitta, for instance, started to cross-dress for the Carnival in 1969, a practice he sees as an experimentation with a culture of femininity.[81] By the same token, João used to enjoy the Carnival with friends who would come to the city from Chokwe precisely to attend the street festivities. João recalls that, since childhood, he had felt a desire to wear women's clothes. What attracted him to the Carnival was the ability to do so openly and without fears of outing himself. "I used to go there, dressed as a woman. I would even wear breasts", he admits.[82]

That *travesti* shows and public cross-dressing were not only tolerated but also publicly enjoyed is indicative of a broader cultural shift in late colonial society, which included the liberalization of moral codes relating to gender roles and sexual behaviour and the emergence of a dynamic youth culture. For instance, in 1959, a report on the state of public education in Portuguese Africa expressed concerns that the youth in Lourenço Marques was growing up in "complete freedom" and without parental discipline. Their "too easy" lives – where they spent too much time at the beach and in social gatherings – could only lead them to "reprehensible excesses"[83]. This was not, of course, solely a local development. The 1960s were a decade of social and sexual liberalization and flourishing youth cultures nearly everywhere, including in

[74] *Ibid.,* p. 117.
[75] *Ibid.,* p. 104.
[76] Melo G., *A Sombra..., op. cit.*, p. 321.
[77] Havstad L., *To Live a Better Life..., op. cit.*, p. 185; Sopa A., *A Alegria é uma coisa rara..., op. cit,* pp. 46-49.
[78] Miguel F., *Maríyarapáxjis..., op. cit.,* pp. 111-112.
[79] Green James (1999), *Beyond Carnival: Male Homosexuality in twentieth-century Brazil*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
[80] This is described a length in Guilherme de Melo's novel.
[81] Eduardo, interviews conducted on 19/02/2020 and 02/03/2020, in Lisbon, by the author.
[82] João (pseudonym), interview conducted on 05/01/2020, in Maputo, by Nelson Mugabe. João has been always "in the closet" and expressed the fear of having his sexual proclivities revealed. This goes to reinforce the idea of the Carnival as a time in which one could cross-dress publicly without fear of being considered a homosexual.
[83] National Archives of the Torre do Tombo (Lisbon), AOS/CO/ED-7, "Visita do Subsecretário da Educação Nacional a Angola e Moçambique", 1959.

the (post)colonial world.[84] Living through these years, Pitta mentions the "golden generation" of the early 1970s, the sons (and daughters) of the settler elites who started to frequent *Rua Araújo*. As he recalls, it was precisely the arrival of *travestis* in the late 1960s that catalysed these changes in the boundaries of colonial respectability.[85] Moreover, he observed, Lourenço Marques' urban scene was also shaped by another factor: its proximity to Johannesburg.

Figure 3: Street Carnival in Lourenço Marques[86]

South Africans Tourists

In 1970, a Southern Rhodesian newspaper promised "a long, gay, night, for those who seek pleasure" in Lourenço Marques. The word *gay* here refers not to homosexuality, of course, but to the sense of enjoyment associated with the vibrant urban culture that attracted thousands of Rhodesian and South African tourists to Mozambican shores. The article then described the city in familiar terms, as a place of "prawns and palms", a clear reference to the tropical climate and the local cuisine. But the focus here was another aspect of the city's appeal: its nightlife. Downtown, "taxis roll up with pleasure seekers" going to *Rua Araújo*, where a (presumably male) visitor could enjoy drinks, the company of girls, "many English-speaking and mini-

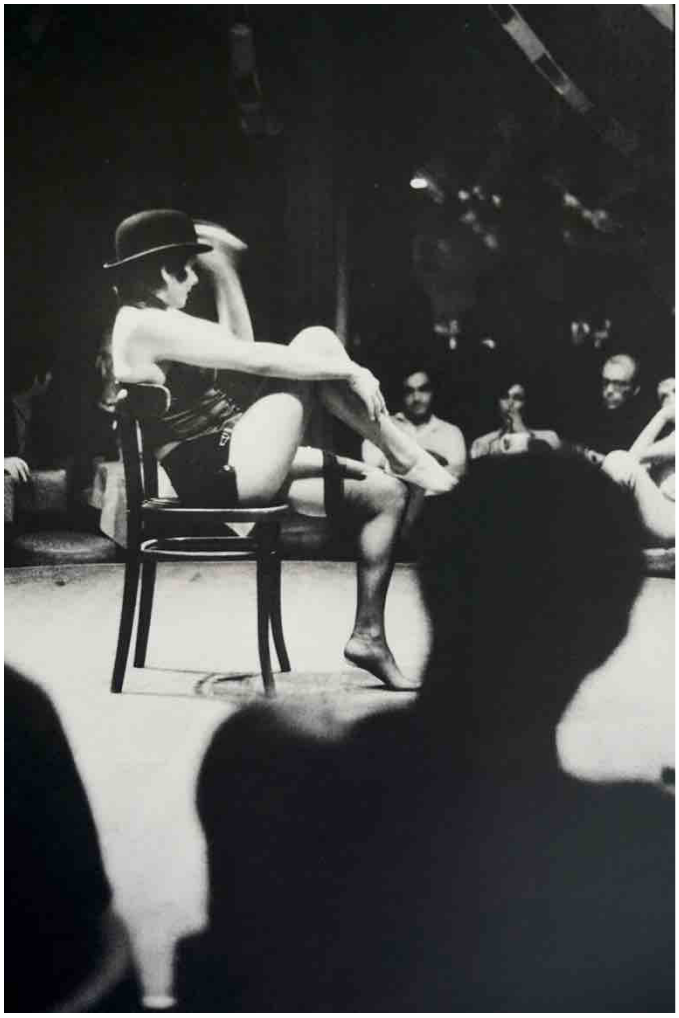
[84] Jian Chen *et al.* (eds.) (2018), *The Routledge Handbook of the Global Sixties: between protest and nation building*, New York, Routledge; Ivaska A., *Cultured States..., op. cit.*

[85] Eduardo, interviews conducted on 19/02/2020 and 02/03/2020, in Lisbon, by the author.

[86] Mozambique Photographic Archive, Carros Alegóricos, Icon 7776 a 7804, Foto 7791. N.D.

skirted", singing numbers, and "strippers who are off in a flash"[87] As a piece of tourist propaganda, this article is illustrative of Lourenço Marques' appeal to regional visitors.

Figure 4: Striptease in the Tamila (1970), Photo by Ricardo Rangel[88]



Indeed, international tourism to Mozambique grew substantially in the 1960s, coming to represent, in the early 1970s, a crucial source of foreign exchange and an important positive input to the otherwise negative balance of payments.[89] Lourenço Marques and Beira were tourist destinations attracting white South Africans and Rhodesians in large numbers.[90] In the 1970s, these two groups alone accounted for nearly 75 % of the total foreign clientele.[91] Because of its proximity to Johannesburg, Lourenço Marques had long been a haven for South Africans, particularly around holidays and during the "season", i.e., the winter months. Scholars

[87] "It's a long, gay night for those who seek pleasure in Lourenço Marques", *The Rhodesia Herald*, 24 June 1970.
[88] Courtesy of Centro de Documentação e Formação Fotográfica, Maputo.
[89] From 194 882 tourist entries in 1961, by the 1971 Mozambique received 582 655 tourists, most of which having Lourenço Marques and Beira as destinations. See: Coelho Celeste A. (1973), "Elementos Estatísticos: Moçambique", *Finisterra*, 8(15), pp. 145-161.
[90] Havstad L., *To Live a Better Life..., op. cit.*; Penvenne J. M., *Two Tales..., op. cit.*
[91] Other groups were statistically irrelevant. See: Coelho C. A., "Elementos...", art. cited, p. 158.

have suggested that some of this tourist trade was sexual in nature, as white South African men were eager to experience interracial sex, then prohibited under apartheid law.[92]

For some observers, the South African presence could produce undesirable effects on colonial society. While many blamed apartheid's tourists for bringing the "colour bar" with them,[93] another issue of concern was the ramifications this tourism could have for public morality. For instance, the 1959 report I mentioned above raised an anxious warning about the possible "repercussion of South African tourists' free or libertine habits" on the local youth.[94] This sense of foreboding was, of course, exaggerated. But at the same time, it spoke to a shared settler anxiety about the racialized boundaries of morality and respectability in a rapidly changing Southern Africa. The Global Sixties hit South African (white) youth culture with rock and roll music, new consumer habits, student protests, and changing fashions and sexual morals.[95] In addition, by the end of the decade, a distinctive gay urban culture was emerging, creating spaces of socialization and new possibilities for community formation.[96] It is difficult to determine how many of these new youth cultural forms travelled across borders, but we can speculate that some of them did.

A point of contact between South African and Mozambican gay-identifying whites was Gerry Wilmot, the director of English language programming at *LM Radio*. A rather popular radio station at the time, *LM Radio* was, interestingly enough, the main source of rock and roll music for South African youth.[97] As Pitta explains, Wilmot was an openly gay man, well-known in local circles for hosting parties over the weekends in his house on Catembe beach, across the bay from Lourenço Marques. These events were notoriously attended by South African men willing to sexually fraternize with locals.[98] They were also "white only", which interrogates the alleged South African appetite for interracial sex in this context. Rather, Pitta suggests that the mutual appeal was the Anglo-Saxon and Latin European backgrounds of South African and Mozambican partners: "we were Latin, so at the end of the day they came [to Lourenço Marques] to have this experience"[99]. Like many whites on both sides of the border, Pitta continued to travel back and forth, until decolonization drastically changed regional politics and society.

[92] Isaacman Allan and Isaacman Barbara (1984), "The Role of Women in the Liberation of Mozambique", *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies*, 13(2/3), p. 133; Newitt Malyn (1995), *A History of Mozambique*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, p. 469.
[93] Simões de Araújo C., *Whites, but not quite..., op. cit.*
[94] National Archives of the Torre do Tombo (Lisbon), AOS/CO/ED-7, "Visita do Subsecretário da Educação Nacional a Angola e Moçambique", 1959.
[95] Grundlingh Albert (2008), "'Are We Afrikaners Getting too Rich?' Cornucopia and Change in Afrikanerdom in the 1960s", *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 21(2/3), p. 153.
[96] Gevisser Mark and Cameron Edwin (1994), *Defiant Desire: Gay and Lesbian Lives in South Africa*, Johannesburg, Ravan Press.
[97] Grundlingh A., *Are We Afrikaners..., op. cit.*, p. 154.
[98] Eduardo, interviews conducted on 19/02/2020 and 02/03/2020, in Lisbon, by the author.
[99] *Ibid.*

"Men with Long Hair, Women with Short Skirts": Liberation and the Politics of Sexuality

Pitta was briefly arrested on 30 October 1974. "This is truly a gay story", he told me. That night, he was out with his boyfriend Jorge, to watch a movie as usual. He was wearing a new pair of jeans, so fitted that his ID would not fit in his pocket. When he chose the outfit, he did not know that Frelimo's troops would be patrolling downtown, demanding people's identification. As he did not have any documents on him, he was taken into custody.[100] Being informed of what had happened, Pitta's mother mobilized her social connections, and he was released fourteen hours later, the next morning.[101]

Pitta's arrest can be situated within a broader moral policing campaign carried out by Frelimo in the aftermath of decolonization. As Benedito Machava has argued, Frelimo's nationalist project was predicated on a combination of protestant puritanism and political Maoism. As a consequence, the boundaries of belonging and citizenship in decolonizing Mozambique had clear moral demarcations: the "new man" emerging from the revolutionary process had to uphold the values of self-discipline, detachment from material indulgence, and moral purification.[102] Those deemed to be dissenting from this new normative order – most notably sex workers, alcohol/substance abusers, or the "unproductive" – were taken to re-education camps (*campos de reeducação*) for moral reform and political education.[103]

Historians have been increasingly mobilizing gender as a useful analytical concept in this context. Machava, for instance, has argued that women were especially vulnerable to internment, as they could be accused of "prostitution, sorcery, adultery, brewing and selling alcohol," or even be wrongfully interned, reported by their partners and relatives wanting to punish any "unruly" behaviour.[104] The revolutionary process was, too, embedded in a particular imaginary of gender and sexuality, oriented towards the heterosexual family and invested in the production of heteronormative masculinity.[105] Indeed, Pitta recalls that, on the night of his arrest, detainees were being sorted out as "men with long hair, women with short skirts"[106]. Similarly to other revolutionary contexts in this period, such as Tanzania or Zanzibar, dress codes and bodily attributes were being politicized because they clashed with revolutionary morality and provoked anxieties about men's and women's respective and respectable positions in postcolonial society.[107] Long hair, hippie dress, short skirts, and so on, were visual

[100] *Ibid.*

[101] Costa Santos Gustavo G. (2017), "'Nos bares da Rua Araújo era fácil engatar militares, sobretudo marinheiros': vivências e sociabilidades homoeróticas em Moçambique colonial", *Estudos de Sociologia*, 2(23), pp. 489-490.

[102] Machava Benedito (2018), *The Morality of Revolution: Urban cleanup campaigns, re-education camps, and citizenship in socialist Mozambique (1974-1988)*, PhD Thesis, University of Michigan, p. 23.

[103] *Ibid.*; Meneses Maria P. (2015), "Xiconhoca, o inimigo: narrativas de violência sobre a construção da nação em Moçambique", *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais*, 106, pp. 9-52; Thomaz Omar R. (2008), "'Escravos sem dono': experiência social dos campos de trabalho em Moçambique no período socialista", *Revista de Antropologia*, 51(1), pp. 177-214; Quembo Carlos D. (2017), *Poder do poder: Operação Produção e a invenção dos improdutivos urbanos no Moçambique socialista, 1983–1988*, Maputo, Alcance Editores.

[104] Machava B., *The Morality..., op. cit.,* pp. 159 et 297.

[105] Katto, J., *Women's Lived, op. cit.*, p. 86.

[106] Costa Santos G. G., "Nos bares...", art. cited, pp. 489-490.

[107] Ivaska A., *Cultured States..., op. cit.*; Burges T. (2002), "Cinema, Bell Bottoms, and Miniskirts: Struggles over Youth and Citizenship in Revolutionary Zanzibar", *The International Journal of African History*, 35(2/3), pp. 287-313.

embodiments of the moral decadence and depravity that Frelimo associated with cities as hotbeds of "bourgeois vice"[108].

Sexual dissidence or indulgence were important components of the urban cultures that Frelimo officials decried. Yet, as Miguel has argued, in revolutionary discourse "the homosexual" was never articulated as an "enemy" of the nation.[109] According to official narratives and popular memories alike, Frelimo never actively targeted homosexuals, at least in part because there were well-known openly gay men in the party's leadership.[110] While it is true that no specific anti-gay policy existed, this does not mean that homosexuals – or men engaging in homo sexual practices – were not affected by the drastic political changes happening around them. João remembers this time with some distaste, mentioning that three of his friends were caught in the moralist wave:

> When Frelimo arrived (into power), they didn't like the hookers, they took them there (to the reeducation camps). They got to know that there were homosexuals as well, so they evacuated them also. It was when they evacuated my friends (…). Frelimo tried to change them.[111]

João's testimony needs to be read with some suspicion, just because it is impossible to ascertain the specific conditions of his friends' arrest. Nevertheless, it invites us to reconsider the position of dissident sexualities in Frelimo's political project, a topic that is still understudied, with the exception of Miguel's recent dissertation. Even if "homosexuality" was never singled out as a vice that needed intervention or called for systematic punishment,[112] the practice of homo sex on Lourenço Marques' urban scene, particularly on the nightlife scene, typically involved, to varying degrees, a constellation of transgressions. These could include, for instance, behaviours associated with alcohol abuse, occasional drug use, sexual promiscuity, and material indulgence. It is possible that João's friends' arrest had to do with one of these offenses, or more generally with their inability to fit into the new normative order emerging in the aftermath of decolonization. Yet, the fact that João remembers their arrests as an attack on their homosexuality suggests that the urban cleansing of Lourenço Marques presaged, to some, the foreclosure of a way of life.

Frelimo did eventually carry out a crackdown on the nightlife economy, shutting down many of the businesses around *Rua Araújo*.[113] In the following years, the geographies of same-sex socialization in the city fragmented along racial and class lines. In affluent neighbourhoods, like Polana, leisure establishments catered to local postcolonial elites and a new international clientele of businessmen, diplomats, and *cooperantes.*[114] Guto recalls that he started frequenting this emerging nightlife culture in the early 1980s, when he had access to dance clubs thanks to his father's economic status.[115] He was soon approached by someone who

[108] Meneses M. P., *Xiconhoca…, op. cit.*, p. 30; Machava B., *The Morality…, op. cit.*, p. 5.
[109] Miguel F., *Maríyarapáxjis…, op.cit.*, pp. 103-104.
[110] *Ibid.*; Danilo da Silva, interview conducted on 04/02/2020, in Maputo, by the author.
[111] João (pseudonym), interview conducted on 05/01/2020, in Maputo, by Nelson Mugabe.
[112] Miguel F., *Maríyarapáxjis…, op.cit.*, p. 82 et 103-105.
[113] Machava B., *The Morality…*, *op. cit.*, pp. 85-86.
[114] *Cooperantes* were foreign personnel, often from Northern Europe or Socialist countries, who relocated to Mozambique to offer technical assistance to the revolution.
[115] Guto, interview conducted on 31/01/2020, in Maputo, by the author.

introduced him to a covert gay network comprising both white and black, local and foreign, men. In this environment, "gay parties" continue to exist privately.[116] On the other side of the class divide, life carried on downtown, and sex workers could still be found around the port, despite Frelimo's restrictions. Having arrived in Maputo after independence, Essa learned of a particular area downtown where the trade of sex was still rife, and from which "one did not leave alone"[117]. He recalls that his first contact with the local "gay scene" happened casually, when he was approached by a male sex worker.[118] This chance encounter also afforded him access to a gay network that existed discretely. These testimonies suggest that gay subcultures persisted in the city even at the height of Frelimo's moralist campaign, as queer people simultaneously employed strategies of in/visbility to find each other and create safe spaces, out of the public eye and beyond the reach of the moralizing state. As Guto put it when remembering this period: "homosexuality never dies"[119].

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In 1966, the daily *Notícias* published a piece on *Rua Araújo*. Divided into two subsections, day and night, the narrative intended to portray a space of stark disparity. During the day, a "calm, provincial, welcoming, and modest street". But as soon as night fell, it became "a little Broadway for the simple minded", resembling "an old exuberant lady, scandalously painted, lavish laughter, ludicrous, decadent, sad in the sense of its false joy"[120]. Such a contrast between night and day, between ideas of modesty and decadence, was a recurrent trope in both colonial and postcolonial public discourse about Lourenço Marques' nightlife scene, its dangers and possibilities.

In this paper, I have aimed to queer the history of late colonial Lourenço Marques and its urban culture, especially in relation to the "pleasure economy" of bars, nightclubs, and cabarets operating downtown, around *Rua Araújo*. By exploring the various ways in which a wide range of men – both white and black, old and young, local settlers and transient visitors – explored same-sex desires, intimacies and affects, I have shed light on urban sociabilities that have been so far largely ignored in both historical scholarship and public memory. Despite this silence, I contend that the urban spaces of Lourenço Marques were a stage for homo sexual practices, desires, and intimacies in ways that are yet to be fully mapped. My intention here is to show that these intimate histories have to do with the politics of sexuality, but also with social and political change, both locally and internationally, and with transnational circuits of mobility and the circulation of people and of cultural forms across what was essentially a vibrant and cosmopolitan urban space. In this paper, I follow how a range of actors – from gay-identifying men to glamorous *travestis* – navigated this world, its nightlife and its sexual geographies; seeking money and pleasure, release and fulfilment, friendship and social capital.

I then follow how decolonization transformed the urban space and its gay subculture, in particular in light of Frelimo's moral crusade and its related campaign for "cleansing" the city

116 *Ibid.*
117 Essa, interview conducted on 05/02/2020, in Maputo, by the author.
118 *Ibid.*
119 Guto, interview conducted on 31/01/2020, in Maputo, by the author.
120 "Rua do Jano", *Notícias*, 18 January 1966.

from the moral depravities of colonialism. This included a crackdown on the nightlife economy of *Rua Araújo*. Although Frelimo never targeted sexual dissidents directly or systematically, I question how this wave of political and moral puritanism affected local gay culture and the social and cultural geographies through which homo sexual encounters and forms of sociability could unravel and endure in the urban space. I hope this will invite further research on dissident sexual histories in the revolutionary, post-colonial, context.

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