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Carnival, Power, and Queer Joy: Chrono-normativity, Carnivalesque Transgressions, and the Spectacle of Gender in Lourenço Marques, Mozambique (ca. 1950–1975)

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Abstract
This article is an exploratory study of the history of carnival as a popular festival in late colonial Lourenço Marques (contemporary Maputo), the capital of Mozambique. Drawing on archival sources and on oral history interviews, it explores the carnival as a site of struggle, shaped by attempts at regulation by the state and co-optation by private capital, but also critically positioned as a potential space of freedom, joy, and experimentation. Looking at instances of racial, sexual, or gender transgression within it, the article presents the festival as an ambivalent, contradictory assemblage of practices and political dispositions, in which desire for subversion and play rubbed up – just as much as the bodies of carnival goers – against the policing of the colonial boundaries of race, gender, class, and sexuality. The article also maps out carnival's transnational attachments, following the circulation of people, practices, and cultural forms in the Lusophone world. The case of Brazilian *travesti* performers is explored as an instance of southern connectivity, allowing a reading of carnival as transnational queer culture. Working with various materials and themes, the article imagines what queer and gender histories may emerge if one focuses on moments of transgression and gender-bending and on those actions that destabilize and complicate dominant sexual cultures and normative gender regimes.

Keywords: carnival; Mozambique; temporality; transnationalism; queer African history

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About the author
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This article is dedicated to Eduardo Pitta, who sadly passed away on July 25, 2023. Pitta was always a kind and generous interlocutor. With him passing, we have lost a talented writer, and a key figure in queer history in the Lusophone world.

Carnival has been a recurrent topic in contemporary social sciences and literary studies, in part thanks to the circulation of the writings of Mikhail Bakhtin, a Russian philosopher and literary critic. Bakhtin formulated an influential reading of carnival festivals in Europe as events in which the dominant cultural order and existing social hierarchies were transgressed and subverted. At the carnival, there was "a temporal suspension of all hierarchic distinctions and barriers, (…) norms and prohibitions" (Bakhtin 1984, 10). While grounded in European history and politics, a theory of the carnivalesque as a "utopian vision of the world seen from below" (Stallybrass and White 1986, 7) has been taken up by scholars and applied to a variety of contexts and situations. In this sense, carnival can be taken, generally, as "a *mode of understanding*" or as "a cultural analytic" (Stallybrass and White 1986, 6). As a practice of inversion repeated in time and present in virtually every society, carnival can be seen as "outside of history" (Lachmann 1988/1989, 151). But it is also deeply historical. As such, its study requires the close examination of the particular "conjunctures" in which carnivalesque practices take place (Stallybrass and White 1986, 16). In this regard, Vicki Cremona has recently suggested that carnival is shaped by the "specific historical and socio-political circumstances" of particular communities (Cremona 2018, 5).

If one follows this line of enquiry, carnival – as a concept, but also as an object of historical enquiry – becomes especially relevant in contexts where it is embedded in the social fabric, as it is in Latin America and the Caribbean, or in contexts "where the political difference between the dominant and subordinate culture is particularly charged", such as in (post)colonial societies in general (Stallybrass and White 1986, 11). In Africa, most of the literature has concentrated on the cases of Cape Town (Oliphant 2013; Davids 2018; Gregory 2018) and the former Portuguese colonies, particularly Guinea-Bissau (Kohl 2018) and Angola (Birmingham 1988; Carvalho 1989; Carvalho 1999; Almeida 2014; Marzano 2016; Oliveira e Gabarra and Focna 2019). Carnival in Mozambique, however, remains understudied. In this article, I intend to fill this gap and sketch the cultural and social history of the festival in late colonial Lourenço Marques (contemporary Maputo). More precisely, I want to mobilize queer theory and historiography and question how engaging with the carnival may elucidate the interplay between gender, sexuality, and temporality in African history. After all, carnival is an intrinsically temporal affair, as a bounded moment of disruption of dominant culture and social norms; of collective play and catharsis; of corporal freedom and utopic possibility.

In order to explore carnival's queer temporalities, I turn to Judith Butler's influential argument that gender is socially constructed *over time* through performance, speech acts, and discursive regimes. Over the last two decades, this analytics has prompted a queer critique of the relational construction of sex, gender, sexual identities, and desires through regulatory practices that sediment both heterosexuality and the gender binary as normative and compulsory (Butler 2006, 24). In this framework, time is crucial to the ways in which sexual difference and gender identity are naturalized and inscribed onto the body. As Butler describes it: "performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration" (2006, xv). Further elaborating on the temporal politics of gender and sexuality, Elizabeth Freeman (2010) has coined the term "chrononormativity" to describe how bodies and lives are disciplined into particular temporal regimes of productivity surrounding labour, family life, gender roles, physical health, citizenship, and so on, from the calendar work day to the heterosexual marriage, family-making, and reproduction as gendered biographical markers.

There are strong similarities between the conceptualization of dominant culture in carnival studies and the understanding of heteronormativity in queer studies; both are expressed in linear temporal regimes that regulate bodies and social practice and shape subject formation. In both cases, there is also the potential for temporary subversion through carnivalesque practices and queer modalities of parody and critique. Cross-dressing may be troubling to naturalized gender binaries, for they expose the "performativity" of gender (Butler 2006, 187). Likewise, carnival is said to "retextualize" the social, revealing its "'fictive' foundations" (Eagleton 1981, 149). Yet, critics have also cautioned against a romantic reading that may exaggerate the utopian, radical, and transformative potential of these practices. As a moment of "licensed release", carnival may operate as a form of social control that ultimately serves the interests of the dominant culture it intends to disrupt (Stallybrass and White 1986, 13). After all, once the party ends, "everything [remains] as it was before" (Stallybrass and White 1986, 125). Queer modes of parody, such as drag, are also not necessarily subversive, but "may become domesticated and rearticulated as instruments of cultural hegemony" (Butler 2006, 189). Other authors have gone beyond this somewhat simplistic dichotomy between transformative or conservative politics to argue that "carnival is a site of struggle" (Cremona 2018, 6) that needs to be carefully contextualized in specific social situations and configurations of power.

In this article, I follow this line of enquiry and explore the carnival in late colonial Lourenço Marques – and the instances of racial, sexual, and gender transgression it invited and animated – as an ambivalent, often contradictory assemblage of practices and political dispositions, in which desire for subversion and play rubbed up against – just as much as the bodies of carnival goers – the policing of colonial boundaries of race, gender, class, and sexuality. I draw from the written archive of the local – and, at times, international – press, to track how carnival was mediated through public discourse and mass media, co-opted by entertainment economies, and regulated by state power. Yet, carnival – as a performative, affective, and embodied practice – demands a research methodology that circumvents the centrality of the written record in conventional historiography, especially considering that written sources, as Paolo Israel has pointed out, tend to be "silent about dance and song" (2014, 17) and other performative practices. As Israel (2013, 2014) suggests, oral history is an alternative method that not only allows us to approach a cultural practice from the point of view of its players, but also to capture the often neglected historicity of performance, play, and embodied cultural forms. Queer historians, too, have for decades resorted to oral history as a means to circumvent the silences of the archive, while also foregrounding the importance of embodiment, performance, and storytelling to queer historical narration (Boyd and Ramírez 2012). It is in the same spirit that I turn to oral histories of late colonial carnival: to fill gaps in the written record, but also to centre the body, the performative, and the lived experience as sites of knowledge production. My intention in engaging with a small sample of interviews is not to argue that these experiences can be generalized, but simply to add nuance and complexity to a history that needs further examination.

Masquerades of whiteness: Settler colonialism, carnival culture, and race

In the early 1950s, carnival in Lourenço Marques was a lukewarm affair. In the press, several commentators lamented its perceived state of decline. As one observer put it, the "disappearance of carnival" evidenced that modern man had "lost the will to live", as he was "dominated by the preoccupations of the everyday", lacking time to rest, or even to

"think of carnival parties".[1] Another article noted that carnival was as old as humanity, as man had always had the "desire to enjoy, as intensely as possible, the delights that life had to offer". Yet, it asked, why "do the men of our time no longer masquerade themselves, to reveal themselves just as they are?"[2] The general opinion was that "the street carnival, the unruly carnival, the immoral carnival", was dead, because the modern man was no longer allowed to entertain "improper", "less dignified" behaviours.[3] The general conclusion was that, as the "period of license" in which "everything that a crazy imagination can come up with" was fair play, carnival was no longer.[4]

In spite of these pessimist comments, the 1950s also saw a renewed investment and interest in the festivity – and in the policing of its limits – from both the colonial state and settler publics. Mentioning a longing for moments of "collective joy", for a period when "social classes got together in the same party", a commentator insisted that "carnival must not die".[5] Such contrasting opinions evidence the tensions existing around carnival in the late colonial period, a time in which the festivities were celebrated and desired in their potential as moments of release and collective play, but also undermined by the dictates of settler sociability, its racialized and gendered rules of status, distinction, and respectability. While these opposing visions persisted until independence in 1975, the 1950s and 1960s witnessed the blossoming of a vibrant carnival culture in Lourenço Marques. Even in the mid-1950s, when many saw the festival as "sickly" and lacking enthusiasm, many carnival balls around the city reported "extraordinary attendance".[6]

Colonial carnival needs to be situated within a broader history of entertainment and leisure industries in Lourenço Marques. While the Mozambican capital had been regionally known for its vibrant "tavern economy" since the early 20th century (Zamparoni 1998; MacDonald 2012), the post-war period brought about unprecedented public (and private) investment in leisure infrastructure. As a result of colonial policies put in place to promote economic growth and white settlement, the 1950s and 1960s saw an increasing number of Portuguese settlers reaching Mozambique every year, most of whom lived in urban centres (Penvenne 2005; Castelo 2007; Jerónimo 2018). To attend the growing urban population – which included, too, an emerging black and mixed race middle class (Havstad 2019) – the local pleasure economy expanded significantly to include cafes, bars, cabarets, dance clubs, hotels, camping grounds, seaside businesses, and the like. In addition to colonial migration, Lourenço Marques also received a transient population of sailors and tourists travelling in cruise liners (Gupta 2015), as well as the white tourist trade from South Africa and Southern Rhodesia, whose seasonal visitors arrived in the country in large numbers (Morton 2015) and contributed to the growth of a local leisure economy.

The late colonial investment in carnival was closely related to these shifting local and regional consumer publics, and the economic expectations they carried. In the mid-1950s, commentators urged state and private initiatives alike to explore the economic and tourist potential of the carnival, by organizing public parades and spectacles that could attract national and regional visitors. After all, "with the atmosphere granted (to the city) by its Latin people", Lourenço Marques was already a desirable destination to white South Africans, who crossed the border on various festive occasions, such as the Easter holiday. If more was invested in the carnival, it could build on the existing tourist flow and "earn fame (…)

[1] "Nota do dia," *Notícias*, February 17, 1953.
[2] Medina Camacho, "O eterno carnaval," *Notícias*, February 6, 1951.
[3] "Nota do dia," *Notícias*, February 17, 1953.
[4] "Nota do dia," *Notícias*, February 17, 1953.
[5] Soares Lema, "O Carnaval vai morrer?" *Notícias*, February 9, 1955.
[6] "Chegou o Carnaval e a cidade diverte-se," *Notícias*, February 20, 1955.

and money!"[7] While these plans never fully materialized, in 1964 the Lourenço Marques carnival was advertised in South Africa, Swaziland, and Southern Rhodesia in hopes of attracting "a high number of tourists".[8]

Colonial carnival's entanglement with the modern entertainment and tourist industry mimics a longer history of the festival's commodification in Europe, where, as Bakhtin (1984, 33) himself argued, its primordial "spirit of freedom" had given way to a "mere holiday mood". No longer as a subversive moment but as a cultural product for consumption and entertainment, modern carnival belongs to a broader leisure economy, which surely raises its own set of questions. As Phyllis Martin (1995) has argued, colonial leisure was a modern technology of power that not only regulated workers' time and everyday rhythms, but also demarcated the boundaries of racial and class distinctions in highly hierarchical and unequal societies. European leisure activities were crucial markers of colonial status, as performative acts that distinguished "the whites" as an exclusive racial community. Yet, rather than being self-evident and natural, these boundaries required careful supervision and negotiation, constantly bringing into question distinctions of race, gender, class, and sexuality (Stoler 2010). Leisure activities too could potentially spark off tensions, expose the gendered and classed fractions within certain communities, and ultimately reveal that "the whites" as a homogeneous group did not exist except as an abstraction (Martin 1995, 194–195). In such contexts, as Ann Stoler (2010) has suggested, notions of morality and respectability served to police the (gendered) boundaries of whiteness in the everyday and, in doing so, sustained settler privilege and rule.

It is, therefore, not surprising that colonial carnival could also be a moment of moral policing and boundary making. An opinion written by columnist Maria Pacóvia is illustrative. In it, Pacóvia describes going around the city with her husband to watch the festivities. Witnessing a lack of enthusiasm, she stated: "it's a pity that we have such few opportunities to enjoy ourselves (…) without everyone whispering about it. We, the Portuguese (…) are so afraid of receiving the horrid 'dirty look', we are so harsh in our criticism of others, that we turn any party into a funeral."[9] Pacóvia's narrative alerts us to the self-policing of settler morality, but it also indicates the depoliticization of colonial carnival, turned into a "spectacle" ready for consumption by settler publics (Stallybrass and White 1986, 183). To be sure, social policing was not only a matter of moral judgement, materializing in whispers and dirty looks. Perhaps more importantly, it involved the observance of class distinctiveness and racial boundaries. Spaces of leisure and conviviality in Lourenço Marques, as in other settler colonial cities, were segregated on the basis of racial or religious affiliation, class positionality, and gendered morals. The colonial state, private businesses, or settler publics themselves determined who could occupy certain spaces and obtain certain cultural goods, and under what circumstances (Penvenne 2011; Morton 2019).

While in the late colonial period Africans gradually gained access to some spaces of multi-racial socialization and emerging forms of consumer culture (Havstad 2019; Domingos 2021; Morton 2022), their terms of inclusion into settler society remained partial, conditional, and subject to scrutiny. Colonial carnival too was fractured along the same lines of racial difference that were constitutive of settler sociability and its exclusivist urban geography. The carnival of "the city" was staged in selective clubs and hotels, subject to hefty entrance fees and, therefore, mostly attended by the settler population. The carnival of "the

[7] José Mendonça, "O que poderia ser o carnaval em Lourenço Marques," *Notícias*, February 18, 1955.

[8] "Este é o cartaz em circulação na República da África do Sul, Suazilândia, e Rodésia," *Notícias*, January 14, 1964.

[9] Maria Pacóvia, "Cu...cu!... Entrudooooo!" *Notícias*, February 14, 1961.

suburbs", on the other hand, took place in public spaces or in clubs and associations patronized by an African or multi-racial clientele and located in black-majority neighbourhoods, such as Mafalala, Alto Maé, Xipamanine, and Malhangalene (Manuela Soeiro, interview, October 28, 2021). The Avenida de Angola, a main urban artery cutting across the suburbs, was a notorious arena for these popular carnival forms. In the early 1950s, a newspaper described the "spectacle" that was offered by "thousands of natives along the Avenida de Angola, in their revelry and incredible characterization, [with their] dances and drums."[10] However, by the end of the decade, another commentator lamented the decline of the street festivities alongside the avenue, attributing the situation to the intimidating presence of the mounted police. Tacitly pushing against the increasing policing of the suburbs, the article urged the administration to again allow Africans to enjoy "'their' carnival".[11]

This comment was not unwarranted, as the colonial state increasingly attempted to police the carnival in the name of public safety. This was not unique to Lourenço Marques either, but responded to a broader colonial anxiety blooming in the face of rising nationalisms in Africa. In both Angola and Guinea-Bissau, carnival was seriously restricted, when not simply banned, in the late 1950s and early 1960s (Moorman 2008; Kohl 2018). This drive towards regulation or prohibition had to do with fears that the festival "could be used to channel subversive nationalist and anti-colonial ideas and performances" (Kohl 2018, 136). The start of armed struggle in both countries would only have accentuated those fears,[12] and Moorman (2008, 96) pointed out that street carnival in Angola remained prohibited until 1968, when it started to experience a slow and only partial recovery. In Mozambique, this period also saw growing collective anti-colonial resistance and organized political mobilization, with the Mozambique Liberation Front (Frelimo) being formed in 1962 as a liberation movement in exile, based in Tanzania.[13] While a Frelimo-led liberation war started in 1964, most of the conflict unfolded on the northern front, far removed from the capital, which may explain why, in this case, carnival was never fully banned. Yet it suffered from similar regulatory attempts to draw the boundaries of what was politically possible and morally permissible. From the mid-1950s, police notices were published in local newspapers, laying out the list of punishable practices for the carnival period, which included throwing liquids and dust on other people, publicly wearing masks in a manner that could hide one's identity, wearing costumes that mocked or insulted public or private persons, or costumes that harmed religious beliefs, morals, or good manners.[14] However loosely these rules were enforced, they evidence that the colonial commitment to regulating the festival was informed not only by political concerns, but also by moral considerations.

Nowhere were such tensions over morality presented more clearly than in the writings of Guilherme de Melo, a journalist and editor-in-chief for *Notícias*, Mozambique's leading daily newspaper. Melo was widely known as one of the first men to live his homosexuality openly in Lourenço Marques, a unique life experience he later detailed in his fictionalized memoir, *A Sombra dos Dias*, published in Portugal in 1981.[15] He also wrote for a front page column, *Folhas Dispersas* ('Scattered

[10] "Terça-Feira de Carnaval," Notícias, February 23, 1950.

[11] "Nota Breve – O Carnaval na Avenida de Angola," *Notícias*, February 8, 1959.

[12] The liberation war in Angola started in 1961, and in Guinea-Bissau in 1963.

[13] I cannot do justice to the extensive body of work detailing the history of anti-colonial mobilization in Mozambique. Some important contributions are Isaacman and Isaacman (2019) and Cabaço (2010).

[14] "Edital do Corpo de Polícia sobre o Carnaval," *Notícias*, February 18, 1955.

[15] The novel remains one of the richer accounts of the white gay scene in Lourenço Marques. See Melo (1981).

Pages'), which appeared in *Notícias*' popular Sunday edition. During carnival time, the festival's masking practices were a recurrent theme in his writing, mentioned year after year. Melo described the carnival as the only time in which, sanctioned by the calendar, "a man decides to look at his neighbour and at himself, and to acknowledge that they are wearing a mask."[16] For him, the festive period called into question the social masks that people wore everyday: not so much the masquerade of balls and parties, but the masks that every person wears "daily, at the table at a cafe, on the seat of the bus, in the queue, at the cinema hall."[17] Pushing against the dominant imagination of the carnival as a temporally bounded event, Melo suggested that society was immersed in an "eternal masquerade" that persisted even after the party had officially ended. [18] To make this point, he listed several (social) masks that went unnoticed in the everyday, such as a white woman who is charitable in public but abuses her black servant at home, or a husband who preaches conservative morals and family values, but supports a secret lover.

In offering such caricatures, Melo redefined settler morality and respectability as masking practices, pointing to their constructed normativity and social hypocrisy. His texts performed a satirical critique of settler colonial culture by exposing its racism, elitism, and only precarious commitment to monogamous (heterosexual) marriage. Even if Melo never explicitly raised the theme of homosexuality or gender variance, by parodying settler morality as a quotidian mask, his writings offered a carnivalesque critique of gendered respectability and heteronormativity. His intervention is akin to what Aching (2002, 6) theorized as the act of *demasking*, meaning "literally or figuratively removing an ideological mask from oneself or someone else". As Aching elaborates, masking and demasking practices during carnival time necessarily raise issues of knowledge and power, as they delimit what can be seen and what remains hidden, including what is socially recognized as moral and immoral behaviour (Aching 2002, 7). In demasking the settler colonial self, Melo offered the possibility of repoliticizing a carnival that was being policed by the state and co-opted by private capital. While his (queer) critique of the dominant social order was restricted to the medium of language, carnival also invited more performative, corporeal forms of engagement.

Carnival's (trans)national lives: Masks, *samba*, and the carnivalesque dance floor

Beyond private spaces, such as balls and parties held by associations and clubs in various neighbourhoods, the street carnival presented the opportunity to disturb the racialized and gendered distribution of pleasures and joy in the settler colonial city. While the colonial press frequently reported on street festivities – especially the main carnival parade, known as the *corso* – such texts are descriptive at best, and fail to capture the affective state and embodied experiences of carnival goers. To address this silence, I will draw on the life history of the actress, playwright, and theatre director Manuela Soeiro. Described as the "great mother of Mozambican theatre" (Rubin 2015), Soeiro's biography overlaps with the history of the country's public culture: she is celebrated as the creator of the first theatre company of the postcolonial period. Founded in 1986, the company was called *Mutumbela Gogo*, in honour of the "popular songs that, during the carnival period, were sung on the suburbs of Maputo" (Carlos 2019). *Mutumbela* means 'mask', 'masking oneself' in Changana, while *gogo* is a reference to playing carnival on the

[16] Guilherme de Melo, "O Grande Carnaval," *Notícias*, February 20, 1966.
[17] Guilherme de Melo, "O Grande Carnaval," *Notícias*, February 20, 1966.
[18] Guilherme de Melo, "A Eterna Mascarada," *Notícias*, February 28, 1954.

streets, when people shouted, in the rhythm of the music "go! go!", as an invitation to keep moving, to keep dancing (Soreiro, interview). Her adult fascination with the politics of joy and freedom that the carnival promised was, at least partially, a response to a childhood marked by the lived experiences of racial discrimination and sexism. Soeiro was born in Lourenço Marques in a mixed-race family with roots in the Manjacaze chiefdoms and in the East African Jewish diaspora. She spent most of her childhood in a Catholic boarding school run by nuns, who tried to prevent her from hugging her grandfather because, as a Jewish man, he had "dealings with the devil" (Soreiro, interview). As a native speaker of Chope, she was punched in the mouth for speaking "the language of the blacks", and had to learn Portuguese "by force" (Soreiro, interview). At school, she was pejoratively called a *mulata*, and learned that girls needed to be virgins and invariably to get married.

Before returning to Lourenço Marques in the 1960s, when she was in her 20s, Soeiro lived in Vila Pery (contemporary Chimoio), a town close to the Southern Rhodesian border in central Mozambique. In her youth, she struggled to navigate a settler society that could at times be hostile and unforgiving. "There was a lot of racism, a lot, really… They didn't like our presence...", she recalls (Soreiro, interview). In response, she adopted practices of self-fashioning and mimicry, such as wearing mini-skirts and long boots, items that carried the promise of modernity and precarious inclusion. As Soeiro explains, "we tried to dress like the Portuguese girls, to show that we are the same… I was not afraid, I wanted to be like them… If they could wear those clothes, why couldn't I?" (Soreiro, interview). Her testimony shows that, as technologies of identity, clothing and style were not merely about imitation, but could also indicate rebellious practices of refusal, a refusal to conform to one's expected place or to play one's conventional social role.[19] At the same time, she never hid her affinity for distinctively African cultural forms. She had also previously lived in Pemba, in the Northern province of Cabo Delgado, where she gained an enduring fascination for *mapiko* masquerade, a cultural practice deeply rooted in the history and politics of the Makonde people (Israel 2014). Her musical tastes contrasted with those of the balls and parties held in white-frequented clubs, which tended to privilege certain musical styles to the detriment of the local rhythms, such as *marrabenta*. As Soeiro puts it: "they were really racist… They didn't throw parties to dance *marrabenta*, but we would somehow convince [the musicians] to play it… We made the point of dancing our own dances" (Soreiro, interview).

Soeiro points out that her insistence on occupying settler spaces and disturbing their racial protocols had little to do with a well-defined political consciousness. Back then, she observes, "I didn't really understand [politics, but] I always disliked injustice" (Soreiro, interview). While she embraced the carnival mostly as an experience of joy and bodily freedom, the festival could also offer the opportunity to push the racialized and gendered boundaries of colonial sociability. While she was still living in Vila Pery, she gathered a group of Portuguese girls and introduced them to *mapiko* dance and characterization – which included distinctive masks and costumes – intending to enter the troupe in a carnival competition. Their performance impressed the white audience, and they won the first prize. As Soeiro recalls: "not knowing what that was, they went crazy over it, it was very beautiful" (Soreiro, interview). In my view, this case elucidates the critical potential of the carnival as a time of cultural and gendered subversion. While Soeiro had previously mimicked Portuguese girls as a means to access social

[19] Soeiro's experience is similar to practices of mimicry as theorized in postcolonial scholarship as both avowing and contesting colonial power. See Bhabha (1994).

spaces where she was not welcome as a mixed-race young woman, during the performance it was her white peers who had to catch up, imitating, however they could, the movements of the *mapiko* dance. That the performance won the competition also challenged the racialized hierarchy of culture in settler colonial society, whereby modern styles, tastes, and rhythms were situated above "traditional" ones, as more desirable markers of status and distinction. Dialoguing with Aching's work, I read Soeiro's carnival masking as a subversion of the regimes of visibility in a racist society, where the temporary appropriation of *mapiko* provided a "mean of [cultural] reaffirmation" (Aching 2002, 26).

But this case also demonstrates the political limitations of cultural critique under colonial rule. Soeiro's party was cut short that night, when she was suddenly approached by an officer of the notoriously brutal *Polícia Internacional de Defesa do Estado* (Pide), the Portuguese secret police. Being called to the station the next morning, she had to convince him of her naiveté and lack of political intent in engaging with a cultural form that, as Paolo Israel (2014, 10–11) has demonstrated, was particularly suspect to the colonial state, given its linkages to anti-colonial politics.[20] "How was it that I, at that time, being so young as I was, dared to show what Mozambique was? I danced *marrabenta*, I danced *mapiko*" (Soeiro, interview). If Soeiro's story illustrates the policing of carnival, it also gestures to the politicization of dancing practices, musical tastes, and public performance at a time of rising anti-colonialism. Perhaps more importantly, it reorients our histories of political dissent in Mozambique towards the affective and embodied experiences that are often kept at bay in histories of liberation and nationalism (Israel 2014; Katto 2019). While Soeiro insists that she lacked a "political consciousness", she admits that she "lived" her nationalism "in (her) intimacy", as something that was deeply "felt" (Soeiro, interview). Carnival was so appealing as a moment of personal freedom and collective pleasure because it allowed a sense of belonging rooted in a Mozambican culture that did not find an appropriate space of expression under white settler rule.

After returning to Lourenço Marques in the mid-1960s, Soeiro found a vibrant carnival culture, richer and more diverse than anything she had experienced before. "People wanted to let out what they had inside, they wanted to show what they were. In the suburbs, in Mafalala, where there was a lot of [racial and social] mixture, people came out dancing. That was extraordinary", she recalls. The festival also brought about transnational forms of expression and imagination. In 1962, for instance, the carnival party in the Malhangalene neighbourhood in Lourenço Marques was advertised as "100% carioca", meaning a night that would mimic the famous carnival of Rio de Janeiro, having as the main attraction the Brazilian musicians Déo Maia and Irmãos Guarás. As was later reported in the press, the *carnaval carioca* attracted "the biggest wave of people ever seen", as a "great multitude" partied all night, until the sunrise.[21] As this case illustrates, carnival was a transnational affair increasingly mediated by mass culture and shaped by the circulation of imaginaries and musical tastes in the Lusophone world.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the international projection of Brazil's cultural production situated the Rio de Janeiro carnival as perhaps the global epitome of the festivity, in no small part thanks to the enhanced visibility created by highly successful cultural items – such as the film *Black Orpheus* (1959) – that intimately linked global imaginings of Brazil to "the tropical carnival, where the pulse of life is expressed in the drums" (Stam 1997, 177).

[20] As Israel argues, the Makonde plateau, home to the *mapiko* masquerade, was "the cradle of anticolonial guerrilla and socialist revolution", which means its practice was "permeated by political symbolism as none of the other song-and-dance Mozambican traditions were" (Israel 2014, 10).

[21] "A maior enchente de sempre no carnaval da Malhangalene," *Notícias*, March 5, 1962.

Thinking of the carnival as transnational culture, I argue, may alert us to forms of cultural critique and practices of freedom that bypass some of the inherent exclusions and limits of nationalist discourse and historiography, particularly considering the minoritized subjectivities – such as queer and gender non-conforming folks – that are commonly denied national belonging (Araújo 2022). In Soeiro's narrative, the embodied feeling of collective play, of cathartic release, was buttressed by the festival's transnational attachments, its promise of belonging to a global culture mediated through the rhythms and movements of *samba*, and whose nodal point was Rio de Janeiro. In remembering this time, she explains:

> There were the Brazilians, who came here to sing and dance… It was such a lively thing. These were picturesque places, such as the African Association, places like Xipamanine, Alto-Maé, and then the clubs. It was no child's play … That afforded us, Africans, the possibility of experiencing something that had to do with us, but that came from abroad. Other things, that came from Portugal, they meant nothing to us, even though we spoke Portuguese. But the music that we listened to on the radio, it was Brazilian. We knew all the Brazilian songs… *Eêê*! They were ours. Sometimes we didn't understand all the words, but the music, it had to do with us… It was easy to get into the rhythm of *samba*. It wasn't the same (as our Mozambican rhythms), but it was easy. It moved us. The drums, the *cuíca*.[22]

In my reading, Soeiro is alluding to the emergence of a Southern cosmopolitanism predicated on the circulation of cultural forms and musical practitioners between the South Atlantic and the Indian oceans. While the first visits by Brazilian musicians dated back to the 1940s, regular musical exchanges served to popularize *samba* in Lourenço Marques, as the rhythm resonated with the local African and multi-racial publics, being considered a black musical genre (Filipe 2012, 162–163). In the 1950s and 1960s, Brazilian performers were routinely received in Lourenço Marques, often as headliners. In community associations and local clubs, they entertained the racially and culturally diverse audiences of the suburbs. Soeiro's narrative suggests that dancing *samba* and experiencing the joy-making practice of *brincar* (playing) the Brazilian-style carnival afforded Mozambicans the possibility of transnational belonging and claims of modernity that were otherwise foreclosed by the racial exclusivity of white entertainment spaces. The carnival parties in the city clubs, she explains, were held mostly for the settler elites: "in the elite clubs, a black person couldn't go in. And even someone mixed-raced, they were allowed in only if they were married to an European. Otherwise, no way" (Soreiro, interview).

In addition to racialized barriers preventing unrestricted access, some of the carnival balls organized in luxury hotels claimed a different genealogy, preferring to embrace the distinctively European roots of the festival. As Soreiro pointed out: "in Europe, there was also the Venice carnival, so that was also imitated here" (Soreiro, interview). For instance, in the early 1950s, a publicity poster for the carnival ball in the distinguished Hotel Girassol mimicked the European masquerade, representing its well-known characters, such as the Columbine, Harlequin, and their comedy troupe.[23] The photographs of elite gatherings published in the press also portrayed a more formal affair, with men in suits and bow ties

[22] "A maior enchente de sempre no carnaval da Malhangalene," *Notícias*, March 5, 1962. *Cuíca* is a friction drum used in *samba*.

[23] "Baile de Carnaval na Taverna do Girassol," *Notícias*, February 19, 1950.

and women wearing long party dresses.[24] Yet, as *samba* and *carnaval carioca* gained popularity, they found space in elite clubs, too. In the mid-1950s, even at Hotel Girassol and Hotel Polana, which were home to two of the most exclusive and sought-after nightclubs in town, party-goers danced until sunrise to the sound of *samba* and *marchinas*, another typically Brazilian carnival rhythm.[25] Alongside these musical exchanges, carnival also invited and animated forms of queer transnationalism across the southern oceans.

Baile das Bonecas: Transnational queer culture and carnivalesque histories of joy

In 1968, a Brazilian newspaper published a cultural column about Brazilian artists living abroad, spreading through the world "our music, our people, and mostly our *samba*."[26] The column focused on a cultural troupe working in Luanda, where they were reportedly warmly received by local audiences and the press.[27] Their spectacle had, as one of its main attractions, the *carioca* dancer Ronaldo Crespo, whose show was an impersonation of the cultural icon Carmen Miranda.[28] Crespo was travelling and performing alongside many other female artists, many of whom were *vedetes*, the glamorous show-girls flourishing in the Brazilian entertainment cultures in the 1950s and 1960s. But the troupe also included Lea Fernandes, a "*boneca* made up as a woman", and the costume designer Antuan Serafim.[29] *Boneca* ('doll') was a common term to refer to *travestis*, cross-dressing performing artists and female impersonators, many of whom rose to fame in the 1960s, becoming a Brazilian cultural export alongside *carnaval* and *samba* (Soliva 2016, 124). To me, this sheds light on an untold story of cultural mobility by demonstrating that Brazilian *travestis* also crossed the Atlantic, often mobilizing the same transnational networks that musicians did. Many of them were welcome and appreciated in spaces where Brazilian cultural items were already valuable commodities. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, *travestis* toured the Portuguese territories in Africa, performing and holding artistic residencies in Luanda and Lourenço Marques.

The actress, singer, and performer known by her stage name Rogéria became the best example of this type of (queer) transnational mobility. In the late 1960s, Rogéria was a rising star in the Brazilian cultural scene, having appeared in a couple of films and starred in several theatre productions. In 1967, she was described as "one of the best *travestis* who ever stepped on Brazilian stages" by the popular magazine *O Cruzeiro*, where an article chronicled her career to date and included several photographs of her transformation, from an average man, Astolfo, to the glamorous, sexy *travesti*, Rogéria.[30] Considering that *O Cruzeiro* circulated in Luanda and Lourenço Marques, where it was a popular read among local publics (Havstad 2019, 169), it is not surprising that Rogéria soon received invitations to perform in those cities, too. Between 1969 and 1970, she spent months in Angola and, later, Mozambique, where she had a short performing run in Lourenço Marques before heading to Beira, where she became a regular presence in the nightclubs Moulin Rouge and Primavera (Paschoal 2016, 101–102).

[24] "Assim se dançou animadamente o baile no Clube Militar, na noite de segunda-feira," *Notícias*, February 24, 1955.

[25] "A cidade entrou alegremente na quadra carnavalesca," *Notícias*, March 1, 1954.

[26] Efe Pinto, "Brasileiros são sucesso no exterior," *A Luta Democrática*, September 1, 1968.

[27] Efe Pinto, "Brasileiros são sucesso no exterior," *A Luta Democrática*, September 1, 1968.

[28] According to Rodrigues (2016), Renata Crespo was Ronaldo's artistic name when he performed in drag.

[29] Efe Pinto, "Brasileiros são sucesso no exterior," *A Luta Democrática*, September 1, 1968.

[30] "Um Homem e uma Mulher," *O Cruzeiro*, Edition 48, August 8, 1967, 28.

In a poster published in the press, she was described as "the great attraction of the hour", as well as "the greatest *travesti* of South America".[31] While her later career in Brazilian film and television makes Rogéria a memorable queer figure, she was not the only *travesti*, nor the first, to make an impression in the entertainment scene of Mozambique. In January 1970, the daily *Notícias* published a lengthy interview with Cassandra, another Brazilian *travesti*. She, too, had spent some time in Angola before her five-month run in Lourenço Marques.[32] In her interview, Cassandra speaks about her art – which included a strip-tease number – and of her desire to "become a woman" through medical intervention, which she hoped to undertake in the following year, in Casablanca, Morocco.[33] That she brought the potentially sensitive topics of gender nonconformity and sexual reassignment to public view only demonstrates the critical labour done by *travestis* in shifting the terms of public debate on gender and sexuality, wherever they went.

Moreover, the cases of Rogéria, Cassandra, and others whose names are not preserved in the archive, speak of the circulation of queer cultural forms, and of the professionals associated with these practices, in the (post)colonial world. However temporary, their sojourn through cities such as Luanda and Lourenço Marques produced significant cultural impacts, widening the possibilities of visibility, personal expression, and cultural experimentation for queer and gender nonconforming folks. While private parties had been spaces of joy and community-making for gay-identifying men for most of the 1950s and 1960s (Miguel 2019), by the end of the decade, *travesti* shows in public spaces coincided with – and were partially a result of – broader cultural shifts taking place in settler society, where urban youth cultures pushed back against the sexual conservatism and gendered morals of the dominant colonial order (Araújo 2021). This context of rapid social change is described by one of my interlocutors, the writer Eduardo Pitta. Born in a settler family in Lourenço Marques in 1949, Pitta recalls growing up in a "hypocrite society", where certain issues were not "spoken about", particularly matters of sexuality (Eduardo Pitta, interview, February 19, 2020). As an openly gay young white man, he remembers the early 1970s as a moment of relative freedom, when the local white youth started to join the cosmopolitan and multi-racial bohemian world revolving around the infamous Rua Araújo, a street of bars, cabarets, and nightclubs in downtown Lourenço Marques. As the core of the city's nightlife, this was also a popular stage for sexual and romantic encounters, both homo and heterosexual, either transactional or not (Araújo 2021). For Pitta, the arrival of Brazilian *travestis* in this space was a "great motor" of cultural change, through which gender and sexual experimentation could happen more openly (Pitta, interview). Soeiro also remembers her initial fascination with the *travestis*, and their impact on settler colonial culture: "We could not believe it, we did not know that was possible [for a man to perform as a woman]… Those were things that people did not speak about" (Soeiro, interview). As she puts it, *travesti* shows were "a scandal of the first order, a true scandal. We couldn't even imagine, but we loved to watch." Soeiro refers to the artists with admiration, as "very outgoing" and "having no inhibitions" (Soeiro, interview).

The public visibility of *travestis* and others engaging in cross-dressing practices was, in both Brazil and Mozambique, closely associated with the growing popularity of the carnival. Rogéria herself, like many other performers like her, first cross-dressed for a

[31] "Na Boite Primavera," *Notícias da Beira*, April 8, 1970.
[32] "Cassandra na hora de partida," *Notícias*, January 20, 1970.
[33] "Cassandra na hora de partida," *Notícias*, January 20, 1970.

carnival ball.[34] The term *travesti* itself originated in the 1940s, in reference to *homens travestidos* ('men in disguise'), dressed in female clothing during the festivities in Brazil. The term was later popularized and appropriated by queer men, many of whom embraced a feminine gender expression and worked as cross-dressing performers (Green 1999).[35] As Soliva (2016) has argued, the 1950s and 1960s witnessed the professionalization of the *travesti* as a distinctive cultural agent, whose popularity was based on their unique ability to make a spectacle out of gender itself. *Travestis* embodied hyper-feminine personas, building on gendered imaginaries of seduction, beauty, and, above all, glamour (Soliva 2016, 84). As it was crafted for public display and mediated by the cultural industry and mass media, their "spectacular femininity" (Ochoa 2014) granted *travesti* shows their international market value (Soliva 2016, 124). For performers, show business and the nightlife offered a space of opportunity with unprecedented payoffs, including the possibility of transnational exposure and upward social mobility (Soliva 2016, 67). For their audiences, *travestis* represented the novel, the exotic, and the glamorous; but they were also imagined as icons of modernity and cosmopolitanism, carriers of the transgressive and edgy styles that local publics associated with global cities (Soliva 2016, 104). It is in a similar context that I situate the reception of *travesti* shows in Lourenço Marques, where these performers, too, conquered local audiences in the city's vibrant nightlife (Araújo 2021).

Besides the exclusive spaces of *travesti* shows in elite clubs, cross-dressing practices also flourished during the carnival. While police notices issued in the mid-1950s prohibited the use of "costumes of the opposite sex", considering such public acts of cross-dressing as contrary to public morals,[36] there is ample evidence that this prohibition was never enforced. In 1958, a poem published in the press encouraged this practice as an expression of freedom: "let go of the sorrows consuming you/ do what you feel like/ if you are a woman, wear a male mask/ do not mind being transformed/ if you are man, make yourself into a woman."[37] To be sure, this did not mean open acceptance either, and moralist criticism did take place. In 1961, Maria Pacóvia reported that she had "disconsolately" watched a young man during the carnival, "dressed in women's pyjamas, in small shorts with lace, exposed hairy legs, a skinny jacket, all in pink silk. With pointy breasts, and loud lipstick and nail polish."[38] While Pacóvia's tone demonstrates that, to some, publicly cross-dressing pushed the boundaries of what was morally acceptable, the mention of "hairy legs" also suggests a sense of mockery in performing gender confusion, rather than an intentional display of queerness.

As Miguel (2019) has argued, there is nothing intrinsically queer in cross-dressing during the carnival, as these practices could just have been moments of entertainment and licensed gender play for heterosexual men, in ways that did not challenge the male/female and the homo/hetero binaries. Even if that is the case, just like the act of masking oneself, cross-dressing was also a means by which social tensions around gender were made visible

[34] "Um Homem e uma Mulher," *O Cruzeiro*, Edition 48, August 8, 1967, 28.

[35] I cannot fully engage with the rich transnational history of *travesti* as a term/concept, especially because its uses change over time and from country to country in Latin America. However, I want to draw a distinction between how the term was used in the period at hand, mostly to refer to cross-dressing performers, and the ways in which it was reconceptualized and politicized in the following decades, to denote a non-normative gender identity. For a sketch of this history, see Hutta and Balzer (2013).

[36] "Edital do Corpo de Polícia sobre o Carnaval," *Notícias*, February 18, 1955.

[37] Zeca, "Poema sobre Carnaval," *Notícias*, February 13, 1958.

[38] Maria Pacóvia, "Cu...cu!... Entrudooooo!" *Notícias*, February 14, 1961.

and negotiated.[39] For a group whose social life often remained hidden, secluded within private parties – in what Aching has called "partially hidden public spheres" (2002, 26) – carnival opened up a stage where sexual and gender transgression could be lived differently, in a public and intensified manner (Green 1999, 335). As *travestis* and gay men became a habitual presence in the Rio de Janeiro carnival – having parties, balls, and costume competitions dedicated to them (Green 1999, 360) – their hypervisibility reached Lourenço Marques, too. In 1971, the local magazine *Tempo* sent a correspondent, Mota Lopes, to cover the festivities in Rio. In an article running for several pages, Lopes mentions having attended one of the *bailes de bonecos* (or 'balls of dolls') typically frequented by homosexual men, women, and *travestis*. He reported having witnessed "authentic scenes from Sodom and Gomorrah."[40]

Lopes' article conveyed more a sentiment of playfulness and laughter than a tone of censure, and is perhaps indicative of the relative moral openness of the 1970s, a point that is confirmed by Pitta. At that time, people "were liberal, from the point of moral judgement" (Pitta, interview). It was in the same period that public *travesti* balls and competitions were first held in the city, too. Pitta recalls having first cross-dressed for the festivities in 1969, alongside a group of gay friends. In the following years, many of them entered the carnival competitions for the best *travesti* costume. The first *travesti* ball reported in the press was organized in 1973 by the Brazilian artist and costume designer Antuan Serafim (the same Serafim who had been to Luanda, in 1968, as part of a Brazilian cultural troupe). Held in a nightclub, with nine participants, the competition was met with "the enthusiastic support from the public, to whom the novelty of the spectacle was a hit."[41] Remembering these events, Pitta explains that they were mostly about "having fun", and did not involve any political consciousness, or any explicit politicization of the sexual orientation and gender identity of the participants. Rather, these *travesti* balls were a public exploration of the "culture of effeminacy" that already existed amongst homosexual networks in the everyday, which included homosexuals calling themselves by female names, often chosen with reference to flowers or Hollywood stars, such as "Daisy" and "Sophia", after Sophia Loren (Pitta, interview). But they also point to the southern circulation of repertoires of queer joy and world-making, not the least because they were organized by a Brazilian queer artist who had for years worked with *travestis* on both sides of the Atlantic. On the eve of national independence, in 1975, a *travesti* ball was named after its Brazilian counterpart, *Baile das Bonecas*.[42] The publicity poster for the event – depicting the silhouette of a pear-shaped female body onto which an ugly male head had been imposed – reiterated the playfulness at stake on these occasions, with their temporary suspension and mocking of gender norms.

While *travesti* balls underscored carnival's constitution as transnational queer culture, their subversive potential was limited by colonialism's racial interdictions, and they remained mostly frequented by the white middle classes (Pitta, interview). This was no different from Lourenço Marques' queer scene more generally, where spaces of socialization tended to be demarcated along the lines of race and social status (Miguel 2019; Araújo 2021). While the perspectives of working class people from the suburbs are generally absent from the print settler archive, the life history of one of my interlocutors, João, gives us some glimpses into the experiences of queer Africans during the

[39] This interpretation is informed by Aching's (2002) theorization of masking practices as an encounter and a negotiation between masked subjects and viewing subjects.

[40] Mota Lopes, "Carnaval no Rio," *Tempo*, no. 14, March 14, 1971, 43.

[41] "Carnaval Justifica," *Notícia*s, March 5, 1973.

[42] "Carnaval no Malhanga," *Notícias*, February 8, 1975.

carnival. Born in 1956, João had spent most of his childhood and youth living in the suburbs, where his mother sold "traditional beverages" and snacks (João, interview, January 5, 2020). In his youth, he befriended a group of slightly older men, who arrived in the city from rural areas in the Gaza Province. These friends defied gender norms by adopting feminine gender expressions in the everyday, and making a living by practising same-sex sex work downtown, at Rua Araújo. While he was with them, João recalls feeling a pervasive sense of shame: "The men and women in the neighbourhood spoke of them: 'Those guys, how is it possible? Wearing scarves? Braiding their hair? And what-not'" (João, interview).

Despite these friendships, João kept his own sexual desires hidden: "I was in the closet, so no one could know about me" (João, interview). The exception to his cultivated practices of discretion was the carnival, when he attended the street festivities in the evenings, dressed as a woman. João notes that, since childhood, he had felt the desire to wear women's clothes, without ever acting on it, for fear of being reprimanded. The ability to cross-dress publicly was what fascinated him about the carnival as a space of freedom, where the subversion of gender norms was temporarily permitted, if not welcome. As he described it: "I used to go [to the street carnival at Avenida da Angola], dressed as a woman. I even wore breasts" (João, interview). This is not to say, of course, that the festival – and the forms of experimentation it invited – was appealing to all queer Africans. Another interlocutor, Abdul, was never seduced by the carnival, a position he attributes to his Catholic upbringing, noting that many observant Catholics refrained from joining the party (Abdul, interview, October 5, 2021).

Pitta's and João's stories suggest that for gay-identifying men, cross-dressing at the carnival was primarily an act of gender experimentation and cathartic release, rather than an affirmation of gender non-conformity. Yet, to other people, the same practices could link to particular forms of transgender self-fashioning that were consequential to subject formation well beyond the temporal boundaries of the carnival event. A Portuguese medical essay from 1981, for instance, described a "transsexual patient" born and raised in Lourenço Marques. With its temporally linear and medicalized narrative, the report documented a familiar story of transgender becoming, from neglecting male toys in preference for dolls, to playing with and wearing female clothes. At age 7, the "patient" had first attended the carnival dressed as a woman, wearing a wig that had been gifted to them by their father (Gomes et al. 1981). In engaging with this text, I do not intend to reify its medical authority, since the medicalization of transgender phenomena has been widely critiqued as a form of biopower that regulates and naturalizes the binary gender system (MacKinnon 2018). I am, however, suggesting that a carnivalesque lens may offer some interesting possibilities for thinking about transgender and non-binary histories of Mozambique, and of Southern Africa more generally, as an intellectual project under construction (Mugabe 2021; Matebeni 2021).

Yet, because late colonial carnival invited modes of gender crossing and non-conformity that pre-dated the rise of "transgender" as an identarian category and historical subjectivity, its history requires a carefully reading of the moments of experimentation, transgression, and freedom as lived by queer and gender non-conforming folks in ways that avoid linear narratives of queer and trans liberation. Carnival may be analytically useful not because it allows us to "find" gay, *travesti*, or trans identities in the archival record, but because it points to dynamics of social visibility and collective joy, of boundary-making and border-crossing, of emerging countercultural formations and practices of queer world-making. Thus, as a historical lens, carnival allows us to imagine queer history beyond the frames of sexual discipline and medicalization, to focus instead on carnivalesque acts and imaginations that were intimately mediated by the

body in motion, dancing, singing, or cross-dressing. Carnivalesque histories of queer joy relate to what Ananya Kabir (2020, 245) theorized as "alegropolitics", as a "politics of embodied happiness" that circulates through "culture-specific routes, [transversing] the intersection of several transnational and local axes". In Lourenço Marques, various manifestations of the carnival promised alegropolitical possibilities, even if their critical potential was necessarily constrained by the colonial regimes of race/gender/sexuality.

Conclusion

On April 25, 1974, a coup led by dissenting factions within the Portuguese military in Lisbon brought down the regime that had ruled Portugal – and her colonies – for decades. Months later, on September 7, the Lusaka Accord was signed between Portugal and Frelimo, setting Mozambique on the path to decolonization, which was scheduled to take place the following year, on June 25. On February 10, 1975, the Ministries of Information, Internal Administration, and Labour of Frelimo's transitional government jointly issued an official communiqué.[43] The short document stated that carnival Tuesday – which had typically been a holiday – was now an ordinary work day. "In the same spirit", it also determined that "carnivalesque manifestations in public street (…) will not be allowed."[44] Frelimo's cancelation of street carnival can be read as part of a broader policy of urban cleanup and moral policing, through which the Party sought to curb practices it deemed reactionary, anti-social, immoral, and generally contrary to the principles and values of the Mozambican revolution (Machava 2018). Often imagined as centres of moral depravity by the Frelimo leadership, the nightlife scene existing in major cities was under attack, especially in downtown Lourenço Marques. In this context, it is not surprising that street carnival was disallowed in the years following independence, which may have contributed to the general forgetfulness about the festival in contemporary Mozambique.[45] This article has been an initial attempt to engage with this history, about which much is yet to be done.

As I have argued, looking at the carnival may be a particularly productive proposition to historians of gender and sexuality in Southern Africa. Much of the scholarship in the field has focused on the making of gender regimes over time, examining the ways in which men and women are situated as historical subjects, whose identities and positionalities are shaped by medical, labour, and cultural systems, and so on. Conversely, in this article I endeavoured to imagine what queer and gender history can emerge if one focuses instead on events and moments of transgression and gender-bending, in those acts that destabilize and complicate dominant sexual cultures and normative gender regimes, such as carnivalesque events. I have shown that, as elsewhere, in Lourenço Marques the carnival could be a potentially liberatory moment of sexual experimentation and cross-gender performance, despite all the limitations and constraints set in place by the colonial situation. Thinking with the carnival allows us to reorient our attention away from normative gender regimes and disciplines of sexuality, to privilege instead those acts of disruption and subversion that are produced through the body.

[43] After the Carnations Revolution of April 1974, which overthrew the dictatorship in Lisbon, Portugal initiated a process of negotiated transfers of power in its African territories. In Mozambique, the Lusaka Accords were signed on September 7, 1974, to put in place a transitional government to lead the country to independence under the leadership of the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO).

[44] "Quadra Carnavalesca – Comunicado Official," *Notícias*, February 11, 1975.

[45] The first mentions of street carnival I could find in the postcolonial press date from the late 1980s; the festivities in Maputo seemed to have experienced a significant revival in 1988, 1989, and 1990, as documented on the pages of the magazine *Tempo*.

Indeed, the analysis of print sources and oral history interviews pushes us to return to the concept of carnival as a practice of transgression, freedom, and utopian imagination that is deeply mediated and grounded on the body in motion, dancing, singing, in pleasure and joy. These materials, too, paint a complex picture of the carnival in Lourenço Marques as a site of struggle, situated between procedures of domestication by the colonial state and co-optation by private capital, but also critically constituted as a potential space of freedom. The politics of the body in disguise, masked, on the dance floor, cross-dressed, invite us to rethink these gendered practices and forms of subversion, indiscipline, and transgressive affects that they make possible. As I have argued, this history of joy connects to broader queer geographies in the Global South, and particularly to how the circulation of *samba* and *travesti* cultures, from the South Atlantic to the Indian Ocean, invited forms of gender play, performance, and pleasures that subverted the racially segregated and gender binaried format of the settler, private, carnival party. In Lourenço Marques as elsewhere, the festivities offered the promise of freedom, although temporarily. Thinking of play, joy, and transgression during the carnival along these lines allows for new histories of gender and sexuality, grounded in the colonial archive, but also in the more ephemeral registers of the performative and the more nuanced temporality of the everyday.

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Interviews

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João, interview, Nelson Mugabe, Maputo, January 5, 2020.

Manuela Soeiro, interview, Caio Simões de Araújo, Maputo, October 10, 2021.