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Sexuality in cosmopolitan Maputo: *the aesthetics of gendered practice through the lenses of class*

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With its fusion of diverse ethno-linguistic groups, nationalities and races, the 'worlding city' (Simone 2001) of Maputo, capital of Mozambique, showcases the global homogenisation of urban space in Africa. This is a cosmopolitan city, a sprawling urban space where various social classes and myriad identities strive to live and express themselves in numerous ways, although always within the context of economic, political, historical and geographical coordinates.

A number of studies on urban Africa tend to focus on the poor - see for instance, Simone (2001 and 2004) as well as most of works in the volume edited by Myers and Murray (2006) - but most studies of sexuality in the continent have kept silent with regards to the socio-sexual practices of the middle classes, and whenever sexuality is treated, it is usually in relation to disease, reproduction and death. This investigation explores relatively wealthy urbanities. Thus, cosmopolitan young adults, most of them part of the middle class, constitute the target group.

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Indeed, as described by Coupland, the middle class will have to live with the fact that history will ignore it and will never champion its causes and that is the price that is paid for day-to-day comfort and silence (1991).

The concept 'young cosmopolitans' refers to a group of young men and women (between the ages of 25 and 36) whom do not belong to the impoverished layer of society. They combine backgrounds ranging from working class to middle class and, some of them are part of elites with power, capability and influence. These differences amongst them tend to be levelled as they share similar lifestyles and have enough resources to invest in it. Cosmopolitanism, in the sense of urban citizens who seek the global world in their local contexts (Spronk 2008: 23), thus brings these young adults to a similar stratum.

My experience of fieldwork in amongst this group of young adults, and indeed in other sites and social strata in Mozambique, has always raised discomfort in regards to the (neo) colonial and mainstream gender and feminist (early feminism) thinking where the notion of 'woman' is inscribed in a binary opposition to 'man' - more than opposition is the fact that the fields of operation, functioning are clearly defining with men having a list of characteristics, powers, roles that oppose and complement women's ones (Ortner 1974; Chodorow 1978; Beauvoir and Parshley 1988). A lot has/is happened/happening in gender studies and feminist theory reviewing and de-constructing such binary categories. A few examples include: Herdt's invitation to investigate the 'third sex and third gender'(1994); Butler's refusal of gender as a static description of what one is but re-conceptualising gender as a process rather than a category, with the focus on the 'doing' of gender rather than the 'being' of it developed in the performative theory (1993); Oyewùmí's refusal of gender as the central category informing social organisation in African societies but seniority and kinship relations within the extended family (1997); to the suggestion for the abandonment of gender as a concept and venture into the homo–hetero partition to understand socio-sexual dynamics (Sedgwick 1991).

These perspectives indeed re-dimensioned the female–male binary. However, even recent academic productions in Mozambique tend to focus on somewhat narrow views of femininity and masculinity as well as gender relations (re)producing ideas that portray men's hegemony within the patriarchal male domination model (Osório 1997; Cruz e Silva, Andrade et al. 2007).

In my experience as a local consultant in gender topics in the country, it becomes apparent that orthodox patriarchal views tend to inform national policies and development projects negating diversity and transformation in the relations established between men and women. My fieldwork in Maputo (2008 to 2009) has highlighted a more diverse scenario in the interaction between men and women that would not fit into the tendency of the fixed model in which there is a box in which women would fit and another one where men would fit too. Men and women in Maputo travel within these boxes and, in the process create new ones that allow for flexibility in the ways people define themselves. Thus, focusing in the example of the middle class and cosmopolitan young adults in the capital city, I aim at describing a more nuanced pattern truly influenced by postcolonial notions of personhood - manhood and womanhood - mediated by discourses of 'modernity' and 'Africanness' similar to the examples of young professionals in Nairobi (Spronk 2006) and young Igbo men and women in Southern Nigeria (Smith 2001).

I aim to describe and explore the ways in which gender identities circulate in fluid ways. As my general interest focus in the individual's sense of being, I will begin with a discussion of the gendered meaning of social status and how in Maputo men and women negotiate their status and therefore their positioning in the family and society, at large, by manipulation a number of subjectivities at their disposal in the landscape of the city. In this discussion, hoping to highlight Oyewùmí's (1997) point that gender is not necessarily the main family and social organizing system throughout Africa, I will use the example of Maputo to show how the city combines both a system that rests in the nuclear family (colonial inheritance) to give status to women (and men) as well as on the kinship and seniority system.

I will then follow by presenting examples of diverse masculinities and femininities and argue that even though such remain structuring aesthetics in the city, amongst the middle class youth they have ceased to be moral categories. My point is clarified by the nuances showing the integration of perceived male characteristics into femininities and vice-versa, although with specificities that highlight the masculine. The deviations from these categories seem to be socially accepted, at least to a certain degree among young adults in the middle class. Next, I will focus on the internal politics of intimate sexual relationships to highlight the manner in which feelings, desires, negotiations and sexual practices shape masculinities and femininities in the

privacy of relationships but also, how then, such private logics influence one's sense of self and social interaction in the city. In this section, I will also discuss the gendered features desired in the ideal relationship, having in consideration the aesthetics of masculinity and femininity. The endeavour of this article subsequently, is to disentangle (neo) colonial thinking around gender relations, intimacy and sexuality in Africa (Oinas and Arnfred 2009) and shed light on non-normative heterosexuality in order to contribute to the telling of the plural stories of the African continent.

Gender identities and the definition of one's social status

Marlene is one of the married women in this research. She has recently married and she refers to her status as the ideal one for an individual to be in. Later in the article I will give a thorough characterisation of Marlene when I use her case to exemplify a model of femininity. Marlene's femininity is embedded in a mould in which there is need for the existence of a male partner in order to grant her social status, as being married or in a steady relationship, having children and exercising motherhood (preferably with a partner who will be exercising fatherhood as well) is central to her sense of being a woman. However, there are examples in the city that tempt me to advance that there are cases in which a man's social status depends on a woman too. The case of Victor is paramount. On a Thursday evening Victor invited me to his one bedroom apartment in down town Maputo. While drinking Gin tonic he started complaining that he, as the eldest (36 years old) of five brothers and sisters, was under pressure to get married. He described how his relatives never included him in discussions regarding family matters because he had no experience on the subject, as, even though he was the eldest, he had not been married. Victor is excluded from some topics of his relatives' conversations, discussions and decision making processes as he is regarded as a 'boy' - irrespective of his age. He is not yet considered a man as he has not performed the perceived rite of passage to adulthood – marriage!

Both Marlene and Victor's examples highlight the need of formally recognised romantic and/or sexual heterosexual relationships to allow one's family and social status. Nonetheless, still in Maputo many other links and relations do grant both women and men socially recognised status.

4

Indeed, this model of granting social status through marriage or union is an inheritance of early feminism that, although globalised, is grounded on the Western nuclear family that distinguishes the subordinate wife, the patriarchal husband and children (Chodorow 1978). There is no place for other adults. As consequence, 'it is not surprising that the notion of womanhood that emerges from Euro-American feminism, rooted in the nuclear family, is the concept of wife' (Oyewùmí 2002: 4). Thus, the man - the husband - is the one giving social status to the woman. However, in other contexts, as in the case of many African countries different family organisations are established. In Yorubaland for example, seniority and kinship relations (Oyewùmí 2002) play a crucial role in detriment of gender hierarchy. In urban Maputo, while aspects of the nuclear family have been assimilated, they socialise simultaneously with logics of the extended family in which, similarly to the Yoruba case, seniority; one's position in the family tree (for example being the first born) and one's role in the family (having descents or godsons/goddaughters) immediately confers one a social status.

Also, taking care of one's parents once one becomes a professional is highly regarded in Maputo and in Mozambique in general. The idea of retribution implicit in descendants caring for their parents is the driving force of such high regard. Thus, a man or a woman who becomes a professional and starts earning a salary is expected to; somehow, help the parents or other close relatives. Daniel, for instances, covered the expenses of medical bills in South Africa when his mother had a sudden stroke. However, the term 'help' does not necessarily cover the meaning of what is expected from the young adults. There are instances in which the parents may not necessarily need any kind of (financial or material) help. Though, a surprise gift, as happened when Nília and her brother threw a surprise party when their mother turned 50 years old, is highly regarded. These kinds of action grant individuals a social status that is equated to adulthood, maturity and responsibility.

Participation in family rituals and taking leading/guiding roles also prompt admiration and respect. For example, Solange prepared and read a speech at a large event commemorating her grandmother's 80th birthday. Ismael called a family meeting to discuss the situation created in his family as his father and his uncle (his father's brother) were not in talking terms. Thus, "kin relationships have some significance in the way people organize and run their everyday lives"

(Allan 1979: 1) and practices from young adults that demonstrate participation and interest in the kinship relations are highly regarded.

Such actions are perceived by family members and by society in general as expressions of maturity. Plus, maturity is associated locally with age and experience – thus a continuation with the gerontocratic model of status in society. When young adults display actions as the ones described above, irrespective of their gender, they are appreciated and highly perceived by the receivers and the spectators of such actions. Through conversations parents, uncles and other relatives from older generations comment positively about the young man or woman actions. Younger siblings, cousins and other relatives are persuaded by elders to follow the example of the young adult's action in order to show that he/she respects, considers and cares for the family. Also, after such highly perceived actions the young adult is, for example, granted an opinion on Sunday - extended family - lunch. These facts highlight the reproduction of the gerontocratic model in Maputo in ways that are not simply associated to age but incorporate the notions and practices representing responsibility, caring and maturity. Thus, young adults are granted status, not exclusively based on the o patriarchal model (Chodorow 1978) but also (in combination with or disregard of it) through the performance of actions expected to those in the top of the gerontocratic structure. Plus, the patriarchal system in Maputo is complicated by the diversity in expressions of femininity and masculinity which highlight subjectivities to the gendered aesthetics in place, overstepping essentialist readings of gender roles, as I will discuss next.

An overview of diversity in femininities and masculinities

Based in my research experience in Maputo, I depart from the premise that contemporary theorisations of gender dynamics in urban Maputo must start from the basic hypothesis that, as stated by Aboim, 'in the city one witnesses a complex locus of 'mixed' forms of reconstructing oneself as a 'man' and a 'woman' in the light of the rapid changes that have been taking place broadly (…) toward a new gender order' (2009: 218). Such changes influence individuals in particular ways that differ based on personal trajectories and the specific social and economic conditions in which one finds him/herself living.

I argue that (1) individuals construct their notions of femininity and masculinity and develop their gendered relationships in an intertwined embodiment of the concepts, philosophies and experiences resulting from the rapid changes occurring in the country as well as the legacy of colonialism and local cosmologies. Thus, postcolonial masculinities and femininities are plural, hybrid and dynamic. Still, as part of my argument, I demonstrate that (2) young adults work on their notions of femininity and masculinity in ways that they better feel to represent their own selves. However, in the dialectic interaction with society both men and women often struggle to view their perspectives recognized in a fashion granting them social acceptability to the groups they aim to engage with. As a response, young adults recreate or reinforce their identity notions to restart and/or recuperate and/or conquer the social spaces they wish to. In this creative cycle young adults mould existing and nouveau (gender) identities constructing creative/innovative ways of being (de Certeau 1984) thus, re-configuring the social landscape, in this case, in regards to gender dynamics, femininity and masculinity. Borrowing from the conceptualization of Honwana and De Boeck (2005) I could argue that the young adults are indeed makers and breakers. However, this concept misses a crucial dynamic that I identified in the interaction of the youth in Maputo's scenario: the power of continuity. While 'makers and breakers' convey an idea of bringing up the new and also destructing it (and the old), in my analysis it became evident that young adults in Maputo greatly incorporate existing social expectations and rules to their ways of being and socialising. Therefore, the new and creative interact with a continuity of practices, meanings and logics in complex ways fomenting the dilemma that the young adults face in the search for stable relationships in the city.

An interesting aspect that I identified while doing research was the manner in which the (re-) construction of both masculinities and femininities emerges from processes such as contestation, affirmation and/or side lining from mainstream notions at given times. For example, the reification of 'Africaness' in the (re-) definition of a certain kind of masculinity emerged for some young men as a response and resistance against the 'independent' woman and her correspondent partner - the 'new man' (Messner 1993). As at a broader level I am interested on politics employed by young adults in Maputo to state and grasp their sense of self and to interact

in society, I aim at focusing on gender dynamics to demonstrate how such processes happen under this particular category.

I will describe and discuss four case studies: two on different definitions of masculinity and the other two on diverse constructions of femininity. In developing the analysis on post-colonial identities in Africa and elsewhere, many authors scrutinize their ethnographic data under the linear polarization of 'traditional' and 'modern'. Even if tempted to follow this line of argumentation as, indeed, young adults appeal and refer to what in their imaginary and discourse is described as 'traditional' and 'modern' to give sense to their own positioning and practices, I do not follow such argument line. Young adults in Maputo understand modernity and tradition in a similar manner as described by Utas in regards to Liberians as quoted by:

> " (...) modernity is what comes from overseas and predominantly takes the form of commodities, technology and clothes. Modernity comes in the guise of consumption... Tradition on the other hand is what is locally produced, whether it comes in the form of commodities or of ideas. Traditions also occupy a space largely dominated by elders, thus youth, contesting the powers of elders are prone to seek status in the modernities." (Utas in Sommers 2010: 7-8)

Thus, the terms 'modernity' and 'tradition' represent emic categories present in daily discourses and common sense (Passador 2009) in Mozambique. Theoretically, I refuse to develop an argument based on the binary opposition of tradition and modernity. My refusal is twofold: On the one hand, the concepts embody a fixed and essencialised content that discredit the multiplicity and ever-changing dynamics that reality presents. On the other hand, analytically, traditional and modern become useless tools for socio-historic periodisation as one witnesses that at the present, different historical periods and gender orders seem to be entwined and as a consequence producing mixed identities and practices (Aboim 2009).

In order to elaborate on the nuances presented by the diverse periodic influences in the identities of the young adults I will now give the profile of two young men who perform their masculinities in quite diverse manners. The title of each description summarises my analysis of the model of masculinity the individual displays in society.

8

Affectionate husband with lovers

Benjamin is 33 years old. His construction of masculinity merges ideals of polygyny, that had characterized the patrilineal south (Junod 1927; Johnston 1983; Arnaldo 2004), with ideals of affection and companionship. Benjamim grew up in a family in which the father had two wives. His father was married in a civil marriage with the first wife and later joined his mother in a union, then formalized by *lobolo*[2]. The wives lived in separate houses in Maputo city with their own children. Benjamim recalls having a very close relationship with all brothers and sisters, from the two mothers, as well as with his 'other' mother (his father's first wife).

In his conception of being a man, having more than one partner is central as he expressed in regards to polygyny: 'Having many women allows a man to feel fulfilled'. The legitimisation of masculinity for Benjamin seems to be conceived through the acquisition of diverse sexual partners. This differs from the conceptualization polygyny in which a man would marry various wives and cover the expenses of running these families. Indeed, Benjamin is married to Kátia. They married in a civil ceremony three years ago and they have a two-year-old daughter. While discussing about getting involved in a relationship with someone he would consider a second wife, he stated that it was not his objective:

> *'Times have changed! I would not get a second house, a second family. I guess in today's time being a man does not need to be about covering the expenses of the second house as women work too. Being a man is about being able to perform and conquer diverse women'.*

In reality, Benjamin is involved in a relationship with two other women. One he calls a lover as they see each other regularly. This woman has been in on-and-ff various relationships while seeing Benjamin. With the third women, Benjamin develops a more sporadic relationship, as they do not see each other very often. He keeps these two unofficial relationships a secret as he

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[2] Bridewealth in Southern Mozambique. Authors discussion the topic in Mozambique include:

Arnfred, S. (1994). Reflections on family, trends of change, Lobola and Polygyny <u>Changing Families Changing Laws</u>. WLSA. Harare, WLSA. **Working Paper #9:** 36-47.

Bagnol, B. (2009). Offerings to the living and the dead: Lovolo therapeuthic practices in Southern Mozambique

Granjo, P. (2006). "Wining back our good luck: Bridewealth in nowadays Maputo." <u>Ufahamu</u> **32**(3): 123-162.

aims to protect his marriage. When I asked him if he thought his wife could be aware of his affairs, he told me 'no' as 'I am very careful for not letting her know and I treat her with all the consideration!'

He believes that as a husband, his role is to share a pleasant and happy life with his wife and be a partner that comforts by showing affection, sharing marriage duties and household chores with his wife. He seems less concerned with authority and appears as a caring father. Thus, affection and companionship in the relationship come across as elements of his notion of masculinity. Romance is also a central definition of his masculinity. I have witnessed events in which he would publicly share affection in the form of hugs and kisses, caressing the face and the hair of his wife as well as reading poetry to her or asking the disc jockey (DJ) in a nightclub to dedicate a specific song to his wife. Such kind of behaviour, associated to the 'new man' (Messner 1993), is not widespread among men in Maputo. Entertainment is also a key part of Benjamin's life and he is very proud to mention: 'I take my beautiful wife most of the times when I go out partying, I don't hide her at home like the others!'

Free spirit and uncompromised

Ben could be described as a '*bon vivant*'. He travels between on and off relationships. While in a relationship he may have many other partners that acquire different categories: either one-night stands, lovers or second or third girlfriends. He has two daughters. They are both four-years-old, however one is three months older than the other and they are from different mothers. Indeed, he has been married to the mother of the first daughter but the marriage only lasted a few months because, as he says 'the mother of my ex-wife pushed us to get married'. Ben and his group of friends have a very active social (night) life. I would mostly meet him during the week at *Mundo's* bar after 5PM where he would join his friends for drinks. From Thursday on, the weekend would be inaugurated with a night at the *Africa Bar* or *Bar Gil Vicente* where there are live music performances of Thursday night with, *Africa bar* advertising itself as a place for *música e copos* (music and drinks). The rest of the weekend would follow a similar pattern, with the group of men driving from one bar to the other, going to nightclubs and parties around the city.

An interesting parallel can be established between this kind of masculinity and some masculinity models found in Britain that, as suggested by Attwood (2005), the migration of soft porn out of sex shops and into readily available magazines is symbolic of a form of modern sexuality that emerged in the 1990s: the 'new laddism'. Such representations suggest that it is normal for men to go for nights out with 'the boys' in which excessive consumption of alcohol, forms of competitive homo-sociality and sexual predation go hand in hand. The *malta*[3] of Ben and many other young men from diverse social classes in Maputo city follow a very similar pattern of life style epitomized on Fridays - considered to be '*dia dos homens*' (men's day) in the sense that men are free to enjoy themselves drinking, going out with friends. In many ways, these images of male sexual prowess inform the rituals of consumption and leisure played out in city centres every weekend, with alcohol-fuelled and testosterone pumped men performance (Hubbard 2008).

What is also evident is that the new lad has found his counterpart in the 'ladette' [*mulher moderna/independente* (modern/independent woman) in Maputo] a label connoting women who are 'boisterously assertive', 'sexually aggressive' and drink 'like a man' (Skeggs 2005; Jackson 2006; Hubbard 2008). The ladette's existence is suggestive of shifts in expectations of feminine sexual comportment (Hubbard 2008). The example of Solange (featured below) is one of a ladette that in many ways constitutes a challenging femininity for most residents in Maputo.

The description of femininities explores, again, two distinctive expressions of the identity. I categorise them as house femininity and home femininity. Such categories emerge from the discussions I had with young adults that would refer to home and house as two diverse environments. I found it interesting and in many ways such distinction reflected the characteristics highlighted by the Solange and Marlene.

House femininity

In Portuguese there is a distinction between the words *casa* (house) and *lar* (home). While the first refers to the physical structure of a building used for residential purposes, the latter

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[3] *Malta* is a collective noun used to designate a group. In this case, others can refer to this group of friends as a *malta* as they share similar behavior and tend to socialize together in specific public and private venues. Other terms to designate a group of friends include *gang, grupo, turma*.

designates the environment where a family lives, associated to domestic affections. When it comes to femininity, I argue that these terms refer to two poignant ways of exercising femininity (not always clear cut and not always necessarily a choice). House femininity refer to women who buy houses themselves or with the help of their relatives or even get the houses through the professional positions they occupy (which grants them a house as a privilege) and live in such house or apartment alone or with one close relative (in most cases a sibling) or rent a room in the house. It is worth noting that women in this group are a minority. During my research it coincided that such women had a distinctive characteristic: they were either single or in on-and-off (mostly) short-term relationship. In some cases they were involved in relationships with married men. This uncertainty in their intimate life is viewed and verbalised by many as resulting from their lack of kindness and certain submissiveness in their relationships and/or the prioritisation of their careers and/or studies in detriment of their affective life and/or building of a family. Also, sexual openness that characterises some of these women (which is regularly linked to their involvement with multiple partners) is perceived as a reason for uncertainty and instability in their sexual and romantic relationships.

The popular discourse in Maputo categorises this group of women as independent and modern. In general, they are women in their late twenties and mid thirties who have established their professional careers and/or furthered their education to a Masters and/or PhD degrees, most of the times, internationally. Some of the women expressed that living alone and not committing to a relationship and/or an institution like marriage was actually their choice as they would like to delay or not have their sexuality and freedom controlled through such institution. Another reason mentioned was the feeling of unpreparedness to deal with the hardship and expectations of the domestic life, even though in Maputo general social expectations would be for both men and women in their late 20s and early 30s to get engaged in a long lasting relationship, get married, get off-springs and raise a family [*lar* (home)]. This data corroborates with two other studies undertaken in Mozambique, though referring to lower social groups (Aboim 2009; Archambault 2010).

For other women, life circumstances seem to push them into the 'house' category. Professional, highly educated women in their late 20s and 30s that are well established in their professional

careers often highly remunerated have reported challenges getting involved in long lasting relationships. Their discourses and the discourses of others (both women and men) develop around the difficulties most men have in accepting successful and independent women that do not necessarily need a stable partner as a breadwinner[4] as these women are able to fulfil such a role. Indeed popular discourses fluctuate around the inability that independent women have to be docile and allow the man to still be the head of the household or, as put locally, wear the pants! The following sentence of Levi summarises the aesthetic model of femininity for a balanced relationship: 'I do not mind if she earns well or even more than I do however, she has to respect me, I need to still feel that I am the man in the house'. Being the man in the house was verbalised as not having the man's (as well as couple's) decisions disrespected; not having the women constantly overpowering the man and making the man feel small and unimportant or that he is subsidised by the woman.

In the popular discourse however, it is articulated that independent and well off women go against the above mentioned model of femininity as they embody a superiority complex towards men that may make it difficult to establish a long lasting relationship. Such superiority, I argue, would characterize self-possession and self indulgence which is read, in Maputo, as not being a good characteristic to a partner with whom to establish a relationship because such person (woman or man) is not ready to subordinate his/her desires to the desires of the other.

In most cases women living alone have a particular routine that is totally controlled by them as the locus of the management (the house) is solely managed by her [not by the father (other relatives) or in conjunction with husband/partner]. This is what I refer to as 'house' femininity. During fieldwork, the women I met embodying this kind of femininity invited me plenty of times to their houses and gatherings. There we would chat, be spontaneous by, for example, prolonging a Friday afternoon conversation till late in the night, sometimes until dawn after buying beers or distilled drinks for cocktails and finger foods at one of Maputo's many take away restaurants. The example of Solange is a typical one.

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[4] The independent women seem to be refusing the expectations that the men in a position of breadwinners demand (related to the performance of house shores, control their social life, and sometimes their fertility). In the same manner some men expressed their refusal to engage with such women exactly because they would be reluctant to perform the roles indicated above.

Solange lives alone in an apartment in central Maputo. She is single, at the moment, and has a mortgage with the bank to buy the apartment where she lives[5]. She rents one of the rooms in her apartment and at the moment she has the second expatriate woman staying there. At the dinner party that she invited me to at her apartment, most of her friends and acquaintances that showed up were also single. Two of the friends were married with children and two others were in relationships. We all sat on the balcony having fried chicken and fries with wine and beers. Most of the women, in the room, were smoking and there was a joint of marijuana passing through the room for those interested.

The popular discourse about the independent women (specifically from the middle class) indeed includes smoking, drinking and other practices (such as sexual freedom to engage with various partners and to be sexually adventurous and innovative, alternative dress codes and socializing patterns, argumentative power and intelligence) as practices carried by such women thus, embodying Hubbard's description of the 'ladette' (2008) . Such discourses also imply that independent women can only end up in relationships with white partners. A white partner is perceived here as a foreigner (non black African) who is tuned with the philosophies of life of the independent woman - the new man (Messner 1993). Some patriarchal local discourses, emphasising that a woman's social status is given by man, consider such women *encalhadas* (stuck – in the sense that they did not manage to find a man to engage in a union) and, in a similar line, refer to them as women who are going to stay with their aunties (*ficar pra titia*[6]). Still, such local discourses associate the future of such women with homosexuality. The rational is that with the failure to conquer a man due to the woman's profile and attitude, she would resort to sexual and romantic relationships with other women. As a coincidence, I heard rumours that Solange was having an affair with the expatriate woman whom is renting a room in her

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[5] It is worth noting the practice of single women at her age (33) buying a house in Maputo is still rare: (1) the houses are very expensive and not within the budget/salary of most young-adults, even from the middle class and some elites in Maputo; (2) most of the women buying and/or building houses do it with their partners (in most cases husbands – either through civil, religious, traditional unions or in de-facto unions) as the joint finances may allow to cover the expenses of such investment; (3) some young women owing apartments had them paid for partially or totally buy their parents and/or lovers, husbands or ex-husbands]

[6] *Ficar pra titia* (literally to stay with the auntie corresponding to the expression 'to be on shelf')) is a expression borrowed from Brazilian Portuguese that is widely present in Maputo, and Mozambique in general, through the Brazilian soap operas that started being screened in public television in Mozambique in the mid 1980s.

apartment. Solange has mentioned, in our conversations, having had sexual experiences with other women. Her sexual experiences underscore Epprecht's argument on a false dichotomy of homosexuality/heterosexuality in Africa (2008) and emphasises Butler's notion of identities as performative rather than stable and fixed. Solange's femininity and sexual desire is indeed fluid as she challenges herself to be guided by her desires and not by heteronormative, conventional gender roles a some other socio-cultural restrictions in place.

During the gathering, some of the women's complaints included the manner in which society in general responded to their lifestyle and to the fact that they were single. Nheleti complained that her friends, relatives and others would always comment negatively about her smoking, which did not leave her comfortable. It seems that independent women are in a dilemma as, they want to get involved in relationships but express discontentment as partners put forward demands that they do not perceive as fair. Also, sometimes partners have the perception that, as men, they have to dominate, change women's views and lifestyles in order to have them as their partners.

A similar independent way of living exists amongst men. Ismael described his friend's use of the apartment where he used to live alone as a place where one can *chutar a porta* (kick the door) to express the level of freedom his friends had at his house. The fact that his friends could pop at any time, bring other friends and partners without even informing him in advance and make use of the apartment to party, eat or sleep was personified in the expression *chutar a porta*.

Home femininity

Marlene got married to Valdo during my fieldwork. They have been living together and already had a daughter aged two years old. I selected Marlene's story to show a pattern of femininity that I categorise as 'home'. I will start by giving the background of Marlene's relationships to demonstrate how the notion of being in a stable relationship and raising a family takes centre stage in her life.

In her late teens and early twenties Marlene was in a long-term relationship with Ivo. They grew up together in the centre of Maputo and their families were acquaintances. They frequented the same primary and secondary school, where they started going out together. For the last years of

secondary school Ivo went to live in Manchester with his parents and siblings as his father got a job position in England. Marlene always looked at Ivo as her partner for life. Distance, in her view, was not an obstacle to their relationship as they kept in constant contact through the phone and she sometimes visited him as she had a close uncle living in London. When Ivo returned to Maputo, Marlene was about to depart to New York as the uncle from London was relocated to the United States of America (USA) and invited her to go with them in order to further her studies. Her parents and she saw that as a great opportunity. She left for the USA and as she says 'the plan was that Ivo and I would get married upon my return'. She always mentioned how madly in love she was with Ivo. However, at her return, Ivo had become a 'different man' as she explained it. He was not so serious with Marlene. She insisted consistently on their relationship but heard rumours about Ivo being involved with other women. She was heartbroken and quickly accepted an offer to work in the northern Mozambique province of Nampula to an International non-governmental organisation (NGO): 'I just wanted to escape the pain! She expressed.

Shortly after her arrival she met Valdo, a colleague working for the same NGO. They became close friends and after a few months in Nampula they started going out together and she fell pregnant. Valdo belongs to a lower social class than Marlene and that was an issue for most for her friends. Actually, the combination of him being from a different province (Gaza province[7]) and being quite authoritarian (and very much with a mentality that the man is the head of the household and all decisions regarding the household should pass through him) has created quite opposite views in Marlene's circle of friends. Ana, a close friend of Marlene, referred to Valdo as *grunho* (rude) in a barbecue around the pool at her house. Most friends could not understand how Marlene would end up in a relationship with Valdo. Marlene explained that she was ready to engage in a stable relationship and have a family. She continued:

> *'Valdo came at the right time, he was respectful and wanted a serious relationship, (...)*
> *that was enough for me! I am tired of these boys that grew up with us but only want to*
> *party….men from our circles (middle class) are yet very childish, they do not want serious*
> *commitment'.*

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[7] Many informants visualize in Gaza province the epitome of the power of men over women because their examples and references of polygyny come from the province. Also, Gaza is the land of the Shangana people – Mashangana – which in the eyes of many informants from Maputo are seen as rude people, prone to conflict, with no good manners and lack of urban and cosmopolitan style (associated to the *assimilados* – the natives who have acquired the Portuguese manners). Thus, ethnic prejudice is highlighted in instances such as the mentioned one.

After the birth of Marlene's child she moved to Maputo as she was offered a better job. She is now working for the US Development Agency, which pays some of the highest salaries in the country and, indeed she now earns more than her partner. However, because she believes in the maintenance of the *lar* (home) and the grooming of her family she takes care of the partner and tries not to overpower him. Indeed in one occasion before going to group dinner in a restaurant I went to Marlene and Valdo's flat to catch their lift and I saw her giving him money so that later, in the dinner, he would be the one opening his pouch to take the money to pay the restaurant bill.

Close to the end of my fieldwork I attended Marlene and Valdo's wedding. It happened at the beginning of Marlene's second pregnancy. Marlene's notion of being a woman at her age (32 years old) is, in her words, associated to 'being in a stable relationship - preferably marriage, have children, exercising motherhood and being a professional who contributes to the running of the nuclear family'.

These examples of masculinities and femininities reveal diversity in the ways of performing gender identities. This diversity adds on to the problematisation of gender as a key referential in social status as highlighted by patriarchal. To include to it, the next section will focus on internal aspects of sexual relationships that question gendered expectations for men and women and heteronormativity.

Gender differences highlighted through internal politics of relationships

In the last month of my fieldwork in a conversation with Ben, one of the key participants of the research, approached me and expressed that his girlfriend practiced anal fingering on him. He articulated that such sexual practice would give him a lot of pleasure but simultaneously a sense of disgust as he felt less of a man, a sense of losing dignity and manhood (Middelthon 2002)[8], therefore, he would not want it to be public. In Ben's words:

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[8] Middelthon (2002) discusses similar anxieties however among young gay men in Norway in regards to being anally penetrated.

'I like when she (the girlfriend) *inserts her finger in my anus, I feel pleasure, but that disgusts me as I fear liking a man penetrating me. Also, I do not want anyone to know about it as people may think that I am less of a man'*

Anal fingering creates in Ben the anxieties expressesd as he makes sense of himself as a man within a heteronormative system which not only perceives heterosexuality as the norm but also indicates 'several intermeshing ideological state apparatuses which try to ensure that everyone is heterosexual in particular ways' (O'Rourke 2005: 111). Anal fingering does not fit into the cultural heteronormative pattern lives in Maputo which leads for a sense of confusion in Ben's experience of a practice that paradoxically gives him pleasure. Moreover being perceived as 'less of a man' is at the centre of Ben's angst. Masculinity in this context is, in a widespread manner, intersected with the act of penetration. Then, the penetration of the girlfriend's finger in Ben's anus represents, in his view, his feminization. Such feminization becomes even more problematic to Ben as it is accompanied by pleasure. His concerns are based on the fact that such practice may lower his and other's sense of his masculinity as he puts it:

'I feel confused, I think that my girlfriend may feel that because she does that (inserting her finger in his anus) *when we have sex, she may start thinking that she can begin commanding other aspects of the relationship that I usually grasp!'*

As one can perceive, the internal dynamic of a relationship highlight gender differences. By inserting her finger in Ben's anus, the girlfriend is perceived by Ben (and probably by herself) as masculinised (at that moment) and possessing characteristics of manhood. Such realization, on the one hand, highlights the manner in which Ben perceives his manhood in the relationship in general. On the other hand, the realization reflects the fluidity of his and his girlfriend categorization in terms of gender. Such fluidity is something that does not necessarily leave Ben comfortable as it may threaten other aspects of the relationship which, with his manhood status, he has conquered: space and decision making capital.

Vanusa, who also plays a similar practice with her fiancée, explained how being able to perform such sexual practice has helped introducing her notion of femininity to her fiancée.

'My fiancée always believed that there are two kinds of women: women to play with and women to be serious with, but I completely disagree. I started doing things that he would not expect me to do – as he perceives me to be a woman to be serious with, the future mother of his children. I believe that as a couple we should explore all our desires and fantasies with each other and as a woman I am complete: a professional in the workplace, a lady in the living room, a chef in the kitchen and a bitch in the bedroom'.

Vanusa recounted how being adventurous in bed and trying new sexual practices has helped her transmit the message to her fiancée about her notion of womanhood and how a sexual affective relationship should be lived. The double standard of women held by Vanusa's fiancée is indeed widespread. Vanusa's notion of femininity binds the two models of the double standard as she states in the last sentence of her discourse.

Again, as in the previous example the woman performing the act is masculinised. Thus, the examples highlighted above show how the partners believe that masculinised sexual practices of women may be transported to other spheres of the relationship and women may adopt attitudes perceived by the partners as masculine. Consequently, who penetrates whom in the context of heterosexual relations highlight gender differences, its shifts and anxieties emerging as a result of such dynamics.

As the cases discussed emphasise, I perceive gender as an identity: someone being gendered as female or as male irrespective of the biological sex and looking at such identity as a fluid one susceptible to change in the diverse interactions that people establish with each other and with society as a whole. Thus, I give case studies that highlight femininities and masculinities showing diverse instances and ways in which individuals perform their specific roles. I locate such performativity of gendered identities (Butler 1993; Butler 1999) in the complex processes that lead individuals to negotiate social affirmation and emotional stability in their everyday life.

Here, queer heterosexual theory brings light to make sense of these identities as it broadens the definition of "queer," such that it is no longer simply a synonym for gay or lesbian. As described below:

'"Queer" is now considered to be an umbrella term for all non-normative gender expressions and sexualities. While gays, lesbians and the transgendered are still included under the umbrella, queer can also refer, for example, to feminine men, masculine women, people in non-monogamous relationships, and those who perform a wide variety of sexual practices that are considered to be "kinky." Many heterosexuals fit these descriptions, and also feel isolated from the dominant gender and sexuality frameworks in society (http://feed.belowthebelt.org/2009/12/queer-heterosexuality.html)

Thus, queer heterosexuality helps me understand Ben's feminine role/side/self-perception, Vanusa's masculine role/side/self-perception or the unorthodox practice of inserting the finger in men's anus that I have described above.

Another appealing dynamic emerging from the conceptualisation of this specific sexual practice has to do with territoriality and its role in the 'de-naturalisation' of gendered roles and notions of masculinities and femininities reified and mainstreamed by neo-colonial discourses of gender and sexuality in Africa. Ben was very clear in his statements that he would only accept being caressed and 'penetrated' by the finger of his girlfriend <u>only</u>. I highlight the word 'only' as anal fingering features in the spectrum of sexual practices usually perceived and permitted to happen in the context of *namoro*/marriage/steady partner (serious and/or long term relationships) or, with partners with whom, even if not in a stable relationship at the present, the man has had an enduring intimate relation in the past and with whom, most of the times one is said to be 'a *moleza*' of (not to resist someone – I will engage in a exhaustive discussion of this notion below) and engages in sexual encounters either frequently or sporadically. Rare where the cases stated in which such kind of practice would occur in early stages of relationship or with occasional partners.

An interesting similarity is apparent in the discourses of young women who, when discussing sexual practices would mention that they had engaged or would engage in anal sex only with a stable boyfriend or with the future husband. There is in that kind of discourse a resurgence of the notion of virginity. Defloration of the anus is compared to the rupture of the hymen and fantasised to be experienced with someone with whom one shares a profound emotional/sexual connection. One could read this description of the young women as a return to the double standard between men and women in which women's virginity is glorified. However, the

20

interesting point is, in my opinion, the fact that young men are using an analogous logic in regards to the 'concession' of their anus to the fingers of women. The men are strict in regards to what kind of women can practice such an act with them. As can be observed in Ben's case, only the steady partner or a woman with whom the man establishes a close and intimate connection - verbalized as love, passion, special connection/relation – is the one with whom men also 'lose' the 'virginity of their anuses'.

These examples contribute to disentangle (neo)colonial thinking around gender relations, intimacy and sexuality in Africa by demonstrating that sex in post-colonial Africa does not only happen in an mechanical manner completely disassociated from emotional ties (Cole and Thomas 2009). Additionally, gender relations are not clear-cut following a model of masculine domination. What these examples demonstrate is that emotions and sexual expectations, to mention a few, constantly define and re-define notions of being man, women, having pleasure, showing love, amongst others. Men can adopt traces perceived as feminine – keep their anus' virginity, lose their anus' virginity to the one he is in love or feels a profound passion. Women can acquire masculine profiles - by penetrating (their fingers) in the man's anus.

Additionally, the politics and management of emotions within the relationship also bring to light gender differences. In colloquial Portuguese spoken in Mozambique, the term *'ser moleza de'* which in literal translation means 'to be the weakness of' and implies that the person being called *moleza of X* cannot resist *X*. The condition of becoming *moleza* highlights how the internal politics of the relationship, amongst other things, reflect gender differences. In the local context one is perceived to be *moleza* of someone when that person has strong emotional feelings towards the other. Love and passion are the two most used words to describe the emotional characteristics that make one a *moleza* of someone else. However, increasingly the term *moleza* is employed to describe other kinds of dependency. It is common for people to mention physical and sexual attraction as a form of being a moleza of someone. Also, difference in social status may 'imprison' the one in the lower status (who is interested in maintaining the relationship and rise in the social ladder) to be considered a *moleza* of his/her partner. However, in this analysis I will focus on the use of the term *moleza* in relation to emotional 'dependency' as I am interested

in understanding the role of emotions in the discussion of gender and sexuality in the theorization of African realities.

Being in love is regarded in general as a positive characteristic. However, there is the generalised belief that in most relationships one loves more than the other, one desires/wants more than the other. Therefore, one is more willing to invest in the relationship, to be more generous and understanding towards the other. I have heard many times women affirming that while it is wonderful to be in love, that position is desired for a *namoro* relationship and not a marriage or union relationship in which partners live together and raise a family. The logic behind such statement is that once in love, one becomes unable to think and act beyond the intense feelings: the good things are extremely good and the bad ones are simply destructive. Thus, the extreme love that one devotes to the partner is not necessarily perceived as positive since, the partner may start taking advantage and disrespecting the one loving more. In general, such state of emotions is feminized and therefore attached to feminine characteristics.

Nevertheless, both men and women find themselves as *moleza* of someone else. Ismael had recently started a relationship with Vera. He dropped his previous partner to stay with Vera, as he expressed 'I could not let this opportunity go, I have always been in love with her, and she did not even know it'. However, a few months in the relationship Ismael's friends had to sit with him to call his attention, as there was a rumour that Vera had travelled to meet her ex-boyfriend. Ismael replied that he knew about the incident but had forgiven Vera as he really was in love with her and she had promised that similar episodes would not be repeated. The friends were flabbergasted at his response as they could not believe that he would accept such behaviour from his partner. However, Ismael replied that he really saw in Vera the woman with whom he could spend the rest of his life. As he described to me:

> *'She is an equal partner (...) you know in my previous relationships my decisions were always the last and final ones. Differently, with Vera we build a decision together and I really like her points. She will be a great mother for my children (...) and she has created an impact in my life. I am a disciplined man now that I am with her, she helps me organize and build things for the future...I really needed a woman like her'.*

And when I asked him about her involvement with the ex-boyfriend, he replied 'that is part of life…she is only human! How many times have I cheated? I guess I'll have to live with it and really hope that it does not happen again!'

Nevertheless, Ismael's friends were not happy with his relationship with Vera. They complained that Vera was forcing Ismael to change by preventing him to spend time with them. In the eyes of the friends Vera was manipulating Ismael. The friends stated that: 'she knows that he desperately loves her that is the reason why she abuses him'. In the friends' eyes this constitutes a typical case of *moleza*: Ismael being a *moleza* of Vera. Thus, who loves more within a relationship highlights gender identities that may not necessarily fit within the expected 'naturalized' conceptions of gender roles and the functioning of gender dynamics.

Moleza is also a not desirable partner to a relationship, as it is perceived as someone who has lost all the capacity for self-governance in his/her eagerness to please the other person. Thus, an ideal relationship rests in a balance between self-possession and moleza.

Conclusion

The discussion in this study questions the relevance of gender roles and identities in granting an individual a reputable social status. Being a wife and a mother is only one possible way for a woman to have a social status in an environment that also associates man's social status to a woman and values gerontocracy.

Femininity and masculinity in Maputo are identities mediated by historical social dynamics and personal trajectories which constantly (re-) shape individuals' identities. Also, the encounters of individuals in relationships contribute to transformations (and continuities). Thus, as the ethnographic examples highlight, masculine and feminine have ceased - in this class and among people of this age - to be a moral category as such because people can deviate from them, to some extent, without being shunned. Of note, however, is the fact that masculine and feminine remain powerful as aesthetic principles informing people's performance of themselves as gendered. And, as elsewhere, for example in Indonesia described by Oetomo (2000), though

people find both processes somewhat troubling, the masculinisation of women is more readily accepted than is the feminisation of men (Holland, Ramazanoglu et al. 1998).

The masculine ideal presents an abiding power, which remains a strong organizing figure even in this changing terrain. As the examples demonstrate, women can be too masculine (the example of Solange) while men cannot be masculine enough or too masculine (too authoritarian, too irresponsible - as in Ben's case) both of them reflecting the idea of a man as sovereign; ruled by none but by himself. When it comes to relationships this authoritarian and irresponsible model is not desired as it presents a person who is too self-possessed and as a consequence not a good partner because either man or woman, the individual is self-indulgent and will not subordinate his/her desires/needs to the desires/needs of the other.

The sought after model of relationships seems to be a balanced self-possession, which means that what one gives to the other, is actually a gift – freely given by an autonomous partner as an act of love. This model follows a gendered script in which there is the expectation that women will not overpower men. Thus, giving your husband the money to allow him to be the man in public, as in the case of Marlene, fits into the desirable aesthetic of femininity. More than that, Marlene's attitude in overall terms constitutes the desirable model of a partner in a relationship as it demonstrates generosity of spirit. The other extreme of the undesirable partner is the *moleza* because the person is seen as not being able to say 'no'.

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