PERFORMING CITIZENS AND SUBJECTS: DANCE AND RESISTANCE IN TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY MOZAMBIQUE

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Abstract

Performing Citizens and Subjects: Dance and Resistance in Twenty-First Century Mozambique

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This dissertation examines the politics and economics of the cultural performance of dance, placing this expressive form of communication within the context of historic changes in Mozambique, from the colonial encounter, to the liberation movement and the post-colonial socialist nation, to the neoliberalism of the present. The three dances examined here represent different regimes, contrasting forms of subjectivity, and very different relations of the individual to society. *N'Tsay* (1984) is a dance produced by the National Song and Dance Company (CNCD) about a female heroine; suggesting that the people of Mozambique will find a way to stand up to the violence and wretchedness of the present as they stood up to it in the past. *Nyau* is a traditional dance genre performed by the male Nyau secret society and designated UNESCO World Cultural Heritage. When performed in the context of national festivals *nyau* is about hinterland, renegade males calling on the spirits of the ancestors to assert power over both the rulers and the ruled. Augusto Cuvilas’ controversial choreographic work, *Um Solo para Cinco* (2004), contrasts with the ascendance of *nyau* in the 2000s. Cuvilas, trained in Mozambique, Cuba, and France, was the darling of the CNCD but eventually was rejected and reviled, and murdered in 2007. *Um Solo para Cinco* is a classic for Maputo art-goers and public intellectuals, but something better forgotten for public officials and religious leaders. Whereas masked male *nyau* dancers excite audiences with their performances of menace and disorder, the five
female dancers in *Um Solo para Cinco* create anguish by revealing their naked bodies. The female dancers perform the disintegration of social life and their dispossession in the current era compared to the prowess of uncontainable male hinterland dancers. *Um Solo para Cinco* expresses another form of resistance, quieter but in many ways more powerful, another form of subjectivity that reveals the precariousness of everyday work and life. The dances are wonderful examples of body politics; they recall the system of Citizens and Subjects that was instituted through colonial rule and communicate Mozambicans experiences with this legacy in contemporary social life.
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Introduction

This dissertation examines the politics and economics of the cultural performance of dance in twenty first century Mozambique, placing this expressive form of communication within the context of historic changes from the colonial encounter, to the liberation movement and the post-colonial socialist nation, to the neoliberalism of the present.

The Argument

I frame my argument by referring to Mahmood Mamdani’s rightfully influential book *Citizens and Subjects. Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (1996). Colonial rule was based on hierarchies of privilege, largely but not exclusively racial: at the top, white settlers (along with their allies who might be of East Asia or even occasionally of African descent); at the bottom, the largely rural and indigenous African population. Mamdani calls these two categories of persons who were subject to colonial rule “Citizens” and “Subjects.” He writes about Uganda and South Africa, but the structural distinctions he points to apply elsewhere.

In Mozambique, as in much of Africa, these two categories of privilege could be mapped not only through “race” but also legally, economically, and spatially. “Citizens” had full access to legal privileges and protections, whereas “Subjects,” typically the colonized population, were denied these rights and were administered under what were seen as customary laws and tradition. Citizens had access to
economic resources and power, whereas Subjects were marginalized or excluded from the sources of the greatest wealth (capital and trading networks, and, later, capital, labor, and industrial infrastructure). Citizens lived largely in areas of dense population and permanent buildings, such as ports and urban centers, whereas subjects lived in poorer urban areas or in rural towns and villages. These distinctions were also reflected within urban spaces: the city of Lourenço Marques, the Portuguese administrative center which with Independence in 1975 was renamed Maputo, was segregated between the urban core for citizens, built of cement (cidade de cimento), and the peri-urban area for subjects, built of less permanent materials such as mud and straw (cidade caniço).

At certain moments in colonial history, the distinction between Citizen and Subject was mapped onto the of notion of “civilization,” embodied by the Portuguese Citizen elite, versus those who were believed by the colonial power to be in need of becoming civilized. Portuguese colonists were not alone among colonial powers in believing that colonialism was a civilizing mission. Consequently, whether one was a Citizen or a Subject was also enacted in everyday habitus and in cultural practices. Dance in Maputo, for instance, included ballet school for the children of citizens, whereas I point out at the end of Chapter One that people who aspired to join the elites made their elite status visible by adopting European habits and practices, such as eating with a fork and knife or being baptized.

At other moments in both colonial and post-colonial history, the Citizen-Subject distinction could be mapped onto the Modern and the Traditional. That
distinction was adopted by the Portuguese during the twentieth century, and was promulgated during the initial rule of the newly-independent nation state of Mozambique in its Marxist-Leninist phase under the party Frelimo (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique), which lasted less than a decade. In the Modern/Traditional distinction after Independence and during neoliberalism, Subjects occupied the spaces of tradition and backwardness, as well as poor and rural, whereas the space of Citizens was occupied by Frelimo party members, business owners, and industrialists.

Legally the distinction between Citizens and Subjects dissolved with the end of Portuguese rule at Independence, yet the social, political and economic hierarchies that Mamdani pointed to in other parts of Africa continue to persist in Mozambique. Since Independence, Mozambican dance has continued to reflect, resist, construct, or comment on that divide between the small elite of the privileged, and the mass of others.

I make two major arguments about dance as such. First, that the dances that emerge or gain prominence in each particular moment are related to the politics and economy of a particular era – not as a direct reflection, obviously, but as an expression of protest, or of celebration, or of commentary on the national politico-economic condition of that moment. My second argument concerns how dance should be analyzed as an aesthetic and political form. The meaning of a dance, I argue, may of course in some cases be partially expressed through its narrative, the story it tells. That is the case for N’Tsay, for instance, which depicts symbolically the coming of
colonialism and the eventual victorious defeat of the oppressor. However, although sequential moments through which a dance unfolds may in some cases tell a narrative, I argue that a profounder understanding of its meanings can be had by attending to its energetics and movement; to the moment in history in which it is performed or gained prominence and the controversies; to the way that it was created; to its place in the semiotic fields of politics and categories of dance in which it falls; and to its context and circumstances of being performed, including its staging and framing. Thus my argument is that any individual dance or dance genre, although an “art form,” is not free-standing and autonomous. Rather, its meanings are embodied literally in the bodies and movements and energetic poetics of the dancers, on the one hand, and its meanings accrue and are constituted by its larger semiotic-political contexts of performance.

N’Tsay: Dancing Decolonialism

The armed struggle and revolutionary socialist government in many ways intervened in the structure of power but in other ways reinforced it. During the armed struggle and on the eve of independence, dance was an important activity that represented a transformation of the racialized and ethnicized subjectivities and spaces. When Frelimo arrived in the capital of Mozambique in the south after fighting a guerrilla war in the north, they inherited a city spatialized along the colonial lines of urban-rural and modern-traditional, divides. Dance radically intervened in this divide by forging new cultural spaces, and Frelimo assisted by giving material support to
these new spaces and even establishing new institutions that were dedicated to
developing dance performance and teaching practices that bridged previous
traditional-modern embodied practices.

One social group that was instrumental to this push for new cultural spaces
and new dance practices was the soldiers and their families who moved with Frelimo
to Maputo from the liberated zones of the north and encampments in Tanzania. They
brought with them leisure activities and training exercises with dance and music at
the center. Their dance culture simultaneously embraced ethnic specialization, the
exchange among ethnically distinct genres, and the innovation of new forms. This
ethical practice embedded in dance and music was continued in the newly formed
dance institutions, with one addition—Cuban, Russian, and other dance professionals
from socialist friendly countries who brought their techniques in ballet, modern, and
folklore and their knowledge of international theatrical arts.

The new government established dance and cultural institutions with the
support of the Soviet Union and international socialism that further dissolved citizen-
subject performed subjectivities. The Companhia Nacional de Canto e Dança
(CNCD) and the Escola Nacional de Dança (END) were two of the most important
institutions that continued the dance culture that emerged in the military during the
armed struggle. Both institutions taught particular traditional genres and produced
new choreographic works that fused these genres and incorporated international
techniques of ballet and modern dance. In addition, the process of teaching dance and
creating dance productions encouraged collaboration and multiple authorship over
more hierarchical processes that emphasize technical specializations and privileged art managers and cultural brokers over the artists.

*N’Tsay* was a CNCD production that debuted in 1985 and would come to be one of the CNCD’s most iconic and loved works. *N’Tsay* performed the legacies of colonialism, the promise for cultural transformation, and perseverance during the harrowing civil war (1977-1992). The war was fomented by regional and international forces when Mozambique joined the frontline states against apartheid South Africa and Rhodesia. By the mid 1980s the conflict became an internally based civil war with devastating effect that included nearly one million deaths, four million displaced refugees (out of a population of about 18 million), and Mozambique became one of the world’s poorest and most indebted countries. *N’Tsay* was created as an allegory about national emancipation but also, because of the severe conflict, was a beacon of hope that national sovereignty and the values of the revolutionary cause would endure.

The CNCD took the mythical figure of N’Tsay, a mother goddess who is central to the cosmology of many Mozambicans in the central provinces, and made her a metaphorical figure of resistance to the colonial occupation. The CNCD’s N’Tsay both validated Mozambican ethnically specific traditions and modernized such traditions by framing them within national imaginaries about revolutionary ethics. The CNCD’s N’Tsay performed the new citizen of a new nation-- a person who would have to reflect on the colonial legacy and radically transform from within,
create a new consciousness based on egalitarianism, respect across differences, and selfless sacrifice.

These values of a new consciousness, egalitarianism, and the bridging of the Modern-Traditional divide, were also performed in the process of making *N’Tsay*. The form of the work integrated many of the dance cultures in Mozambique from rural villages, international theatrical arts, and military routines. In addition, at the time of its creation, the work was multiply authored, and the environment of the CNCD encouraged participatory theatrical production. *N’Tsay* had tremendous currency for Mozambicans during a time of terrible turmoil.

*N’Tsay* was received with domestic and international acclaim and would continue to be performed at high-level events and venues, such as the Kennedy Center of the Arts in Washington D.C. in 1998. By the 2000s, however, *N’Tsay*’s had run its course and today is typically only performed for political-party purposes and at state-sponsored events such as commemorations of public holidays such as Independence.

**Nyau: Dancing “Tradition” and Resistance**

*Nyau* is a traditional dance genre performed by the male Nyau secret society, which exists in the Nyanja and Chewa areas of Malawi, Zambia, and Mozambique. In Mozambique, Nyau secret societies also exist in many provincial capitals due to migration, although they are historically from the central Tete region.
In Mozambique, the dance of *nyau* is one of many male masquerade dances, such as *mapiko*, which is danced by the Makonde and others from the provinces of Cabo Delgado and Nampula. In the newly independent Mozambique, both *nyau* and *mapiko* were danced by people with former colonial tribalized identities. But *mapiko* of the Makonde were able to represent ideal citizens because of the Makonde’s position as freedom fighters, while *nyau* of the Tete community were viewed as tribalized by the modern Frelimo nation-state. *Nyau* accrued meanings as a backward, obscurantist, nativized practice whereas *mapiko* was more pliable to the modernizing project of creating new modern subjectivities. Pejorative meanings were attached to *nyau* more easily because the Tete province, as well as the Nyau secret society, were not as active or sympathetic to the Frelimo-led armed struggle, whereas thousands of Makonde participated as freedom fighters and assisted to defeat the Portuguese in Cabo Delgado. *Nyau*, then, illustrates the way that citizen subject divide was re-articulated in the brief socialist era to privilege certain groups and discipline others. *Nyau* became a dance that within the nationalist imaginary of Marxist-Leninist socialism embodied subaltern subjectivity from the hinterland (read: primitive and subversive) Mozambique.

After the peace accords of 1992 that ended the civil war, Mozambique entered fully into neoliberal reforms of structural adjustment programs that implemented austerity programs and brashly created advantageous conditions for financial capital, resource extractive industries, and criminal organizations. A crucial aspect of the neoliberal reforms instituted in the 1990s was to encourage “autochthonous” social
institutions to replace the welfare state, and to allow the flourishing of cultural practices that were previously suppressed under the authoritarian Marxist Leninist regime. In postsocialist Mozambique, the government and UNESCO worked, along with Malawi and Zambia where nyau is also performed by the Chewa and other groups, to promote the application for nyau as UNESCO intangible World Cultural Heritage, which was achieved in 2007. Today, nyau is featured at national cultural festivals and other high profile events as a representative of Mozambique’s bounded, long-standing ethnic traditions. Because of the recent ascendance as UNESCO World Cultural Heritage, nyau has been able to shift categories from the national pariah to the national hero. The shift was culturally constructed and politically convenient for Frelimo and donor agencies.

Thus, the story of the ascendance of nyau is integral to the story of neoliberal reforms. It plays a role in the mnemonic revisions on the part of Frelimo and the donor agencies to reframe the socialist period as an authoritarian regime that failed to recognize Mozambique’s cultural traditions. It frames the neoliberal period as the opening of democratic reforms.

Nyau embodies the resurgence of “traditions” in the neoliberal era. Interestingly, nyau performances are not fully contained within this discursive political struggle over the meanings of the state. Nyau performances present masked male dancers who embody Nyau spirits that express humorous, dangerous, and menacing images. The energetics of the dance are explosive, and the dancers/musicians create rhythmic sound and movement that progressively evolve
from calm to disorder, comfortable to strange, in order to maximize its effect of shock and disorientation on the audience. The performers are young, athletic, and from rural/ peri-urban, working and peasant class backgrounds.

Much like the dance itself, nyau is the embodiment of uncontain-ability. The dance revels in its subaltern aesthetics. Nyau performers are the uncivilized subject from colonialism, the obscurantist subject from socialism, and the disposable laboring subject under neoliberalism. The performances express male prowess, virtuosity, and evasion. The poetics of nyau performances on such stages as the National Culture Festival draw attention to the ability of hinterland males to provoke disorder for nation-state elites and draw attention to the role of violence to disrupt their modernizing projects.

**Augusto Cuvilas’ Um Solo para Cinco: Dancing the Neoliberal Condition**

Augusto Cuvilas’ controversial choreographic work, *Um Solo para Cinco* (2005), contrasts with the acceptance and ascendence of nyau in the 2000s. Cuvilas, born in 1971 and trained in Mozambique, Cuba, and France, was the darling of the CNCD but eventually was rejected and reviled, and murdered in 2007. *Um Solo para Cinco*, directed and choreographed by Augusto Covilas, is a cult classic for Maputo art-goers and public intellectuals, but something better forgotten for public officials and religious conservative leaders. Whereas concealed male nyau dancers excite audiences with their performances of menace and disorder, the five female dancers in *Um Solo para Cinco* create anguish by revealing their naked bodies. The female
dancers perform the disintegration of social life and their complete dispossession in the current era compared to the prowess of uncontrollable male hinterland dancers. *Um Solo para Cinco* expresses another form of resistance, quieter but in many ways more powerful, another form of subjectivity to that reveals the precariousness of everyday work and life.

*Um Solo para Cinco*, the third dance that I will analyze, was a choreographic work by Augusto Cuvilas that launched his career on the international stage. Augusto Cuvilas (1971-2007) studied at the Escola Nacional de Dança during the 1980s and further trained in Cuba and France. By 2000 He became the artistic director of CNCD where he established new dance practices and produced new works oriented towards contemporary dance.

*Um Solo para Cinco* was Cuvilas’ most polemical choreographic work. The dance presented five Mozambican maidens (poor, black, unmarried women) who in the dance perform ordinary activities of work and play. The dance takes the audience through a series of repetitions and revisions of maidens’ performing everyday activities. The maidens then become trapped in routines that never can be accomplished: instead, their activities dissolve into chaotic and frenzied energy and movement patterns. Near the end, the dancers strip themselves and become naked.

The work was awarded first prize by a jury at the most important dance festival in Africa at the time, SANGA (Africa and Indian Ocean Choreographic Encounters) in Madagascar in 2004. Then, the Madagascar authorities intervened and banned the work from being presented in the final ceremony.
Um Solo para Cinco’s success and controversy both pivoted around the naked female body. Upon the dance troupe’s return to Mozambique, conservative voices vehemently criticized Cuvelas for his immoral work and the state for allowing such a dance to represent Mozambique on the international stage. They argued that Um Solo para Cinco revealed that the Mozambican state was devoid of values that had previously characterized the country. Other Mozambican voices, along with international aid agencies, defended Um Solo para Cinco as a work of art and insisted that any censorship would violate the freedom of expression of Cuvelas and the dancers. In addition, they supported Cuvelas by arguing that Um Solo para Cinco was a critical work that posed valuable questions about gender inequality and patriarchy in Mozambique and Africa.

Another interpretation of Um Solo para Cinco that was widespread in Maputo, but that was not part of the public debates about the dance, understood that the dance performed the embodied experiences of precarity and the responsibility of the current political and economic order in reproducing structures of elite worthy citizens and disposable, servient subjects. The moment of nakedness is one more element among many in the dance that communicates fear and a kind of despair with insecurity.

The dancers that I study and the other subjects of austerity measures live in a state that Berlant (2011), Butler (2004), Ridout and Schneider (2012), and others have called “precarity,” a condition of instability that in many countries has been the result of neo-liberal “reforms” that have impoverished state institutions and caused them to withdraw basic social, educational, and cultural supports from their citizens.
and publics. The naked performed body in *Um Solo para Cinco* expresses the condition of precarity, and the feeling of precariousness in the contemporary moment that is experienced by young black, Mozambican women as well as by Cuvilas, by dancers, and by people who labor in the neoliberal service economy. Many Maputenses interpreted *Um Solo para Cinco* as a subversive work because it expressed public feelings about the market reforms that have left people more exposed to the citizen-subject divide forged through colonialism. The subversiveness is in its “stickiness” (Ahmed 2004) that attracts affective, sensory, and embodied experiences of dispossession and generates increasing circulation of signs that links the political economic order with people’s sufferings.

**Fieldwork**

I went to Mozambique in order to study the relations between art, aesthetics, and politics. I had done work there in the years 2000 and 2001 on a Junior Fulbright-IIE, and both then and during my anthropological fieldwork (2009-2012) I had observed the difficulties that the practitioners and what I came to see as laborers in both the visual arts and dance were suffering in the regime of neoliberal austerity, which Mozambique had commenced in the late 1980s under pressure from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. By the time I arrived, the deterioration in the conditions of the institutions of culture and of the artists’ morale was extremely apparent, and, knowing something about the vibrant histories of African dance in the twentieth century, I was intrigued as well as saddened. For a
variety of reasons, I became closely engaged with the dance community of Maputo, the capital of Mozambique, and my fieldwork circumstances afforded me access to oral histories of dance from older and retired practitioners, as well as students, audiences, and dancers engaged in the struggle to make a living in these difficult times. The three dances I examine are all performed in the twenty first century, but they circulate in different venues, and they were created and came to prominence at different times.

My ethnographic fieldwork was conducted in Maputo between 2009 and 2012. Using participant observation, interviews, and classes in dance, my family and I lived among the many of the Mozambicans that I studied. I helped establish a curriculum and professional development program dance program, Programa Apoio À Dança (PAD), at the Escola Nacional de Dança (National Dance School) and Centro Cultural Ntsindya with funding from the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. For this program I co-taught two courses Documentation of Dance and History of Mozambican Concert Dance. I co-taught the courses with Lúcio Chumbitico, who was one of the founders and longtime directors of the dance troupe Milhoro, a well-known dance troupe that toured nationally and internationally during the 1990s and early 2000s. Lúcio has a Bachelor’s degree in Education from the Universidade Pedagogica, and has abundant knowledge of both popular and concert dances in Mozambique.
The two courses Lúcio and I taught became my research methods for working through a set of questions about dance, culture, and power in Mozambique. The first course, Documentation of Dance, taught students concepts about ethnography and focused primarily on the process of describing, analyzing, and interpreting dance as an art form and socio-cultural practice.

The second course, History of Mozambican Dance, was an experiment we wished to conduct with the students. Since little is documented about Mozambican dance, if we were to write a history how would we do it? What dances, choreographies, and performances matter? Who are the people and institutions that contributed to these performances? What was the role of the state, both the Mozambican state and foreign states and agencies? How do dance practices in terms of aesthetics and the daily activities of making dance possible differ across time from the liberation struggle, independence, socialism, postsocialism, and the present? How do we account for the diversity and richness of dance in Mozambique, from performances under the Baobab trees to those on the national stage at Cine Africa, to those at the Kennedy Center for Performing Arts in Washington D.C. and beyond? How do you study the diversity of dance in Mozambique as one body of expressive culture?
Instead of trying to answer these questions ourselves, each week we invited guests from among experienced figures in the dance world who could talk about their experiences to the class. In addition, the students had research projects in which they would investigate for themselves a particular figure in Mozambican dance and give a presentation at the end of the semester. Each student picked one choreographic work, mostly from the CNCD. I guided them through a methodology of description, movement analysis, and interpretation. Before these presentations, the students had written and given prior presentations that described the works including a detailed description of the movements and choreographic arrangements. Then the students were asked to do interviews with performers, choreographers, and people who had seen the performances.

My partner, Yula Cisneros Montoya, established and administered Programa Apoio À Dança (PAD). Yula is a Mexican born, U.S. based dance educator who trained at the National School of Choreography- Kiev and the Shevshenko Theater of Opera and Ballet, the Ukraine, moved to Mozambique in 1992, and worked at Escola Nacional de Dança (END) and established a dance school called YucisBallet (1994-2001).

When we moved to Mozambique in 2009, She developed PAD with Escola Nacional de Dança (END) to offer advanced-level dance courses in ballet and modern techniques as well as Mozambican dances and techniques. END offered
coursework for up to six years in dance, which covered youth between 5 and 18 years of age. Although Maputo offers many workshops and organized exchanges with foreign dancers and choreographers who come through development agencies to Maputo to perform, there are no consistent venues for advanced professional-level dance training and education. PAD filled the void by creating a classroom and studio space, organizing a paid faculty of dance teachers, the majority Mozambican, and offering regular and thematic courses at no cost to the students.

Mozambique Demographics

Mozambique is a country in Southern Africa, just east and north of South Africa. Portuguese is the official language but there are over 42 different languages spoken in Mozambique. Makua is the largest language group with 25 percent of the population and Swahili is one of the smaller with .1 percent of the population. The literacy rate in Portuguese is around 50 percent for adults (36 percent for women and 67 percent for men) and 65 percent for youth (56 percent for women and 80 percent for men).¹

The country has a tremendously long coastline with the Indian ocean of 1,534 miles, which is longer than the whole pacific coastline of the United States (California, Oregon, and Washington). In terms of area, the country is almost twice

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¹ According to the UNESCO Institute for Lifetime Learning. Statistics are on the web at http://www.unesco.org/uil/litbase/?menu=13&programme=135
the size of California but has a population of around 26 million, just about the same population of the greater Los Angeles and San Diego areas.

The country has three general geographic regions. The two interior northern provinces of Tete and Niassa that neighbor with Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, and Tanzania are rich in resources (hydroelectric energy, wood, agriculture, precious metals, and coal). The other two northern provinces of Cabo Delgado, Nampula and Zambezia have large coastlines, have communities that are culturally integrated with Swahili communities across the Indian Ocean, and are rich in resources such as fisheries, petroleum, and natural gas. The central provinces are Manica, which neighbors Zimbabwe and is large producer of agricultural goods for the country, and Sofala, which is on the coast and is mountainous and provides the main port for trade to and from Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Malawi.

The southern provinces of Inhambane, Gaza, and Maputo have strong economic ties to South Africa because of the the mining and other industries. In addition, since the 2000s major roads have been constructed that has enabled South Africans to travel to Mozambique for vacations, especially on the beautiful coastline of Inhambane. Ecologically, the southern provinces are lowveld savannas that are similar to the South Africa and Swaziland neighbors. Linguistically, the southern provinces are predominantly comprised of Xitsonga (Tsonga) languages such as Changana, Ronga, and Tswa that share the same family as many Tsonga languages in South Africa and Zimbabwe.
The southern provinces are the most developed economically and have the most infrastructure because of their historical integration with the economy of South Africa. Mozambicans from the southern provinces work as laborers in the mines, agriculture, and domestic servants in South Africa. For centuries they have lived both in South Africa and Mozambique, traveling frequently between the two countries. The majority of the migrant laborers are men. They often times have maintain different families on both sides of the borders. They bring cash and goods from their jobs in South Africa to their families in Mozambique. It is difficult to find a family in southern Mozambique who does not have a family member that works as a migrant worker in South Africa. Subsequently, Mozambicans are fully versed in South African cultural trends such as music and dance, consumer goods, and entertainment. But the reverse is not true. South Africans remain mostly ignorant of Mozambique. This lack of cultural knowledge on the part of South Africans occurs despite the massive influx of South African tourists to Mozambique every year, especially during the summer and South African holidays.
Chapter 1
Citizens and Subjects in Portuguese Mozambique

In this chapter I discuss the kinds of political subjects created by the Portuguese crown during its centuries-long history of trading on the East African coast using indirect rule and an elite of non-Portuguese trader allies and trading alliances. From the beginning, relations between coastal traders—for initially the Portuguese were one among many—were complex, as they exploited the human population and natural resources. The Portuguese shared little in the way of a common language or religion with the African people; they had difficulty organizing trade and exploitation efforts, and they felt themselves superior to African races. These complexities persisted, albeit in varying configurations, and with increasing control by the Portuguese Crown, throughout nearly four hundred years in East Africa.

Citizens and Subjects were distinguished legally in Mozambique by the Portuguese in 1899, when European nations rushed to establish footholds in Africa. In the late nineteenth century, “the scramble for Africa” resulted in treaties, codification of laws, and new policies that brought new forms of control, oppression, and violence than had been visible before. In Mozambique, this was the moment when Citizens and Subjects were codified. Following the intensified colonial rule and labor policies promulgated the Portuguese crown during the late nineteenth century, the legal distinctions made between Citizens and Subjects, were further reified and codified in
the racial, cultural, and spatial divides made during Portugal’s colonial administration of Mozambique during the twentieth century. In 1928 a military coup in Portugal brought the fascist regime of Salazar to power and abolished the Crown, reconfiguring at once the relations between Portugal and its colonies. Another coup in Portugal in 1974 ousted the Salazar regime and indirectly enabled the Mozambican party/army of liberation Frelimo to attain independence. At that point the Portuguese distinction between Citizens and Subjects was abolished, though its legacy continued in various forms.

Although Portuguese rule formally ended with Mozambique’s Independence in 1975, the dances that I discuss in subsequent chapters continued to reflect aspects of the divide between Citizens and Subjects.

This chapter provides the historical background necessary to understand the antecedents and formation of the divide between Citizens and Subjects, which rested upon centuries of Portuguese presence and practices of administering and exploiting the labor of the populations and the natural resources of the interior lands of the east coast of Africa, notably through forms of indirect rule (eventually named indigenato).

**The First Phase of Indirect Rule, Prazeres da Coroa**

When the Portuguese explorers began trade routes to eastern Africa in the 1500s, they were one more group in a long history of trade in the region. What Enseng Ho (2006) has called the Hadrami diaspora (originating in Yemen) traded throughout the Indian Ocean since the 12th century. Communities of traders along the
East African Coast, known by the sixteenth century as “Swahilis” for the lingua franca they used to communicate among themselves and with peoples of the interior, had developed as early as the 900s, when Arabic and Indian traders arrived on the east African coast. Coastal African traders were in communication with kingdoms and chiefdoms of the African interior, from whom they obtained gold, ivory, animal skins, copper and other commodities, which they exchanged with the Asian travelers for items such as cowry shells, mung beans, and porcelain from China. As a result of this trade, distinct Swahili communities developed cities on the east African coast. These communities were African, Arabic, and Asian in terms of culture, religion, languages, politics, and technologies. Their own cultures were distinct from those of the African populations in the interior of the continent. The wealthier Muslim men were able to go on pilgrimages to Mecca, or to other trade cities in the Indian Ocean. The Swahili communities were also connected to other cities in the Indian Ocean through a complex genealogy that traced their lineages to relatives who were from other places in the region.

The Portuguese took advantage of the already established trading communities and networks. Although the Portuguese established their own forts on the East African Coast from the sixteenth century forward, it is more accurate to describe their presence in the region as being folded within the Swahili communities rather than independently setting up their own communities. The Portuguese built forts within Swahili establishments and on top of Swahili buildings. The forts were commanded by representatives and subjects of the Portuguese crown. They then
would work through Swahili and other African groups to expand their outposts and conduct trade.

Representatives of the crown would return to Portugal, but communities of Portuguese men stayed and lived in the forts, creating their own social networks among the African and Swahili groups. Eventually there developed of settlements Afro-Portuguese communities, who included Swahili traders and others, which operated as intermediaries between the Portuguese crown and African indigenous political groups.

From the eighteenth century and most of the nineteenth, the Portuguese crown relied on the prazos da coroa system of trade/control, especially strong on the northern coast. The prazos da coroa was a patronage system between the Portuguese crown and merchants in Mozambique many of mixed origins (Portuguese, African, Swahili, and Arabic) often lumped under the category of Afro-Portuguese (Newitt 1995). The system was complex and lasted for 400 years in many different forms, but its most prevalent feature was the creation of patronage lineages and sodalities between the Portuguese crown and Swahili traders, and the centralization of the authority of chieftains that could facilitate trade, especially of highly valued commodities such as gold, ivory, and slaves (Newitt 1995). The system of prazos da coroa was characterized by transculturation among groups, understood by the Portuguese as miscegenation and assimilation.

Thus the Portuguese Crown in the first few centuries did not try to “rule” the area that is now Mozambique. It gave concessions for contact with the interior to
companies and traders, not exclusively Portuguese, relying on the Afro-Portuguese trading communities, which were mixed in race, religion, and culture. *Prazos da coroa* was, however, a form of indirect rule and the Afro-Portuguese concessionaires under which the traders were the precursors of citizens. They lived in a fortified, densely populated, built environment in the ports and along the coast, and their concessions were backed by violence authorized or provided by the Crown. They formed an elite with connections to the wider worlds of Europe, the Levant, and the Indian Ocean. They were firmly in control of the main sources of wealth.

**The Scramble for Africa and the Labor Code in the Late Nineteenth Century**

By the 1880s European powers (Belgium, France, England, Portugal, and Germany) had divided Africa into “spheres of influences” at the Berlin Conference (1884-1885), but the boundaries between the European powers’ spheres were not well defined. What ensued has been called “The Scramble for Africa” (the eponymous title of several books, including Pakenham 1991), when all European powers aspiring to consolidate their resources divided the continent among themselves. One of the weakest European states, Portugal also rushed to expand into its declared territories in Africa (Cape Verde Islands, Guinea Bissau, São Tome and Principe, Angola, and Mozambique).

Before increasing the number of settlers in the Mozambique and establishing what amounted to a crown colony, the Crown gave concessions to Portuguese and other European “companies” to expand into the Mozambican territories to exploit
resources and labor in exchange for the remuneration of taxes paid to the Portuguese state. Concessions were given to explore resources in the production of industrial and consumable oils, such as from peanut, sesame, and copra, as well as sisal for the production of ropes and cotton for the production of textiles. Some of the companies that moved into the interior to produce these products were Companhia Africana de Lisboa, Fabre e Filhos and Régie Ainé (based in France), and Oost Africaansch Handelshuis (Holland) (Coquery-Vidrovitch, 1972). The Portuguese military, in support of the companies, launched “pacification” expeditions into the interior to end the reigns of African states. Between 1880 and 1930 many African groups were defeated, compelled to cede land to the companies, and their populations forced to work, amounting to slave labor for the concession companies. The Afro-Portuguese who had previously existed as independent intermediaries between the Portuguese and African states for centuries were under more pressure to establish allegiances with the Portuguese state and military, as well as with the concessionary companies.

The discovery of gold in Southern Africa in 1885, some of it in the British protectorate of South Africa, dramatically changed the cultural geography of Mozambique and the complexion of Portuguese presence. Rich gold reefs were discovered in the territory called the Republic of Transvaal which was inhabited by 80,000 British and a 120,000 people of Dutch heritage, commonly called Boers, whose descendants are today known as Afrikaners. For the Boers of the Transvaal the closest sea port to export gold and import goods was Lourenço Marques in the Delagoa Bay, the southernmost point of Portuguese Mozambique. Lourenço Marques
was also the only port that was not controlled by the British, who for the past century the Boers had been trying to flee and avoid incorporation under British rule. (After the Second Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902, which the British won, the Republic of Transvaal was incorporated into South Africa in 1910.) The increased import/export trade with the Republic of Transvaal created an enormous opportunity for the Portuguese state to collect custom taxes and to create more industries. In 1895 the Portuguese started construction on a railroad from Lourenço Marques to the capital of the Transvaal, Pretoria, 325 miles away. The population of Lourenço Marques boomed. In 1898 the Portuguese moved their capital from Mozambique Island, nearly 1,500 miles to the north, to Lourenço Marques.

Facing intense competition after the Berlin conference (1884-1885), Portugal was under growing pressure to control the territory and create a labor reserve that would satisfy nationalist capitalism’s drive for accumulation of resources for production in Europe. The Portuguese crown wanted to stop the prazos da coroa and all the transcultural merchant centers, bringing them under tighter control of a centralized state. They also wanted to stop the transcultural practices (the Afro-Swahili-Portuguese prazos), which the Portuguese saw as the assimilation of Africans and Swahilis instead of the preferred separation of different types of people. To this end, Antonio Enes, the Portuguese governor of Mozambique, instituted the Labor Code of 1899 to put a stop to the messy business of miscegenation, assimilation, and to better control the Swahili-Afro-Portuguese merchants. It also was the legal mechanism by which the Portuguese state would militarily conquer the centralized
African kingdoms, appoint chiefs who would report to the Portuguese state and force their male populace to work for the concessionary companies. This was the start of indirect rule and the establishment of native customary authorities, called *indigenato*.

Under the Labor Code of 1899, the Portuguese gave chiefs [*regulos*] and his circle of advisers legal status and protection by the colonial state to “represent” and govern over the native population in their territory. In turn *regulos* collected taxes from the population for the colonial state. All families were expected to pay taxes to the *regulo* through the male members who worked either as migrant laborers in the mines in South Africa and Rhodesia or worked as wage earners for the Portuguese and concessionary companies in Mozambique. Concessionary companies also established their own labor and tax regulations enforced within the territories that they controlled, although in accordance with colonial laws. The companies’ private armies of *cipais*, native police forces, and *capangas*, hired thugs, rounded up laborers for public works and labor on the plantations. Military campaigns became a common practice to control rebellious populations and force them to live in villages under the system of *indigenato*. Large numbers of local people started moving from one region to another to avoid being recruited and taxed. Harsher penal codes criminalized behaviors such as loitering, laziness, public indecency and drunkenness, adultery, and prostitution. Colonial police could round up indigenous men and charge them through the courts that then sentenced them to unpaid labor, or *corvée* [*labuta*]. *Regulos* were able to skip the whole sentencing part and simply use *cipais* and *capangas* to arrest men deemed criminals, or who were just rivals of the chiefs. Large numbers of men
were systematically rounded up and shipped off to work for the state and concessionary companies not as wage earners but as virtual slaves.

The Labor Code of 1899 was the most significant legislation that transferred authority away from the prazo system and towards the centralized Portuguese administrators and concessionary companies. The anthropologist Juan Obarrio (2014) explains that the labor code “first articulated the distinction between citizen and subject: all native subjects had a ‘moral and legal obligation to work’ toward ‘their subsistence and to better their social condition.’ Customary authorities were endowed with power to recruit forced labor and to sanction with correctional labor those who transgressed the law” (2014: 41). The law codified Africans as subjects who were to live under customary law according to the hierarchies and traditions of native authorities, indigenato. The Portuguese increased state power in Mozambique by imposing racial and ethnic segregation.

Portuguese colonial policies were embedded in nineteenth century European master narratives concerning the superiority of European culture, civilization, and technology. Indigenato was not just a system of legal and economic coercion, supported by military violence, but a discourse that inscribed natives as sub-human. Africans could not be citizens because they were “primitive” and slaves. The slave is the figure that precedes the colonial subject. Regulos had the legal obligation to supply labor for the companies but the population themselves had the “moral and legal obligation” to perform forced labor (Isaacman 1972). The natives were to
“improve themselves by work, acquiring through work a happier mode of existence” (Isaacman 1972: 36).

This unilineal evolutionary racism was justified by the architects of the indigenato system and the control of native labor was the first step on the ladder to civilization. Antonio Enes, who was the High Commissioner of Mozambique in the 1890s, stated in the report titled *Moçambique: Relatório apresentado ao governo, Agença Geral das Colônias, 1893* that “assimilation is the fundamental vice of our overseas legislation.” By assimilation he was referring to the Afro Portuguese who, like the European concessionaires, were representatives of the crown as *prazos da coroa*. Instead of miscegenation and transculturalism, the colony needed to establish a clear separation and hierarchy between groups according to their evolutionary stage. Enes stated, “[A] race [as inferior as the black race] does not move suddenly from a state of slavery to the full use of all its rights and prerogatives. It would be lacking in the passage through an intermediate stage--servilism--although in this case it is much tamed by the state of civilization of the dominant Europeans” (quoted in Obarrio, 2014: 41).

The figure of Africans as slaves who through work could move through intermediate stages, such as servilism, to eventually reach the state of civilization had different implications for men and women. Men might have in theory been able to move through the stages but the state of slavery and servilism was thought of as natural for women, who were charged with maintaining the home and family. With women in the domestic sphere, men as laborers became more directly subject colonial
policies. Thus, men and women experienced compulsory labor under Indigenato. However, the difference was that native men were seen as performing their duty to better themselves and their race, whereas women were seen as just existing in their natural states as agriculturalists, childbearers, and caretakers.

During the slave trade, particular groups were targeted for capture and exportation but much of the population was able to continue traditional forms of subsistence agriculture. Under Indigenato most populations were folded into colonial indirect rule which through the regulos, the concessionary companies, and their cipais and capangas subjected the male population to wage and compulsory labor. Therefore, men had less time for subsistence agriculture. But their waged labor for companies did not provide enough for the basics of food, shelter, cattle, or bride price (lobolo) to start families. Women were expected to continue subsistence agriculture and care for families while men were away as laborers. With this background, it is clear that the system of indigenato was dependent on the unpaid labor of women

**Portuguese Colonial Rule**

Up until the 1920s, it is difficult to imagine Mozambique as a “colony” of Portugal because of the sporadic and weak presence of the Portuguese state and small numbers of Portuguese settlers (between ten and thirty thousand in an area with an African population between two to four million). Despite the military campaigns to “pacify” African peoples and make them compliant to the presence of European concessionary companies, the Portuguese and other Europeans were almost entirely
located in a handful of outposts and cities on the coast. This would change dramatically with the political upheavals and shifts in Portugal. Until 1910, Portugal was ruled by a constitutional monarchy. In the 1890s the monarchy had declared bankruptcy. Most of the Portuguese population viewed the overseas African colonies as a drain on the treasury and were little interested in an expansion that just seemed to benefit a few companies run by elites in collaboration with foreign (French, British, and Dutch) companies. The Portuguese monarchy fell in 1908, which was followed by a chaotic period of democracy. Between 1910 and 1928, Portugal dissolved the monarchy and created a democratically elected parliament. However, the parliament was marked by turmoil and political disorder with no party in control (Newitt 1995).

In 1928 the military intervened and established a corporatist, new state called the “Estado Novo” under the fascist dictator António de Oliveira Salazar. Salazar’s “Estado Novo” created a new national imaginary for Portugal that saw the nation and the empire as one and the same. That meant that all the Portuguese territories in Africa were considered “provinces” of Portugal. Thus, the eleven provinces that made up the Portuguese nation on the continent of Europe were joined by another five provinces on the continent of Africa and three in Asia (Goa, Macau, Timor). Yet, the provinces in Portugal were on the average the size of Connecticut, while Angola and Mozambique were the size of the whole eastern United States. As another point of reference, Portuguese overseas African “provinces” were equal to the size of the Iberian Peninsula (Portugal and Spain), France, and Germany combined.
The colonial period in Mozambique effectively encompassed the period of Salazar Novo Estado from 1930 to 1974. *Indígenato*, indirect rule, continued under the *Estado Novo*, but the Portuguese state was extended and its control increased. During this period Portugal strikingly increased investments in industries (cashews, tobacco, sugar, ceramics, textiles, sisal, and oils), requiring dramatic growth in labor and generating capital for the state. To develop those industries, the colony constructed roads, railroads, and ports, as well as housing, churches, schools, hospitals, and markets that had previously not existed in Mozambique. They also required massive increases in land and labor pools. The population of Portuguese increased to 300,000 by 1970 (against a population of around 8,000,000 African Mozambicans). By 1970 there were also another 250,000 other white foreigners (South Africans, British, and other Anglophones, and people from European countries such Germans and Greeks). In addition there were over 25,000 Indians and 5,000 Chinese (Newitt 1995). Although there are no reliable statistics, there was a sizeable mixed race population, called *mestiços*, whether of long-standing Afro-Portuguese or more recently from the rise in foreign migration. The European population provided most of the administrative and skilled labor, and the African population was expected to provide the menial labor for the industries. Asians and mestiços, on the other hand, filled roles as small merchants and intermediaries who administered African labor for European bosses (Newitt 1995, O’Laughlin 2000, Serra 2001).

Portuguese colonialists measured African gender relations through their own notions of and desires for patriarchy as influenced by political and economic systems
that favored men and by a religious system that proffered women as *rainhas do lar*, angels of the home, caretakers of the home and children. Mozambican women, their families, their work, their sexuality, their authority in their communities as mothers, and their matrilineal societies did not at all fit the ideologies of the normative patriarchal Catholic family of Portuguese New State. Women, under this scheme, were doubly damned: they were not fit for citizenship because of their roles as wives and mothers and they were not proper women because of their social power and control of their own sexuality and fertility.

The Portuguese were similarly bewildered when they tried to understand Mozambican agricultural and labor practices. They concluded that men were lazy and women, overworked (Arnfred 2011). This neatly fit the colonial objectives to force men into compulsory labor often through eight month labor migration contracts. With the men “successfully” put to work to earn money as the primary wage earners for their families, then supposedly, women could retire to their proper place in the private sphere and devote themselves to housework as *Rainhas do lar*. No such retirement was the case for African women in Mozambique. Women in the south of the country, whose spouses frequently migrated to the mines in South Africa, took on formerly male roles in their husbands’ absence, though patrilineal relatives still asserted authority over in-marrying women. In the northern matrilineal belt that goes across Zambia, Malawi, and Mozambique, women along with their brothers traditionally had responsibility for providing for members of their families; these women suffered the
loss of discretionary income and resources. Within the colonial imaginary, women were doomed to be forever subjects.

**Lusotropicalismo**

By the 1950s, the Portuguese state began to develop a new social theory that came to be known as Lusotropicalismo. In the mid twentieth century, most countries of Asia had become independent from the colonial powers that had ruled them, and even most of Africa had become independent by the early 1960s. Portugal however continued to resist giving independence to its colonies. The United Nations in the 1950s condemned Portugal’s intransigence over its colonial possessions. In response Portugal reached into its messy, transcultural past of *prazos da coroa*, and turned to Lusotropicalist research by the Brazilian academic Gilberto Freyre to create an ideology that held that Portuguese colonialism was more humane than that of other European powers because of its history of intermixing and racial harmony. Lusotropicalism attempted to soften racial hierarchies and to use Mozambique’s transcultural history from the *prazos da coroa* system as a symbol of Portugal’s racially progressive practices.

The central tenet of Lusotropicalismo was the cultural superiority of the white Portuguese man and his ability to disseminate whitening or “embranquecimento” as a racial and cultural gift. This ideology was widely reinterpreted in Portuguese intellectual circles and re-mixed for the political purpose of protecting colonial interests in the 1950s and 60s after other European nations already ceded or
negotiated transitions to independence. It became the single most powerful propaganda vision to place Portugal “at the center of a single, unified nation incorporating not colonies but ‘provincias ultramarinas’ or ‘overseas provinces’ into a nonracist, Christo-centric world family” (Owen, 2007: 19).

Catholic patriarchy was the backbone of Lusotropicalismo’s non racial aspirations. Luís Madureira describes Lusotropicalismo’s vision of racial mixing and harmony as always predicated on the “sexual availability (‘resignation’) of the ‘native woman’” (quoted in Owen 2007: 19). Even in its extreme forms it was a license for rape, other sexual violence, and prostitution.

Lusotropicalismo generated a sexual mystique around the older history of miscegenation [mestiçagem] and hybridity. The expeditions of the discoveries were romanticized in regard to the appetite of the Portuguese men and the availability of African women. Men were thought to have sexual prowess that must be satisfied for the good of society and women were thought of as available for the good of the nation. Portuguese men supposedly had a plasticity that gave them the unique capability to mediate cultural change and difference. But this was a male fantasy projected onto the imagined “infinitely malleable body of the African woman, the fetishistic stereotyping of telluric African motherhood became central to exoticist strategies for containing the colonizers own anxiety in the face of difference” (Owen 2007: 19).

The many levels of stratification between native subjects and non-native citizens, and all the mechanisms for coercion that generated different levels of
disfavor and privileges, dispossessions and possessions—such as the different levels between unpaid forced laborers (*labuta*), meager wage laborers for concessionary companies, better wage migrant laborers at mines in South Africa, hired thugs (*capangas*), native police (*cipais*), native authorities (*regulos*), non-native laborers and petty merchants (Indians and Chinese), native citizens (*assimilados*), Portuguese citizens who settled in Mozambique, Portuguese citizens in Portugal, overseas colonial authorities, and national authorities in Portugal—all these made colonialism possible, at least for many decades. Though the citizen-subject divide was predominant, the messiness of mixing blurred the categories at the edges.

**Hierarchy, Performance, and Cement and Straw Spaces during Colonial Rule**

Exactly which mode of rule Mozambicans were folded into might have been legally and institutionally dictated, but how one was inscribed in colonial modes of rule was largely “performative”—embodied and expressed through the daily poetics of cultural practices, habits, and personhoods. What the Mozambican anthropologist João Luís Cabaço (2010) calls lusophilia, the love of Luso (Portuguese) customs and habits, was the dominant form that African subjects could use to prove their civilizational status. Cultural practices like speaking Portuguese, eating with knife and forks, being baptized, following colonial gender norms (such as monogamy) were some of the performances that Africans could enact to pass from the status as mere subjects to citizens. Subjects lived in mud and wattle, ate from communal bowls, paid bridewealth at marriage, and venerated their ancestors. The performance of
citizenship or subjecthood was thus embodied in individuals as they conducted their lives.

Yet, channels to take up such cultural practices of lusophibia were limited, and even those from the more privileged groups who found avenues to incorporate Portuguese language, education, religion, tastes, and habits found that their status as savage Other was inevitable (Cabaço 2010). By the 1960s, as the colony began to fail, embodying civilized behavior was unattainable not just for Africans but also for the Portuguese and other foreigners (Cabaço 2010). Thus, colonial Lourenço Marques was not sustained as a modernizing project not just because it racially segregated the populations, but, more importantly, because of the deception that was involved in feigning that citizenship was a matter of culture performance, and thus attainable, when in fact for the Portuguese, and the vast majority of their overseas colonial minorities, citizenship was a matter of ontology, granted only to those with particular birth ties to Portugal.

Performances of being a citizen and subject, and all the levels in between, not only instantiated a social hierarchy but a spatial hierarchy was made visible and constituted by the distinction between urban and rural areas. Under colonialism Maputo was called Lourenço Marques after the 16th century Portuguese trader and navigator who explored what is now called Maputo Bay. Lourenço Marques was racially segregated between the peri-urban “straw city” (cidade caniço) for African subjects and the core “cement city” (cidade de cimento) for European and other citizens. The areas were called cement and straw because everything in the core
(buildings and roads) was made of cement in contrast to the peri-urban areas where houses were constructed of reed or straw.

Maputo’s bifurcated straw-cement city is better understood as a performed urban space both in terms of how performance is vital for affirming separation as well as the creation of interconnected and shared space, through ceremonial conduct, everyday habits, and emergent practices. What are presented as ontological status, the identities of civilized Lusophile citizens and primitive ethnically specific subjects, are in fact performative. The division of colonial Lourenço Marques between the cement and straw cities was a matter of the built environment and ideological fabrication. The rightful and just division of two cities was enacted through colonial master narratives and cultural practices about citizenship under the Portuguese Republic. This narrative described those who belonged in the cement areas as having the ontological status of a modern settler population, spreading their civilization to others. In the straw areas were swathes of noble (and ignoble) Africans who supposedly yearned for Portuguese citizenship and modernity but who, according to Portuguese like Antonio Enes, were still dragged down by their primitive and barbarous nature. Thus, there was not just a cement and straw city, but cement and straw people. Cement and straw are not just metaphors about the built environment but also ideological replications of deep-seated assumptions about the merit and worth of some residents over others.

Dance and music practices reflected the bifurcation of the straw-cement city and performed urban space that affirmed separation but also created new ways for people to intermingle. In the cement areas, Portuguese settlers had ballet schools for
children, festivals for Portuguese folklore, and clubs where they danced to global popular culture of swing and rock and roll. Integration of the Maputo mixed race and assimilados into these dance spaces was encouraged for the few, but dissemination of such urban aesthetic spaces to the straw areas was unfathomable.

In the straw areas Maputo Africans had their own spaces where they came together to dance participatory forms at commemorations or to mark spiritual and community ceremonies. Colonial authorities both promoted and censored such spaces depending on whether the political and social meanings were read as conducive or aggressive towards colonial policies. As long as dances symbolized the ethnic minorities of the Overseas Province then they were allowed and even supported through customary rule of chieftainships, or regulos. However, if the dances were too unwieldy for customary rule, or especially if they fomented open criticism, which they often did, then the chiefs, or even colonial officials, would send native police (cipaiio) to discipline participants. This context of indirect rule produced the flourishing of “invented traditions” (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983), or particular dances and environments that came to be known as authentic cultural practices of specific ethno-linguistic groups.

Meanwhile, composite dances evolved that did not easily stick to either rigid traditional divisions or the racializing modern-traditional dichotomy. Entertainment venues developed in intermediary spaces at the boundaries of the cement and straw city. In these venues composite cultures flourished that rebelled against segregated space but in subtle or indirect ways, and more importantly were open to many
movement beats. All Maputenses whether Portuguese citizens or subjects of the Overseas Province of Portugal, might be able to gather and share in a less hierarchal and overtly segregated fashion. These spaces would become known as places of refuge for some political activism both by the Portuguese leftists struggling against the fascist Salazar regime, but not necessarily fully questioning of colonialism, and by Mozambican nationalists who believed in the armed struggle against colonialism and were maybe even attempting to join Frelimo. More important, perhaps, was that like the spaces of Sophiatown and District Six in neighboring South Africa, Maputo had spaces where globalized soul and jazz beats of bossanova, rock and roll, and rumba were emerging in dialogue with Mozambican styles. This growing cosmopolitanism contributed to the liberation struggle.

By the 1960s the anti-colonial struggle was in full swing with the founding of Frelimo (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique) in 1962 that started the liberation movement fighting for the independence from Portugal. After more than a decade of guerrilla war conducted in the northern provinces with support from Tanzania, Portugal finally ceded independence in 1974. When Frelimo rolled into Lourenço Marques in 1975, they took over a city whose racial segregation was institutionalized over decades and the logic of separate and unequal space was well entrenched in the built environment and culture of the city.

While legal apartheid of Maputo disappeared after independence, the image of straw-concrete city is still active in popular narratives as a remembrance of the deception of the Portuguese who talked about equal access for all but in practice
limited access to few. Even though today cement dominates both the environment in the Maputo core and peri-urban areas, the cement-straw metaphor still describes the contemporary predicament for Maputenses. For example, no longer is the city divided between whites and natives (colonos and indígenas) but between professionals in the development economy and laborers in the service economy. The core of Maputo, what used to be cement city, houses armies of Mozambican and foreign elites who work for development projects for organizations that are private and public or perhaps best encapsulated in the term made well known in Nigeria and West Africa as GONGOs (Governmental Non-Governmental Organizations). With the discovery of oil reserves off the coast of Mozambique, Maputo’s core has undergone a dramatic upscale transformation of boutiques, luxury condos, and culinary restaurants (CNN, March 16, 2015, “Manhattan or Mozambique? Maputo’s Billion Dollar Make Over”). The elites who inhabit the urban core enjoy a standard of living inconceivable for the Mozambicans who live just miles away in the peri-urban areas.

The dances studied in this dissertation bring Mozambique’s tumultuous past into its present and also illumine the now powerful forces shaping the country. Traces of the citizen-subject binary show up in the ruling party’s socialist era attack on obscurantism, ethnic practices that draw the population away from its responsibilities to the state. These traces also exist in the postsocialist, neoliberal period, when ethnic subjects are now valued as representatives of the diversity of the nation, but their capacity to exercise citizenship are limited.
Chapter 2

N’Tsay

Mozambique gained independence from Portugal in 1975 after more than a decade of armed struggle by Frelimo (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique). When Frelimo rolled into Lourenço Marques in 1975 and changed its name to Maputo, dance, like urbanization and race, was divided and distributed into different spaces reflecting the cultures of citizens and subjects. The colonial cement city had theaters for audiences to watch European presentational genres, dance halls to participate in international dancing trends, and public spaces for Portuguese folklore dances as part of national and religious festivities. The straw city had courtyards for African traditional dances and shebeens for social nightlife activities. Meanwhile a new dance culture had developed during the armed struggle in the military camps, and, when Frelimo took the capital in 1975, this new dance culture, bridging the segregation of dance spaces and cultures, came with them.

The colonial cement city was by most accounts a beautiful city with its lush, tree-covered modern streets and an eclectic built environment that included architecture styles such as grandiose nineteenth-century French and Portuguese neoclassicism, Art Deco, Portuguese modernism of tall apartment complexes, and unique Afro-Modernism made famous by the Portuguese architect Pancho Guedes. The citizens who inhabited this romantic built environment created dance cultures
that ranged from *teatro de revista*² to cocktail dancing³, jazz, ballet, Portuguese folklore, rock and roll, and strip clubs. Many of the dance places in Lourenço Marques were in lower downtown (*a baixa*) along the docks. On Rua Araújo was the opera house Varietá, an impressive theater constructed in a similar style to the grandiose Caminhos de Ferro designed by Ferreira de Costa, who transported to Lourenço Marques the nineteenth-century architecture of Portugal and France. For many years Varietá housed opera and orchestras but later was rumored to be a hotspot for burlesque and vaudeville theatrical performances. By the 1920s, many new buildings in Art Deco style were constructed. Most of the city’s contemporary theaters such as Scala, Teatro Avenida, Gil Vicente, and Cine Teatro Africa were built in this Art Deco era. Ballet and modern dance was taught and performed from 1958 until 1975 at the *Escola de Dança Lubélia Stichini* in the building Teatro Manuel Rodrigues, today called Cine Teatro Africa.⁴ The Carleton hotel had a ballroom with orchestras that led waltz, foxtrot, and the Charleston. The downtown area also had numerous casinos such as Casino Belo, Casino Costa, and Dancing Aquário for drinking, gambling, and dancing. The casinos changed over time and so too did the forms of dancing, from burlesque to striptease, from cocktail dancing to rock ‘n’ roll. Lourenço Marques was also well known for its annual carnival and other Catholic Portuguese national religious festivities (Dia das Descobertas, Dia de

² This light comic theater, combining burlesque, vaudeville, extravaganza, and musicals, created a sensual appeal along with social and political critiques.
³ A general term to refer to social dances in vogue in the early twentieth century such as foxtrot, waltz, tango, and shag, just to name a few.
⁴ For more information on Lubélia Stichini see http://delagoabay.wordpress.com/category/ballet/.
Camões, Dia do Santo António, Dia de São João, Peregrinação de Fátima, Festa de Assunção. Nearly all these festivals had public dancing of Portuguese folklore performed at parks and churches and in the modern grid-block streets as part of processions and parades.

The peri-urban native areas were distinguished by lowveld forests, savannas, and estuary wetlands that drained into the bay. The African population ballooned with the growth of Lourenço Marques and its industries and port. Unlike the cement city, the black subjects of the Portuguese colony lacked much of the modern conveniences of roads, electricity, sewage systems, and potable water. They created a built environment that revolved around farmed plots of land. They utilized natural materials of wood, reeds, and straw to build thatched houses that were organized around family and kinship. Their built environment varied from well-manicured villas that circled communal courtyards to impoverished shantytowns alongside factories, as well as dilapidated mud and grass dwellings. The peri-urban Mozambicans danced in many place and for and many reasons. They danced in shebeens to soul, jazz, rumba, rock, and many other nightlife beats. They danced in performance troupes organized by factories to represent the companies and provide leisure and solidarity for workers. They danced at family ceremonies to commemorate initiations, weddings, and funerals. They danced for community leaders at ceremonies that affirmed the social relations and structures. They danced in animist ceremonies and rituals based on rural customs and spiritual beliefs. They also danced in Christian church services. Unlike
the cement city, however, most of the peri-urban dances were performed in public, open areas, such as in courtyards under large trees.

Dance and music were at the heart of a revolution carried out in the late 70s and early 80s to democratize the bifurcated city. Dance produced new spaces that dissolved the citizen subject spatialization and encouraged dance practices from multiple segments of society: urban nightlife dances, international theatrical arts, traditional dances, and military routines. Eventually the new government moved to create cultural and educational centers, and with inspiration from international socialism’s promotion of dance and help of the Soviet Union, the ministry of education and culture was founded in 1977 and in 1983 the CNCD (Companhia Nacional de Canto e Dança) and END (Escola Nacional de Dança) came into being. Under their aegis new theatrical dances were created to convey the messages of nationalism, Marxist Leninist socialism, and modernization.

Mozambicans had many dance cultures and communities, but at the time of independence none was more important to imagining the transformation of society than military dance culture. Freedom fighters and families in the military encampments during the armed struggle established new dance practices that were important for training and leisure activities. They simultaneously embraced ethnically specialized routines, exchanged ethnically distinct genres, and created new forms. Upon independence, soldiers and their families moved to Maputo. They brought with them their dance culture and reproduced it in the city social life. They performed their commitments to national unity, ethnic pride, and innovation through their dance-
music social gatherings. These performances took place in many neighborhoods, but the hotbed of military dance culture was in the Bairro Militar, which was adjacent to the military headquarters in Maputo’s urban core. Bairro Militar was right next to Frelimo’s party headquarters and also bordered many of the foreign embassies. The *bairro militar* had its own dance-music groups that practiced every day in the social club and performed for events and ceremonies.

In 2010 I interviewed many individuals about the formation of the *Companhia Nacional de Canto e Dança* (CNCD) and the *Escola Nacional de Dança* (END). Most described the significance that Bairro Militar and the influence the cadres, soldiers, and their families had on dance and cultural institutions when they arrived in Maputo. Nwesi Pilipo⁵ is a CNCD dancer who grew up watching and participating in the Bairro Militar groups. He was born in 1964 in the military camps in Tanzania, moved to Maputo as a boy with his family at the time of independence, and was selected in 1983 to become a dancer at the CNCD. He spent his life as a CNCD member and dancer. When I interviewed him in 2010 he was in his fifties but still active as a musician, dancer, and archivist at the CNCD. When I asked Nwesi about the CNCD early dances (1980s) and how they came up with the dance sequences, choreographic arrangements, and theatrical presentations, he responded: “Our methods were pretty much the same for all our pieces. We spent a lot of time traveling around the country. In our travels we would do our performances and the local villagers [*locales*] would give performances of their dances for us. In this

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⁵ Not real name.
process we would pick up new dance sequences and movements and would incorporate them into future works. Of course we had training with the Russians and Cubans and others on basic choreographic principles and arrangements, and we also had our own dances that came out of the armed struggle (*Nachingwea*), so we had a structure that we would slot movement patterns into.”

Nwesi is one CNCD dancer who succinctly identified and described the different dance cultures that were important to the formation of CNCD and END in the 1980s: the rural villages [*locales*], international theatrical dance, and the military (*Nachingwea*). These represent the three most influential sources for dance practice and styles that the CNCD drew from to create their works. Similarly, the END (National Dance School) also drew from these three dance cultures to solidify the 36 national dances taught at the school. Of the three dance cultures that provided the institutional infrastructure for dance performance and practice, the least recognized but arguably most important is the military. Although the CNCD and END were established in 1983, Nwesi and others who experienced the military camps or participated in the armed struggle could cite how elements of CNCD dances came out of the previous decades. Their explanations of how they made CNCD dances was particularly interesting because they identified several Mozambican realities through dance movement, whereas usually only one reality was promoted as representative of Mozambican history. Often times, people outside of dance and younger members of the dance company credit rural communities (traditional dance culture or what Nwesi calls *locales*) as the only source for the CNCD works.
New Dance Culture and the Armed Struggle for Liberation

The Frelimo military dance culture was pan ethnic, pan African, and cosmopolitan, much like the armed movement itself. The movement drew from masses of disaffected peasants and migrant laborers within Mozambique and gained international support with governments and liberation struggles around the region and globe. Portugal was the last European power to maintain colonies in Africa. By the 1950s and 1960s most African nations were transitioning to independence. Liberation movements in Angola, Guinea Bissau, and Mozambique, however, similar to the ANC in South Africa and ZANU in Rhodesia, recognized that activism, civil disobedience, and pressure through legal means would not force the fascist Salazar regime to broker political representation for Africans, let alone a transition to independence. Thus, anti-colonial struggles sought military support from allies such as Algeria, Vietnam, China, the Soviet Union, and Cuba and formed military campaigns in their respective countries.

The armed struggle caused Mozambicans to circulate all over the world and brought the world to the military camps that were situated in Tanzania on the border with Mozambique. Most of the Mozambican leadership studied at universities in Portugal and gained military training in Algeria. Frelimo was formed as a military-political organizations in 1962 and established as many as ten military camps in neighboring Tanzania. With the support of Julius Nyerere’s independent Tanzania and military personnel and hardware from China, the Soviet Union, and Cuba,
Frelimo led guerilla campaigns in the northern provinces that targeted the Portuguese military and they successfully liberated zones within these provinces. Approximately 8,000 freedom fighters inhabited the military camps in Tanzania, but the numbers increase dramatically when counting the families and refugees who also inhabited the camps in Tanzania and the liberated zones in Mozambique.

Everyday life in the camps included educational, military, and leisure activities to keep inhabitants occupied and disciplined. Mozambicans whom I talked with about the camps describe an environment where dance and music were significant aspects of everyday life. For leisure they would play instruments and dance. As part of their education they would learn to read and write and also take classes on subjects about history and political consciousness. They also formed classes on music and dance where soldiers shared their knowledge of particular instruments, rhythms, and dance movements. These exchanges created music dance routines, techniques, choreographies, performances that by the time of independence in 1975 were fairly well established within the soldier communities and widespread among the military.

Soldiers learned numerous dances with particular local and ethnic associations from all over Mozambique as part of their military training and leisure. For these dances the movement patterns were musically determined and rhythmically structured modes of interaction. The movement and sound were taught simultaneously and in tight alignment. They developed a standard participatory space, out in the open, publicly visible for all to join in. While participation was open to all, there was a
highly structured routine where initial participants were asked to perform the skill sets of established rhythmic and movement patterns. Once this skill set was acquired then participants could learn more advanced call-and-responses between the dancer and musicians where the dancers could improvise, embellish, and drive the musicians into desired directions. In these educational and leisure settings, soldiers would share their dances of ethnic and regional origins, as well as perform popular beats and rhythms like Cuban and Congolese rumba, highlife from Ghana, and kwela and mbaqanga from South Africa.

CNCD dance choreographies are really confluences of dance genres and practices, despite the fact that today they are represented as ethnic and regional identities. CNCD dances are largely presented as symbols of ethnic/regional groups that have origins in the provinces but that continue their rituals and traditions despite migration to cities and across the region. CNCD choreographies are a dynamic confluence between different social and historical locations-- military encampments, rural villages, international theater arts, and even popular nightlife dance music-- that came together during the whirlwind of the post-independence era.

**Institutionalizing Dance**

Under the socialist government and with support from the former Soviet Union and cooperation in international socialism, Mozambique established art, cultural, and educational institutions. The institutions that specialized in the dissemination of national, traditional, and global forms helped democratize urban
space by no longer following the cement-straw binary where particular areas allowed only certain movements and sounds. All Mozambicans could study all movement techniques or specialize as they pleased. These dance institutions also gave opportunities for Maputenses to become professionals in the arts.

The Ministério of Educação e Cultura was one of the first ministries established by the government. The Ministério of Educação e Cultura created the Direcção Nacional de Cultura in 1976, which established the first art educational institution called Centro de Estudos Culturais (CEC), which lasted from 1976-1983. CEC was tasked with recruiting artistic talent in dance, music, visual arts, and crafts. The students studied in classes and workshops given by teachers, such as Portuguese artists who stayed after independence and foreigners who worked as socialist cooperants and came from countries such as Cuba, Bulgaria, East Germany, and other Soviet republics.

The origins of the Companhia Nacional de Canto e Dança (CNCD) also starts with the Direcção Nacional de Cultura and Frelimo officials who were educators and leaders in the military camps. The Frelimo officials from the Ministry of Education and Culture who were most involved in the company were Carlos Silia, Gabriel Simbine, and Luis Bernardo Honwana. All three were freedom fighters who lived in Tanzania in the camps at Nachingwea and Bagamoyo. After independence in 1975, they were charged to form dance groups who could represent Mozambique at events and even represent the nation abroad at festivals, such as the ‘77 Festac in Nigeria. At first they created groups mostly from the bairro militar but also troupes that were part
of Grupo Dinamizadores from all the neighborhoods around Maputo. Grupo Dinamizadores were activist organizations led by Frelimo cadres and/or neighborhood residents that encouraged communication from the party to the people as well as between the party and the people. The initial success of the dance troupes organized by Silia, Simbine, and Honwana led to plans to form a single professional company that could represent the diversity of the nation in Mozambique and abroad. Their vision for the CNCD was to draw from the talent and routines already created in the encampments during the armed struggle. Many of the CNCD’s first works, including Mozambique O Sol Nasceu, A Gran Festa, and N’Stay, were renditions of previous music-dance works already created by Frelimo soldiers.

In 1983, dance and the arts received a boost when the government established cultural institutions with the support of the Soviet Union. The Direcção Nacional de Cultura replaced CEC with four distinct institutions that had their own facilities and administrations: the Escola Nacional de Artes Visuais (ENAV), the Escola Nacional de Música (ENM), Companhia Nacional de Canto e Dança (CNCD), and Escola Nacional de Dança (END). The CNCD and END further developed techniques and styles into a curriculum and rigorous dance training that gave hundreds of Maputenses professional education and opportunities.

The Direcção Nacional de Cultura formed the CNCD in 1983 with the intention to hire the best performers and a diversity of performers who would bring their expertise of particular ethnic forms. Together the diversity of CNCD performers could represent all of Mozambique. The Direcção Nacional de Cultura organized
auditions where hundreds of dancers and musicians participated. Around thirty
dancers (equally split between men and women) and twenty musicians (all men) were
selected. Most came from the dance groups in the Maputo neighborhoods, of which
the most important in terms of dance-music was *bairro militar*. The neighborhood
dance groups were not necessarily a part of the armed struggle and their dance culture
existed within the context of the leisure and ceremonial activities of each local
community. Many referred to these dance communities as “locales,” which
referenced the locations where specific dances and dance practices were often
representative of the traditions of particular ethno-linguistic communities in the
provinces. When the CNCD was formed, the Direcção Nacional de Cultura wanted to
make sure that they hired people from across the ethnic-regional spectrum, rather than
just those groups that were most active in the armed struggle. The idea was to have a
company that could represent the diversity of Mozambique’s ten provinces and forty
ethno-linguistic groups by employing members who were experts in dances that could
cover most of these major groups. These regional experts could then be drawn on to
teach their music and dances to the rest of the company.

The CNCD was directed by a diverse group of individuals who were
foreigners as well as nationals, educators and producers, and dance choreographers
and publicists. The Direcção Nacional de Cultura appointed Ana Bela Roldán from
Chile and Irene Olivaras from Cuba as artistic directors of the CNCD, Alvaro
Zumbire as general manager of the CNCD, and David Abilio as production manager
and publicist. Alvaro Zumbire was a teacher during colonialism from Beira city, in
the central province of Sofala. Zumbire was active in the armed struggle and a member of Frelimo. After independence he directed a successful Casa de Cultura (cultural center) in Beira that attracted the attention of the government for its dance productions. David Abilio grew up in Lourenço Marques and made a name for himself in the 1960s as the producer for the Monstros, a musical group that played rock, soul, roots, Mozambican music (música ligeira). After independence David Abilio studied dramaturgy in the German Democratic Republic. The Cuban dancer Irene Olivares taught ballet and Cuban Modern and worked with the CNCD to create the first works such as As Mão (1983) and N’tsay (1985). The Chilean dancer Ana Bela Roldán also taught ballet, was the director of END, and gave technical and artistic assistance on many of the CNCD’s works. Probably more important were the close friendships with the many other dance instructors at END from Russia, Cuba, Bulgaria, and Guinea-Conakry. These instructors gave classes in ballet, Cuban modern, and West African dances to the CNCD members. They also worked together on dance choreographies and socialized in the evening over drinks.

The CNCD was a powerful medium of communication for the new government to gain international attention and reach provinces and rural districts, which meant that the CNCD members spent much of their time touring. In an era when there was no television and more than half the country was illiterate, dance was a powerful medium of mass communication, along with radio, newspapers, and an innovative mobile film project, called Kuxa Kanema that was run through the Instituto Nacional de Cinema. But to reach the people the CNCD had to travel. The
CNCD was a touring company that spent much of its time on the road either to the provinces in the country or abroad to festivals and conferences, mostly in Europe and the former Soviet Union. When I asked CNCD members about how they came up with the choreographic arrangement of their first works they emphasized the importance of dancing for local communities [locales] and the exchange that happened before and after their performances. They described how, as dancers and musicians, they relied on their experiences in traveling to the regional provinces and sharing dances with people from specific rural communities.

While touring the country, the CNCD forged artistic exchange among audiences and the CNCD performers that was immensely satisfying for the CNCD members. During such tours, they would work through local Frelimo officials and/or traditional authorities (frequently not the same people) to create the conditions for a dance performance. They had to clear spaces for a stage and for audiences. When the word spread that the CNCD would be performing, people from distinct villages would walk miles to attend. Consequently, the performances were often huge events. In addition, as part of the show it was typical that the CNCD and local villagers would exchange performances. Within this environment of exchange between CNCD dancers and people in the local districts, both groups would come away with new and innovative rhythms and movements. The CNCD members I interviewed told stories about how the best part of working for the company was travelling the country and participating in the events they organized in local communities. These were among their fondest memories, giving them more satisfaction than the performances abroad.
In part, this in-country travel in the 1980s was done at a time of a horrendous civil war, which made the work all the more dangerous and all the more important.

Touring in the country was tough, even perilous, because of increased violence and instability due to war. Mozambique experienced a devastating civil war from 1977 to 1992, which will be discussed later in this chapter. CNCD members talked about touring during the ongoing war as productive of creativity and innovations, but also as causing many hardships. The CNCD travelled across the country during the war and even went places where journalists did not go. They toured in conditions where they had no food, no water, places to sleep except on the bus. They often went months without wages. They were sometimes escorted through areas by armed vehicles and military convoys. They were even flown into enemy-controlled areas and military bases by United Nation’s Antonov cargo planes. Despite these conditions, they talk about how it was worth it because they brought to these locations a “release” from the war and a sense that normalcy and peace can prevail. In return, the population showed their gratitude through their own performances. Many CNCD members emphasized that war heightened the significance of the exchange between the CNCD members and rural communities. The CNCD members felt they were making a significant contribution to society.

**N’Tsay**

I learned through Maputo dancers and studying the history of the CNCD and END that the brief socialist period (1977-1986) was exciting for the field of dance in
Maputo. In the 1980s, the CNCD was a proud institution, rich in artistic collaboration and production. In the first years, the repertoire of the CNCD consisted mainly of reproducing ethnic/regional dances for the theatrical stage. Many of these dances had already been started in the military camps, but the CNCD further solidified the diversity of dances into set choreographies. Then the CNCD produced new works such as *Moçambique o Sol Nasceu, As Mãos, N'Tsay, A Gran Festa, A Noiva de Nhakebere*, and *Aves Selvagens*. Works like these offered educational and professional opportunities for rural and working-class Mozambicans. In turn, the newly professionalized CNCD members produced and performed dances that represented the personal and cultural transformations of the nation. One such performance was *N'Tsay*, which the CNCD members created in 1985 as an allegory for the New Man and New Woman of Mozambique.

Since its founding in 1983 the CNCD has produced over twenty evening-length choreographies that they have performed at home and around the world. But none are as popular and famous as *N'Tsay*. N’tsay is a mother goddess legend from Mozambique’s central province, Manica. In 1985 the CNCD transformed the legend into a national allegory for the theatrical stage about the liberation of the nation from colonial oppression and the primary role of Mozambican women in the struggle. What we see on stage is the story of colonialism’s disruption of men’s and women’s

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*N'Tsay* (Italicized) refers to the CNCD dance. *N'Tsay* (not italicized) refers to the character of the queen-mother in the dance and the spiritual mother-goddess who is one of the most powerful deities in the cosmology for many people in the central provinces, especially Manica. I discuss the traditional religious figure of N’Tsay later in the chapter. To refer more specifically to the spiritual and ritual complex of the mother-goddess N’Tsay, I write Manica N’Tsay. To refer more specifically to the dance, I write CNCD N’Tsay.
daily lives, the king and other male leaders’ complicity with the colonialists, the
queen’s failed assault on the monstrous colonial power, and final victory by her
daughter who rallies men in the kingdom to fight against their oppressor.

*N’Tsay* has become a potent symbol in Mozambique’s nationalist imaginary.
*N’Tsay* created national imaginaries about the making of revolutionary men and
women, what was called the *Novo Homen*. At the time of its inception *N’Tsay* was an
homage to Frelimo’s armed struggle, and the CNCD intended the work to
communicate to audiences the bold revolutionary agenda that was launched through
the armed struggle and that was to be continued through the Marxist-Leninist
government in the face of South African apartheid and entrenched capitalist interests.
*N’Tsay* was an allegory about resistance and how *moçambicanidade* (Mozambican
identity) was constituted through subjects who become citizens by actively
participating in the armed struggle and/or actively participating in Marxist-Leninist
socialism.

*N’Tsay* is an epic African opera ballet about the queen of an African kingdom
who leads her people in a revolution against a foreign occupying group. *N’tsay* opens
with fifteen performers divided into five groups in separate locations on the stage.
The men have nude torsos and wear loincloths and skirts made of antelope skin. The
women are dressed in tops and skirts made of antelope skin and cloth. N’Tsay, the
queen mother, is in the middle with Bvzo Ndaita, the king, and Ya Mbilu, the
daughter. All three wear royal crowns made of feathers and shells. N’Tsay wears a
bright yellow robe, like a sleeveless thawb, that glitters with silver patterns. The
different groups sing in multiple Mozambican languages (Portuguese, Tsonga, Makonde, Nyanja, and Swahili). This opening scene portrays an image of a diverse nation with many distinct ethnicities but united and harmonious.

After the opening scene, the dancing begins with men and women in separate groups performing scenes of an idealized pre-colonial past. The men hunt and the women collect fruit and cultivate the crops. They are celebrating a good harvest [colheita].

The third scene introduces Nhangume, a monster who appears on stilts. Nhangume is a mythical figure for many people, such as the Nhungue, Sena, and Nyanja-Chewa from the central provinces of Mozambique. Nhangume is a foreigner and a monstrous figure, sometimes described as a multi-headed snake, who interferes in menacing ways in the daily lives of ordinary people. In N’Tsay, the Nhangume character arrives on stage towering over the dancers and accompanied by two capangas, hired thugs with whips. The monster’s face is covered with a white mask in the shape of a skull. He is dressed in pants and wears a top hat so that the audience can tell that he is European. The monster enters with the sound of thunderous bass drums and cracking cymbals. The women in the village tremble with fear. But the father-king, Bvzo Ndaita, is not afraid of Nhangume. He approaches the foreign monster and offers him gifts from the harvest. Nhangume receives them and in exchange offers Bvzo Ndaita a leather cannister of drink. Bvzo Ndaita accepts the offer and becomes drunk and happy, then goes to share the cannister with the other male elders.
The fourth scene depicts male drunkenness, indolence, and infidelity. Bvzo Ndaita and three other male dancers are joyously drunk. Bvzo Ndaita seeks to court other women by seducing them to lie down with him on his capulana, traditional cloth. N’Tsay and her daughter, the princess Ya Mbilu, point angrily at Bvzo Ndaita. They aggressively interrupt Bvzo Ndaita’s attempt to seduce another woman. They stand between Bvzo Ndaita and the other woman, and start to push him away. He leaves to be with his drinking mates. These four male dancers no longer dance. They lie down in a stupor while the rest of the village, which consists of eight female and another four male dancers, continue to dance as they did before the arrival of Nhangume and his treacherous drink. With fewer people left to work, cultivating the soil becomes a chore. They are no longer dancing with the same intensity and harmony. Meanwhile, Bvzo Ndaita no longer dances with the village; he has passed out with the other men on the side of the stage. The music slows. The dancers become listless with heavy, slow movements. Nhangume’s drink has interrupted the collective work of the village.

The fifth scene portrays how the village is divided and forced to work for Nhangume. Bvzo Ndaita continues under the spell of Nhangume and lies on the side of the stage in a drunken stupor. The capangas, hired thugs, come into the village and force the remaining men and women to work for them. They wield whips and start to hit the villagers who cower in fright. The dancers form two gender-specific lines. Six men are chained together, and eight women, including N’Tsay and Ya Mbilu, are chained to each other. Whereas in previous scenes the male and female dancers would
form gender-specific choreographic arrangements that were associated with agricultural work and hunting, they would also come together at the time of harvest and dance together. In this scene, however, men and women are separated completely. They perform the actions of work, but instead of revealing energy and precision when they are harvesting their fields, their movements are labored and dull. A few of the dancers fall down sick and are beaten with whips by the capangas.

The sixth scene depicts N’Tsay’s rebellion against Nhangume and her demise. N’Tsay joins with other women and shakes her hands in disgust at the scene of Bvzo Ndaita and his sloven mates who lie silently while the rest of the village is enslaved. Nhangume walks on stage, and N’Tsay walks towards him and confronts him by standing firm and not letting him pass. The villagers cower off the stage. Nhangume summons his capangas who appear on stage and attack N’Tsay. She dispels them with movements of the warrior dance xigubo, which is a male dance from the south of Mozambique that is performed with a shield and staff, azagaia. She attacks the gigantic Nhangume. After a long struggle N’Tsay becomes exhausted and falls, defeated by Nhangume. The villagers return singing somberly as they surround N’Tsay as if in mourning. After some minutes the villagers are forced to return to labor. N’Tsay lies on the stage and then gets up and exits off the stage. The meaning of N’Tsay’s exit is ambiguous. Some in the audience say that they think N’Tsay dies and her spirit enters the forest. Others say that she continues to live and flees to the forest and remains in hiding.
The final scene resolves the dance through a second rebellion mounted by Ya Mbilu (N’Tsay’s daughter), who organizes the village to resist Nhangume and defeat him and his *capangas*. The scene opens with Ya Mbilu alone and saddened by her mother’s disappearance. Her father appears on stage briefly in an attempt to approach Ya Mbilu, but after she rejects him he cowers off the stage again. The villagers return to the stage and continue their movements of forced labor. While also working, Ya Mbilu begins to infuse their labored movements with the rhythmic patterns that they danced prior to Nhangume’s arrival. Slowly, over a period of minutes, she builds the energy of the village. Now, both male and female dancers are again moving in unison. Ya Mbilu carries on the spirit of resistance of her mother and starts to invigorate both the men and women with a feeling of unity and potential. Bvzo Ndaita and his mates also join the group. Ya Mbilu, Bvzo Ndaita, and the other male dancers begin to do warrior dance movements together. When Nhangume and his capangas arrive to squelch the rebellion the men unite to attack the foreigners. The men perform warrior dance movements and lead the charge against the capangas. The women perform non-warrior dances behind the men in supporting roles. Bvzo Ndaita leads the fight. After dispelling the capangas, the men then defeat Nhangume who flees. Ya Mbilu started the rebellion by continuing the spirit of struggle that her mother instilled in her. For the final apotheosis, N’tsay returns, either in person from the forest or as a spirit. She joins with Bvzo Ndaita and Ya Mbilu in the center of the stage and the village surrounding them. The royal family is again united. The dance ends.
N’Tsay is the main protagonist. She is the true revolutionary figure in this story. She attempted to confront Nhangume alone but failed. Then, she continues to be the protagonist after her disappearance. She is the mother-spirit that inspires the daughter, Ya Mbilu, to continue the struggle to unite the people, and inspire them to fight together against Nhangume. N’Tsay is the utopic symbol of freedom and victory and the figure of original culture. Unlike the men who accept Nhangume’s offer and take up new behaviors, N’Tsay rejects foreign influence. She extols “traditional” values of monogamy, hard work, collectivity, and dancing. Unlike the men who capitulate and succumb to divisions in the group, N’Tsay dedicates herself to the revolutionary cause through her struggle against Nhangume, which ultimately takes her life (or banishes her from the village). N’Tsay failed to overtake Nhangume. But her sacrifices led to the liberation of society. N’Tsay is the Mother Africa that unites the people.

In a 1986 interview in *Journal Noticias*, a daily newspaper, the artistic director of the CNCD, David Abilio, explains how the CNCD took the traditional mythical legend of N’Tsay, which is well known primarily in the central province of Manica, and transformed it into a drama about Mother Africa [Mãe África]. The journalist author of the article writes, “According to David Abilio, ‘N’Tsay’ means ‘Mother-Goddess’, mystical mother that has the magical powers that pervade some of the most significant legends of traditional Mozambican society, particularly among
our ancestors of Manica province” (De Jesus 1986, 5). N’Tsay, then, is an African deity/ancestor and one of the most significant figures in a cosmology of deities; she is similar to Iemanja, the mother of all gods in Afro-Brazilian Candomble. N’Tsay is a goddess situated within a complex of socio-cultural practices of rituals, prayers, chants, dances, and morals for people in the central provinces, specifically Manica.

In the interview in Tempo magazine David Abilio explains how the CNCD transformed the deity and cultural complex of Manica’s N’Tsay into a theatrical performance of nationhood, the CNCD’s N’Tsay. He makes it clear that the CNCD planned to separate N’Tsay from its ethnic source as ritual and myth and elevated it to national discourse, something that was universal, scientific and real. The Tempo journalist stated:

“In the theatrical representation of the theme, by the CNCD, [Abilio] explains ‘there was an effort to alter the ritual connotations that are present in N’Tsay, giving it a meaning of Mother-Nation [Motherland]. Therefore’, he continued, ‘we infused⁸ the piece with a sense of the real and scientific meaning. Still,

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⁷ “Segundo David Abilio, ‘N’tsay’ significa ‘deusa-mae’, mulher mítica que teve o condão de dominar algumas das lendas mais significativas da sociedade tradicional moçambicana, particularmente -entre os nossos ancestrais de Manica.”

⁸ The Portuguese word used was “impregnámos,” which is not the same as “we impregnated” but more accurately is “we infused” or “permeated.” “Impregnar” is not as sexually charged as “impregnate” in English, which is communicated in the verb “engravidar” or more commonly “estar embaraçada.” But it still does have something of the connotation of male fertility and female reception of sperm. “Impregnar” is to infuse, to fill, to permeate, to imbue. The original text in the newspaper is: “Na representação dramática do tema, pela Companhia Nacional de Canto e Dança, explica, <<houve a preocupação de alterar a conotação ritual que se ofereceu à <<N’Tsay>>, dando-lhe o sentido de <<mãe-pátria>>. Portanto-- adiantou -- impregnámos a obra de um sentido actual e científico. Todavia ela não perdeu os factos históricos e da ética social e cultural das sociedades tradicionais de então, pois interessam do ponto de vista de transmissão ao público, enfim, à nova geração, para que se tome conhecimento do que se tenha pessado”
N’Tsay didn’t lose any of its historical facts and social and cultural ethics of traditional societies of its time, which are important from the point of view to transmit to the public, especially for the younger generation, knowledge about what has passed” (De Jesus 1986, 5).

According to Abilio, the CNCD based their work on the mythical figure of N’Tsay and included many elements of the legend as well as dance-music expressions and chants, but they purified it of its “obscurantist” roots. Instead, by integrating dance-music and song from other provinces and folding it within a narrative of national emancipation, N’Tsay’s story was transformed from a symbol of ethnic difference to one of national unity, from superstition to reason, from backwards primitivism to modernization.

Abilio discussed N’Tsay within the model of the New Man. Frelimo argued that nothing less than a Marxist-Leninist state, led by a vanguard, would be able to inspire new national citizens who could dissolve the capitalist colonial structure of power. This emerging cadre of revolutionary consciousness was to be embodied in the New Man, [O Novo Homem], which also implied new women due to the struggle’s commitment to gender equality within the context of the revolution. Frelimo saw themselves as the primary role models for the complete decolonization of the country. They would lead Mozambicans to engender new values, habits, and subjectivities to attain the true goal of sovereignty. The CNCD embodied the ideal New Man when they “infused” the Manica N’Tsay myth with “a sense of real and scientific meaning,”
which according to Abilio, is illustrated in the queen-mother character who inspires her fellow villagers to value traditions, work collectively, and resist foreign occupation, forced labor, and individual greed.

The CNCD’s *N’Tsay* also presented the New Man through performing characters who represented foreign occupiers (Nhangume), hired thugs (capangas), and corrupt tribal chiefs (Bvzo Ndaita). Frelimo’s New Man was imagined in contrast to the white settler colonialist, petty bourgeoisie, the colonial-appointed African authorities [*regulos*], and other enemies to socialist ideals. The political scientist Alice Dinerman (2006) explains Frelimo’s critical militant perspective:

[A] truly socialist society could only emerge as a consequence of a vanguard-led, peasant- and worker-driven class struggle against entrenched domestic interests that would actively oppose such denouement....Frelimo, like other professedly Marxist parties, insisted that Western imperialist interests worked with and through locally-rooted clients, who constituted the ‘internal enemy’....Although Frelimo’s accession to power had left them politically weakened and off balance, there was the ever-present danger that they [African petty bourgeoisie, conservative African states, Western capitalists] could regroup with a view to subverting the revolution. Under the circumstances, nothing less than a knock-out blow would do (2006, 14).

The CNCD’s *N’Tsay* toured around the country and the globe delivering the message of this “knock-out blow” that was necessary to defeat apartheid and colonialism’s enduring structures. *N’Tsay* and Mozambique’s first president, Samora Machel,
embodied the “knock-out blow” attitude that was necessary to build a new democratic society. For many, Machel was the country’s moral compass. He articulately described the enduring colonial mode of rule and the urgent role of the state to protect society from foreign imperialism and to intervene in the colonial culture within the country. No other figure in Mozambican history is as venerated as Samora Machel for his dedication to the revolutionary cause. In part, his image is less blemished than other revolutionary African leaders (such as Julius Nyerere and Kwame Nkrumah) because he died tragically in 1986 when his plane crashed while flying over South Africa. Many believe that Machel was assassinated by the South African apartheid regime. Machel’s death marked the unraveling of the promise for revolutionary change.

The Unraveling of Mozambique’s Socialist Revolution

Frelimo’s revolutionary goals for the “Total and Complete Independence of Mozambique,” to transform the country culturally, politically, and economically, was thwarted by harsh realities and mired in the party’s own internal contradictions. Mozambique’s brief socialist experiment last only from 1977, when the government declared itself a Marxist-Leninist state, until 1986, when the government folded to the first round of IMF’s Structural Adjustment Programs to deal with its ballooning debt from the civil war. By the time of N’Tsay’s opening in 1985, Frelimo’s ideological project to infuse society with new values and engender new habits was in full force, but their laboratory to effect such change through a socialist state was unravelled by
cold-war militarism and neoliberal policies that dismantled welfare states around the globe. Therefore, although the nationalist project was committed to eradicate colonial culture and structures so that new men and women could emerge, in fact the project failed.

Scholars concerned with Mozambique’s political economy during the postcolonial transition have debated about how and why the revolution failed. They have focused on to what extent Frelimo’s Marxist Leninist policies are responsible and how. Many have argued that the external forces (apartheid South Africa and the cold war) are the main culprits for its failure, while others have argued that the internal factors, within Frelimo’s authoritarian rule, must be recognized. Here I outline three reasons that the Marxist Leninist state unraveled: Frelimo continued the political economic structures of the colonialists; the civil war devastated the country; Frelimo’s socialism was largely a top-down modernization project that inflamed social tensions, especially rural-urban, that accelerated the intensity of the war.

**Unraveling: Political Economy**

Frelimo made nationalization of industries a political platform as part of its focus to create a national identity and as a major tenet of socialism to disarticulate the means of production from capitalists and give peasants and workers more power in the economic decisions. Yet, according to Pitcher (2002), few companies were
actually nationalized.⁹ Pitcher explains in detail how the rhetoric of the anti-colonial
struggle and nationalism were trumped by the practical aims for modernization:

Because the government lacked the capacity to intervene in every company, it
did not have the power and the interest to confront those companies that were
determined to stay in Mozambique. Those that remained subsequently shaped
certain aspects of the command economy, participated in its erosion, and
influenced the transition to a free market economy. The continued existence of
a private sector, particularly one dominated by large agricultural companies,
rather glaringly exposed the limitations of the anti-capitalist rhetoric that had
been employed during the liberation struggle. As early as 1964, Mozambique
Revolution, the mouthpiece of the movement, wrote ‘FREE NATION means
the elimination of all the concessionary monopolies dealing in cotton, sugar,
sisal, tea, which only benefit one person or a small number of people.’ Yet
initially these companies were neither nationalized nor brought under state
management. Some were never nationalized. The Mozambique Company,
one of the oldest concessionary companies in the country, and its parent
company, the Entreposto Group, remained after the revolution and have
continued to operate in Mozambique to this day. Moreover, two other
companies with long histories in the country, João Ferreira dos Santos and the

⁹ Out of a total of approximately 1,675 companies existing throughout the country at the time of
independence, the state was only involved in 319 companies by 1977, when the government declared
itself a Marxist-Leninist state (Pitcher 2002: 40). The government intervened in only 25 percent of the
top 100 companies (ibid).
Madal Group, remained in private hands with few losses of their assets (2002, 43).

The fact that concessionary companies continued to operate in Mozambique unhampered by the new revolutionary government meant that labor conditions also remained the same (Isaacman 1976 and 1996, Lubkemann 2008, O’Laughlin 2000). In fact, Frelimo’s policies compelled Mozambican men and women to work as wage earners for concessionary and state companies (Arnfred 2011).

Also, the state farming agricultural collectives were widely seen by many rural Mozambicans as an intensification of the expropriation of labor and communal lands that they experienced under colonialism (Dinerman 2006, Lubkemann 2008, West 2005). The government aimed for more scientific and egalitarian methods of producing agricultural goods ranging from food to cotton. Their grandiose vision was to relocate nine million people into communal villages and reorganize production into state farms, cooperatives, and collectives; however, such policies were met with apathy and outright hostility.

**Unraveling: Civil War**

Mozambique was destroyed by a war of destabilization, which became a civil war. In 1974 Frelimo joined the alliance of front-line states, closed its borders with Rhodesia, and helped to tighten the UN sanctions against the rogue state. Frelimo barely had a chance to form a government when an army composed of mercenary
soldiers from apartheid South Africa, Rhodesia, Portugal, and their cold war allies organized incursions into Mozambican territory to destroy infrastructure such as railroad lines, roads, health clinics, and schools. In 1977, as part of the alliance of Frontline states (African nations that joined together to isolate Rhodesia with the aim of ending apartheid), Frelimo closed the Beira port to exports from Rhodesia, which cut off Rhodesia’s main port to export minerals and import goods vital for the economy. In retaliation Rhodesian armed forces joined with former Portuguese military and other extremists to conduct armed assaults into central Mozambique. These extreme elements in the Portuguese military, government, business, and the settler population refused to accept the independence of Mozambique and other former colonies. These elements joined forces with Rhodesia and South Africa to create an insurgent army and launched a campaign to “destabilize” Mozambique. They drew Mozambican support from black soldiers who had fought for the Portuguese military during the armed struggle and who, because of independence, had lost much of their income and status. They also gained support from Frelimo defectors. This insurgent army was, for the first ten years, called the Mozambican National Resistance, in English; its name was later changed to Resistência Nacional Moçambicana, or Renamo, in order to appear more like a Mozambican army. Also, in South Africa, in 1980, P.W. Botha’s hardliners took control of the National Party to become more militarized. Botha invaded Angola, supported armed incursions into Mozambique, and turned South Africa into a permanent state of emergency.
During this period of increased military and political support for destabilizing Mozambique as a socialist country, much of Frelimo’s social programs in education, health, and civil constructions were decimated. Communal villages were destroyed, farms and plantations were burnt, factories were dynamited, schools were looted and burnt, and health centers were bombed. Renamo gained stronger footholds in most of the provinces, especially Manica and Sofala, and recruited popular support from the population and from Frelimo soldiers who were deserting.

By 1984, the South African Defense Force (SADF) had established insurgent military bases within Mozambican central and northern provinces. By 1986 it was clear that a full-fledged civil war had developed where Renamo had strong support and recruitment from Mozambicans primarily in central provinces.

By the 1990s the two warring factions, Renamo and Frelimo, had created an environment where, out of a total population of 16.3 million, an estimated 2 million Mozambicans were refugees in neighboring countries, 3 million were displaced within Mozambique, and another 800,000 lives had perished (Africa Watch 1992: 2-3, Hanlon 1996: 15-16). Renamo destroyed 60 percent of the country's first-level primary schools, and 42 percent of the health clinics (Hanlon 1996). The economy lost roughly $3.8 billion, and socialist development projects lost priority to strict economic and military security concerns. Ecological disasters such as drought and typhoons compounded the crisis (Finnegan 1992: 4).

Many scholars have argued that the Mozambican socialist revolution lacked the ability to decouple the society and economy from colonial structures because of
external forces such as apartheid, Cold War, and structural adjustments (Hanlon 1984 and 1996; Isaacman 1996; Pitcher 2002). Other scholars have identified internal factors that were necessary for the deadly height of the conflict. Dinerman (2006), for instance, argues that scholars too easily take Frelimo's ideological directive of social transformation on its own terms, thus failing to recognize that Frelimo's social and economic practices were far weaker than Frelimo projected and constituted more of a continuity with capitalist colonial past than a purported “rupture” from that past. Furthermore, Dinerman argues that any evaluation of Mozambicans’ support for political parties must be placed within the context of widespread ambivalence demonstrated by Mozambicans towards both parties. Citing Minter, Dinerman emphasizes that even during the war most Mozambicans increasingly viewed the conflict as “a war between two armies, with neither of them 'representing' the people” (Minter 1994: 284 in Dinerman 2006: 30).

**Unraveling: Modernization**

Frelimo also dedicated itself to the idea of modernization at least as much as their colonial predecessors ever had. Frelimo envisioned a nation where social needs were determined and met not by market forces but, instead, through “scientific governance.” For ten years, the party espoused an ideological vision that promised a “revolutionary rupture from the past,” “end of capitalist exploitation,” “poder popular,” (people's power), and the creation of a “new man.” For many Mozambicans this top-down governance resembled the same interference into their
agricultural, cultural, and social practices as the colonial state. Insurgency and war eventually exacerbated the limits of Frelimo's top-down modernist governance. However, Frelimo continued the colonial capitalist course that relied on extra-economic coercion and forced labor to boost agricultural and industrial production.

Frelimo’s socialism was a project of modernization that subordinated all concerns to the principal tasks of increasing production and productivity. Pitcher argues that what exactly was deemed productive was more in line with the modernization theorists like Parsons and Huntington than with Marx. As she explains, “Modernization theorists argued that in order for a society to develop, it had to overcome the hinterland customs and traditions of ‘tribal’ life and embrace the features of modern, industrialized societies” (Pitcher 2002: 54).

Frelimo’s Marxist Leninism substituted Frelimo as the new universal citizens and inscribed Mozambicans with ethnic, religious, regional, and other particular identities as subjects who still had to prove their worth as fully human. The Frelimo leadership drew from widely separated parts of the county and from different ethno-linguistic groups: in the north, where the guerrilla war was waged, they were primarily from the Makonde ethno-linguistic group and Cabo Delgado Province, and in the richer south, they came from several provinces and mostly from the Changana ethno-linguistic group. In addition, Frelimo leaders were often the most educated cadres and soldiers in the armed struggle. Many studied in Portugal, and even Frelimo’s first president, Eduardo Mondlane, received a doctorate in anthropology in the United States. Yet, post-primary education was typically only taught by Protestant
and Lutheran missionaries. Consequently, most Frelimo leaders grew up as Christians and followed many of the behaviors and values of Christian education, such as the monogamous patriarchal family and Protestant notions of work and individualism. The majority of Frelimo are Christian despite the fact that Mozambique’s population was roughly forty percent Muslim, thirty percent Christian, and thirty percent animist. Also, since regulos (chiefs) protected their own children from forced labor, their sons were more likely to attend secondary school education than other subjects. Therefore, Frelimo leadership often came from specific regions (the South and Cabo Delgado), specific ethnicities (Changana and Makonde), Christian backgrounds, and privileged social statuses.

The particular and privileged backgrounds of Frelimo leadership meant that they poorly understood the country that they governed and made many assumptions about Mozambicans from other backgrounds. Frelimo leaders frequently spoke disparagingly of the “superstitious” and “obscurantist” behaviors of backward Mozambicans in contrast to the modern subject who would operate in the modern world through rational and scientific action. This modern-world and modern-subject discourse resonates with the Portuguese colonial narrative that made Africans into subjects with the “moral and legal obligation to work” in order to prove their worth as humans and gain rights as citizens. The colonial performed citizen and subject caught

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10 For more about the ethnic, religious, and social backgrounds of Frelimo leadership and their misunderstandings about Mozambique and their denigration of rural and particularistic communities, see Newitt (1995), Pitcher (2002), Serra (1998), West (2005). See Arnfred (2011) and Owen (2007) for analyses of Frelimo’s values and policies and how the party has railed against rural, particularistic communities that hold strong kinship affinities, that do not separate their social lives into private and public arenas, and that do not fit the gender and marriage norms of the urban elites.
up with the Frelimo New Man. Frelimo reproduced many of the same discourses about how the former tribalized subjects who were in the colonial indigenato were not suitable to be part of the cadre elite.\textsuperscript{11}

**Unraveling: The IMF and Structural Adjustment Policies**

At the height of the civil war in 1987, the government aimed to avert complete economic collapse through a massive infusion of foreign exchange and a rescheduling of external debt service, which could only be guaranteed by meeting the conditions of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The introduction of the IMF’s Economic Rehabilitation Program (PRE) doubled exports in five years and increased industrial production by one-third in three years (Bowen 1992: 264, Hanlon 1996: 92-3). GDP rose 4.5 percent in two years (Minter 1994: 273). The PRE increased production, liberalized prices, devalued the currency, cut government spending, and removed food subsidies.

Mozambique adopted Structural Adjustment programs and market reforms, which made it a poster nation for Western development agencies during the 1990s and 2000s. A running tension in scholarship on Mozambique is to document and contest the narrative of the Mozambican success story. In the 1990s donor interest in Africa waned because of the perception of the continent as largely “corrupt,” “growth

\textsuperscript{11} For de Brito (1995) and Cahen (2000), the Mozambican postcolonial state was captured by “southerners,” who marginalized their principal rivals of rural elites, petty traders, and powerful chiefs from the northern and central regions, and made alliances with Asians, whites, mesticos, and assimilados who were closely tied to or dependent on the colonial state. For de Brito and Cahen, these class-interest groups dominated the state with little understanding or regard for the nation-people because they were largely bereft of any popular roots.
challenged,” “unwieldy” and “authoritarian.” However, Mozambique continued to receive high levels of aid despite the downward trend because of its successful turn toward democratic elections and embrace of the neoliberal market rationale (Alden 2001: 90).

The 1994 national election inaugurated the official transition from civil war to peace and from single-party rule to multiparty dispensation. The elections also set the stage for the Mozambican “success story” authored by the country’s leading external patrons and NGOs, adeptly exploited by Mozambique's ruling elite. UN programs and non-governmental organizations demobilized and reintegrated over 90,000 soldiers, assisted in the resettlement of refugees, and began the removal of mines from much of the countryside. Renamo transitioned from a guerrilla army to a political party.

Successive national elections in 1999 and 2004, while contentious and problematic, received international approval. Frelimo won all the presidential elections and always maintained a majority in parliament, but they had to make concessions at the level of provincial governors and administration because Renamo managed to gain major electoral victories in 1994, 1999, and 2004 in the central provinces of Manica, Tete, Sofala, and Zambezia, and the northern province of Nampula. The 2004 elections were praised highly because the two-time president elect, Joaquim Chissano, did not run for a third term; instead he allowed Armando Guebuza to take the helm of the party and eventually the presidency in the 2004 elections. Frelimo's application of IMF measures and its model of poverty reduction also earned high praise and qualified Mozambique for the World Bank's Heavily
Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) debt-relief programs.

Foreign donors and Frelimo extolled the statistics about economic growth and foreign investments to praise Mozambique’s current path. Academics mainly in political economy and research institutes in Mozambique such as IESE (Investigações e Estudos Sociais e Económicos) and CIP (Centro de Integridade Pública) have been able to refute the ideologically driven narratives of neoliberal institutions and governments, frequently by using the same measures and statistical research as the Mozambican government, Bretton Woods Institutions, and donor agencies. They demonstrate that for most Mozambicans the neoliberal reforms have deepened inequalities and further entrenched poverty.

Thus the Marxist-Leninist state and Frelimo’s project for the New Man unraveled and Mozambique became the darling of the international donor community, which provides sixty percent of the government’s annual budget. This shift to neoliberal politics and economics while retaining the same authoritarian political party and many of the same economic structures operating during the twentieth century has resulted in profound shifts in meanings and organization of dance and dancers in Mozambique.

Conclusion

Samora Machel declared in many of his speeches that “the [colonial] system will be reborn from the fertile ashes of negative values that have remained inside us” (Cabaço 2001: 112). After Samora Machel’s death in 1986, his image and
prophetic words about Mozambique’s unraveling haunted the country. The CNCD’s *N’Tsay* was released just one year before Machel’s death when Mozambique faced the precipice of civil war and the government abandoned the ideals of a welfare state and of intervening in the colonial legacy. To be sure, out of the ashes of colonialism’s demise has arisen a new orientation to an older structure of power. The era of neoliberal reforms has ushered in yet another authoritarian state and a reassertion of colonial social relations, as will be discussed in the next chapter. And yet, out of Samora Machel’s ashes from that deadly plane crash arose *N’Tsay*, which for at least two decades kept the revolutionary socialist promise alive.

Frelimo was faced with a daunting task after independence. When a majority of the 250,000 Portuguese colonialists left the country they took with them their capital, their industries, and technical human resources that had run the country for decades. Left behind was the colonial state apparatus and capitalist economy that marginalized and exploited much of the population but also supported the prosperity and survival of many others. On the one hand, Frelimo moved to fill the vacuum from the human and material capital flight. Frelimo promoted military cadres, employees of former industries, whites who stayed, and practically anyone with a secondary education and some technical ability to administer the schools, mass media, government offices, factories, and companies that remained relatively in tact. Frelimo attempted to maintain stability for an economy and state apparatus that was undergoing rapid, dramatic change. On the other hand, Frelimo had to do something innovative to interrupt the colonial capitalist economy and the social and state
institutions that created deep divisions and inequalities. They intended to build a new society. They turned to a Marxist-Leninist interpretation of socialist governance. The result was an interventionist state that was quite contradictory: partially progressive, mainly conservative, and mostly authoritarian.

Perhaps dance, and the arts, took up this revolutionary cause precisely because other fields (agriculture, industries, labor) were unchanged, or perhaps dance had a momentum of its own that was started in the armed struggle and was taken up by Mozambicans in the euphoria of independence. What is certain is that for many Maputenses the field of dance expressed a progressive path for innovating Mozambican identity and decolonizing urban and rural spatiality. *N’Tsay* arose as an inspiration to Samora Machel’s Frelimo and his revolutionary push for new men and new women. *N’Tsay* inspired perseverance in the face of gargantuan regional and geopolitical forces and gave people hope, or at least a release. It told a story about how Frelimo and the Mozambican independence dismantled the colonial legal and political institutions of forced labor.

For the CNCD dancers and many other Maputenses, the story of *N’Tsay* was not just a political discourse but a depiction of their own lived experience. Specifically, the military dance culture, when transported to Maputo had the democratizing effect of de-racializing and de-ethnicizing the social life and social spaces of the city. Frelimo created more democratic spaces and institutions through which artists, teachers, and students performed progressive formations of ethnic, national, and cosmopolitan subjectivities. CNCD members, for example, were
dedicated to forging national unity as well as validating the multiplicity of ethnic identities. They presented themselves and Mozambican dances as equally cosmopolitan and rooted in local village culture. They promoted open exchange between themselves and villagers who were in less privileged positions than the CNCD members but whom the CNCD dancers treated with respect and shared performances. These shared experiences were considered the sources of creativity that produced innovations in their dance choreographies. Institutions, such as the CNCD, transformed the social imaginary and embodied practices of a city, perhaps a nation, that dissolved the urban-rural and interethnic divides.

Still, Frelimo’s Marxist-Leninist socialism was dedicated to modernization models that eventually reproduced the colonial structure. *N’Tsay* was also part of this process to re-articulate modernist subjectivities whereby Frelimo slotted itself into the role as the chosen, talented elites who were leading the nation on a teleological path to victory, and that justified the domestication of the backward populations, still stuck in colonial tribalized habits. *N’Tsay* became a story that the ruling party liked to tell about itself as the hero who freed the people from bondage. To that end, the dance is usually performed on state holidays and other special occasions of national import, and always linked to the ruling party. While the dance itself speaks to people on many levels, including the veneration of ancestors and particular ethnic traditions, today it is largely hollow as a representation of freedom from poverty and oppression. *N’Tsay* has run its course, and new dances, new modes of resistance, new alternatives to modernist subjectivities have emerged from its ashes.
N’Tsay is a female heroine who represents all the people of the continent, suggesting that the people of Mozambique will find a way to stand up to the violence and wretchedness of the present as they stood up to it in the past. In this respect, Augusto Cuvilas’s *Um Solo para Cinco*, released in 2004, is a continuation of *N’Tsay*. Samora Machel foretold the durability of colonial structures of power, *N’Tsay* hailed the power of Mozambicans to collectively resist, and *Um Solo para Cinco* reframes what collective resistance might look like in the era of austerity.

I now turn to ways the austerity from Structural Adjustment Programs has impacted Maputo and the dance world, which then led to Augusto Cuvila’s significant work.

While Maputenses had the newly implemented institutional infrastructure and cooperation with the Soviet Union and international socialism, the CNCD and END flourished. As soon as the state retreated from support and the Soviet Union collapsed, the CNCD and END entered a difficult transition that by the 2000s ended in stagnation and near destitution. Lacking institutional support, Mozambican dancers have turned to the only two avenues for patronage: dancing gigs in the service economy and international donor agencies. Both avenues have created a split between contemporary and traditional dance genres that evoke meanings about citizens and subjects in the new era.

Augusto Cuvilas made gains through contemporary dance and became an icon for innovation and entrepreneurialism in Mozambique. But most Mozambican dancers have been shut out of such channels and instead produce works under the
rubric of cultural heritage. In many ways, Maputo has returned to where it started when Frelimo rolled into Lourenço Marques and took control. Concert dances perform the classed and ethnicized subjectivities that re-affirm the segregated social space and social positions. In the peri-urban areas are traditional dance forms that signify the customs and long-standing practices of rural and ethnicized Mozambicans. In enclaves in the urban core, contemporary dance is associated with a professional class that leads Mozambican out of poverty through their development projects to support civil society and international exchanges.
Chapter 3

Nyau

Introduction

The political and economic changes in post-socialist Mozambique have led to increasing disparity between the haves and have-nots, to corruption in government and the private sector, and to precarity and poverty in the vast majority of the population. The ruling party preaches a pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps kind of entrepreneurialism to barefoot people while its members glory in the contacts and contracts their positions allow them. The dance, nyau, which I discuss in this chapter, is antagonistic to the central authority of the ruling party and its government. Nyau is a perfect symbol for Frelimo to appeal to Mozambican voters in the new democratic dispensation. In the socialist past, nyau was condemned as a backwards, obscurantist, practice associated with the Nyau secret society, considered a cult. In the postsocialist reforms, however, Frelimo enacted neoliberal policies of decentralization and argued that such policies would allow Mozambican communities to flourish independent of the central state. Their traditional laws, governance, and cultural practices, went the line of the new policies, made them autonomous communities that worked best when unhampered by state intervention. Frelimo’s embrace of ethnic identities and traditions took steps, so the story goes, towards making amends for its past authoritarian stance towards customary rule and ethnic communities. Thus, nyau fits what the political scientist Alice Dinerman (2006) calls the mnemonic revisionism of
the postsocialist period. Nyau also embodies the neoliberal social project to re-fashion society as autonomous from the state and individuals as reliant on their own wits, ingenuity, and culturally specific communities rather than the nation-state.

The most significant ethnic dance in Mozambique in the twentieth century is nyau. Nyau is paradoxical, however, in that it represents the energy and power of groups considered backwards, is a rebuke to those who rule, and is a model of discipline and punishment that seems to be just out of the reach of the ruling party. At the same time, Nyau achieved the status of UNESCO’S Intangible Cultural Heritage, in 2007.

When Frelimo moved into Lourenço Marques in 1975, it was a racially segregated city. A decade later it had been transformed into a relatively egalitarian city with a multiracial and multiethnic population of blacks, Indians, Chinese, Portuguese, other European descendents, and people of mixed races backgrounds, or mestiços. Yet in the twenty-first century, after more than two decades of Structural Adjustment Programs, the city is once again segregated. Today, the same historically privileged groups from colonialism are joined by the black elite empowered by their control of the state and investments from financial capital and donor agencies. These groups inhabit the urban core and enclaves of gated communities on the outside of Maputo. They live and work in very distinct worlds to their black working class and underclass compatriots-- the suburbanos.

Maputo is the capital and largest city of Mozambique with an estimated population of two million people (Jenkins 2013: 52). Romantically called the “City of
Acacias” and sometimes “the Pearl of the Indian Ocean,” the city charms you with abundant trees and splendid natural features. Maputo is beautifully situated on the Delagoa Bay and the Espírito de Santo Estuary, which is formed by rivers like the Infulene and Umbeluzi that drain from Swaziland and the Kruger lowveld of Mpumalanga, South Africa. The nineteenth century Portuguese colonial architecture and the eclectic modernist buildings also contribute to the romance of Maputo. This romance, however, can be short lived with the ubiquitous signs of poverty nearly everywhere but most acute in the peri-urban areas.

In the daily newspaper *Noticias*, one Maputense wrote a letter to the editor about his city titled “The city and the mega-suburb of Maputo.” In the letter he described the two distinct worlds between Maputo city and the peri-urban areas, or what he called the mega-suburbs.

The localization of Maputo city on the vertex of a triangle enclosed by the Espírito Santo Estuary, in the west, and by the Maputo Bay, in the south, east, and northeast, makes it so that Maputo is infallibly blocked by the suburbs, in all directions of the continent, namely the direction of northwest, north, and northeast, that include, among other neighborhood districts, Luís Cabral, Chamanculo, Xipamanine, Minkadjuíne, Mafalala, Urbanização, Maxaquene, Polana-Caniço, Costa do Sol e Pescadores.”

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12 The letter was written by Domingos Gove. “A localização da cidade de Maputo no vértice dum triângulo limitado pelo Estuário do Espírito Santo, no Ocidente, e pela Baía do Maputo, no Sul, Este e Nordeste, faz com que ela seja infalivelmente bloqueada pelos subúrbios, em toda a sua parte continental, nomeadamente em direcção à Noroeste, Norte e Nordeste, que incluem, entre outros os bairros Luís Cabral, Chamanculo, Xipamanine, Minkadjuíne, Mafalala, Urbanização, Maxaquene, Polana-Caniço, Costa do Sol e Pescadores.”
This image of a city located at the bottom of an inverted triangle also fits well with another popular description of how the shape of Mozambique looks like a funnel, with Maputo at the bottom receiving everything that flows downward from the north. Maputo city is at the bottom of constant downward pressure from numerous impoverished suburbs, themselves also under pressure from the constant flow of inhabitants who migrate from the ten mostly rural provinces to the north, which are even more impoverished than the Maputo suburbs. Migration to Maputo ends at its mega suburbs, which in the letter to the editor, this Maputo resident characterized as:

composed of small and fragile hovels, made of straw, wood, and zinc, and more recently (after independence), of cement, almost without any space for patios, streets, water, or electricity at all. The air smells of urine that drains from one plot to another, of feces from the poorly ventilated latrines, of the smell of fried cakes, badjias [dumplings made from smashed beans], and magumbas [measly, spiny, herring-like fish] made for basic survival. In these suburbs you don’t live, you survive. They are crammed with people: the suburbanos.\textsuperscript{13}

Suburbanos\textsuperscript{14} are the underclass of Maputo. Public infrastructure such as roads, schools, hospitals, and football fields are in disrepair. Housing is more limited and

\textsuperscript{13}“composta por casas pequenas e frágeis, feitas de caniço, madeira e zinco e, ultimamente (depois de independência), de cimento, quase que não tem quintais, ruas, água e luz em todo o sítio. O ar está cheio de urina que escorre de um quintal para outro, de fezes de latrinas mal ventiladas, de cheiro de bolinhos, badjias e magumbas fritas feitas para a sobrevivência básica. Nestes subúrbios não se vive, sobrevive-se. Eles estão apinhados de gente: os suburbanos.”

\textsuperscript{14}While I keep with most scholarship who study the outskirts of urban cores in developing countries by referring to these areas as peri-urban, I prefer Gove’s naming of these residents as suburbanos in Portuguese.
skyrocketed in cost. Public transportation has diminished which leaves Maputenses to rely on dangerous private semi-collective (locally called *chapas* or in South African lexicon *combis*) minibuses to get to and from work. Utilities like water and electricity are privatized and beyond monthly salaries. For the few who can find work, wages are stagnant. The prices of basic foodstuffs like bread, cornmeal, and fruit have increased.

Gentrification has occurred in Maputo city at a blistering pace. The elites who inhabit the urban core enjoy a standard of living inconceivable for the *suburbanos*. The gentrification is created by donor agencies and foreign companies that have established headquarters in Maputo to serve the country. Multinational corporations have also made Maputo their headquarters for their investments in extracting resources such as coal, natural gas, and oil. The urban core has been transformed with a “Billion Dollar Make Over” that includes nightclubs, boutiques, luxury condos, and slick culinary restaurants.\(^\text{15}\) The previous privileged social groups and the new Frelimo elite are able to capitalize on the demand for office spaces, housing, consumer goods. They own much of Maputo’s property and are able to sell and rent the property at increasing profits. Some of the super wealthy have also started to construct their own gated enclaves in the peri-urban areas, such as in bairro Triunfo and in Matola, which is a neighboring city that merges with the sprawl of Maputo suburbs. These gated communities exist alongside the poverty of the mega-suburbs, but they have walls and hedges that protect them from the sights and smells.

\(^\text{15}\) CNN, March 16, 2015, “Manhattan or Mozambique? Maputo’s Billion Dollar Make Over”
Freeways have been constructed to lessen the time urbanites might have to confront the cramped conditions of the *suburbanos*. However, as the letter to the editor alludes, the sheer numbers of people living in the putrid mega-suburbs overwhelms Maputo city.

The legacy of citizen-subject, cement and straw, has been cast as a contrast between *urbanos* and *suburbanos*. *Urbanos* have inner-plumbing, eat beef seared on hot stones (*naco na pedra*), and live in high rise apartment buildings or houses with high gates and an army of guards. *Urbanos* are cosmopolitans. They have lived abroad, obtained degrees from universities, dress in business attire, speak fluent Portuguese and at least one other European language. They are professionals who work for the NGOs and embassies in the development economy. *Suburbanos* have ventilated latrines, eat *magumbas*, and live in small cement block houses, reed shacks, or squatter camps. *Suburbanos* are laborers who work in the service economy if they are fortunate to find work. *Suburbanos* are an underclass. Precarity is their daily situation. They risk being classified as criminals and disciplined by the police and criminal justice system. They face constant accusations from the state, from the elites, from neighbors of being lazy, drunkards, shifty, backwards, primitive, immoral for their daily activities and behaviors.

No longer is the city divided between whites and natives (colonos and indigenas) but between professionals in the development economy and laborers in the service economy. The legacy of citizen-subject shows in the postsocialist era, as the upper classes, with their privileges, embody citizenship. But ethnically particular
subjects have gained national recognition as citizens, yet remain economically disadvantaged.

Dance reflects and further shapes the performative identities between urbanos and suburbanos, between professionals in development agencies and laborers in the service economy, between modern cosmopolitans and ethnic individuals rooted to long-standing coherent communities.

All dancers are suburbanos because their institutions, their groups, their cost of living, their wages have gone through the transition from a welfare state preoccupied with the development of culture and the arts to a state compelled to enter the “free market,” which leaves dance and the arts to the vicissitudes of the service economy. Within this class of suburbanos only a handful have been able to make advances into the professional development class by turning their skills as artists into educational degrees and cosmopolitan personhoods that then can perform higher skilled jobs in the development economy and lead projects with donor funds. Most dancers chase after this dream. However, their only path to advance to professional class is through contemporary dance\textsuperscript{16}. For the majority of dancers, traditional dances

\textsuperscript{16} I use “contemporary dance” the way it used by most Mozambican artists to refer to a category of dance that emerged in the 1990s and 2000s and that is mainly supported by European donor agencies. While there is no consensus about what exactly characterizes contemporary, and what elements make it distinct from other genres, most Mozambicans and other artists who visit Mozambique use the term to refer to the broadening out from modern and traditional artistic practices and to use new embodied practices, new materials and themes to create new movement vocabularies and approaches. A major emphasis is to incorporate mundane and quotidian movement into theatrical performances. Artists will also frequently incorporate other art disciplines in performances such as installations, photography, film and new media and technology. Another tendency is to make performances that are non representational-- disassociated from specific cultural or historical contexts. Still, others emphasize the importance to create works that reflect or intervene in social and political problems as opposed to dances that represent cultural heritage or even abstract dances that abide by the mantra “art for art sake.” Another tendency is to attempt to alter the relation between audiences and the performance and
remain their pathway to obtain temporary jobs, or gigs. They too have opportunities for community recognition, increased social status, and travel opportunities through performing ethnic forms.

Thus, the postsocialist Maputo dance world is characterized by institutional decay and a split between contemporary and traditional dance genres that embody broader social demographics and citizen-subject performativities. Contemporary dance offers limited possibilities to break into a professional urban class but still inscribed within a service economy. Traditional dance offers opportunities to be idealized national subjects but always under the aegis of ethnic identities and always as laborers through a service economy.

Both contemporary dance and ethnic dances have emerged in the era of neoliberalism. While elements of both dances existed previously, they have been taken up with new fervor and orientation in the twenty first century. They have become the two avenues for dancers to become successful and make something for themselves as artists, as valued members of a community, as a career. Contemporary dance is characterized by employing dance practices that emphasize the process of creative collaboration among dancers, that is open to all bodily movements from the profane to athletic virtuosity, that attempts to “go beyond” the norms of international create works that “go beyond” the conventions of the theatrical stage. Frequently, protagonists of contemporary dance also articulate a theory of art reception that emphasizes the significance of individual interpretation so that individual audience members determine for themselves the meaning of works. They prefer their works to be relative and communicate multiple meanings rather than have a single authoritative interpretation. In Mozambique, as elsewhere, advocates of contemporary dance frequently contradict themselves when attempting to determine what is unique about the techniques, practices, and products that characterize contemporary. The point for many, it seems, is not to define contemporary dance but sustain lively, sharp dialogues about art, history, and society.

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theater and dance in ballet and modern, and that emphasizes the use of new
technologies and new techniques for performances. Contemporary dance symbolizes
the most innovative dance form on the international circuits of concert dance and art.
In Mozambique, contemporary dance is almost exclusively funded by European
development agencies as part of their civil society initiatives and cultural exchange
programs between Europe and Africa.

Ethnic/traditional dance is characterized by dance and music practices that are
bound by set rhythms and predetermined routines that are associated with the
costumes and rituals of historically and culturally continuous communities.
Traditional dance is funded also by development agencies through initiatives that
support “cultural heritage.” In Maputo, Frelimo and the state are other main patrons
of traditional dance. In the provinces, traditional dances also find support through
performances for tourists. The most likely opportunities for work as dancers is
through performing traditional dances for Frelimo and state-sponsored events. The
state-party hire dancers as entertainers for the numerous events, ceremonies,
festivities that promote their programs or that enliven their gatherings. These events
are really state-sponsored but, like the status of most corporations in Mozambique,
they are frequently state-private ventures. Traditional dances are both entertaining but
also provide valuable symbols of nationalist ideals.

Cultural heritage is a valuable and highly contested terrain in Mozambican
socialist and postsocialist eras. Cultural heritage is equally a product of past
traditional practices as well as political engagement with colonial, socialist, and now
neoliberal reforms. Neoliberal economic and social projects in Mozambique reserve the potential of autochthonous and indigenous communities, their customs, and practices, as independent from and with a power that parallels, and possibly even exceeds, it. Exactly when corporations, the state, and donor agencies evoke the parallel power of customary rule is not consistent. Still, important for the neoliberal project in Mozambique is the resurgence of customary rule and the validation of cultural traditions above and beyond the reach of the nation-state. Frelimo has admitted guilt for its Marxist Leninist policies to undo the history of native authorities. Now, Frelimo is said to have reversed courses by extolling the importance of ethnic communities, their customs, and local governance. This return to traditions gives ethnic identity a renewed place in Mozambican social life, nationalist imaginaries, and state-society relations. Ethnic identity is valuable as a symbol of cultural diversity but it also represents Frelimo’s postsocialist mea culpa-- making amends for the errors of socialism-- and symbolizes Frelimo’s commitment to de-centralized state policies as dictated by structural adjustment programs.

Ethnic identity is respectable, even idealized, and dancing embodies ethnicity in Mozambique more than anything else, except perhaps language. One of the greatest displays of traditions is the National Cultural Festival that is held for one week in provincial capital cities every two years. The National Cultural Festival is organized by the Ministry of Culture with donor funding. The festivals meet both Frelimo and the donor’s goals of fostering feelings of national unity and peace through the public expression of cultural diversity in the arts.
Austerity

The postsocialist period is marked by neoliberal economic and social policies of austerity determined by Bretton Woods Institutions\(^\text{17}\) and implemented by Frelimo and the international donor community. The ostensible focus of neoliberal policies have been to divest the Mozambican state from social and economic programs, and instead allow the economy and society to develop itself through the private sector and the “free market.” Neoliberal policies, however, are also social projects that aim to engender new personhoods who will fashion themselves and their communities into autonomous, self-reliant subjects-- people who do not rely on the support and subsidies of the state for their survival, welfare, and prosperity.

Neoliberal economic policies have had a devastating impact for most Mozambicans that has entrenched a system of poverty. However, powerful financial institutions, the Mozambican government, and international donors continue to promote the deception that Mozambique is a success story. A new authoritarian regime has emerged that attempts to continue the economic policies as well as make the Mozambican society responsible for its own failures to adapt and thrive in the neoliberal social project that proposes to make Mozambicans self-reliant.

The International Monetary Fund and World Bank have determined Mozambique’s macroeconomic, structural, and social policies in support of “growth”

\(^{17}\) This refers to the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. They were formed after World War II at the United Nations Monetary and Financial conference in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire. These institutions are a governing order that regulate monetary relations among independent nations. The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank are the two most important entities that determine government policies in Mozambique. They trumph the Mozambican electorate.
and “poverty reduction” since 1986, when, due largely to the civil war, the government’s debt reached nearly 4 billion US dollars and the country was collapsing. Since then, the objectives of “growth” and “poverty reduction” have been instituted through an endless line of structural adjustment programs (SAPs) called PRE (Economic Rehabilitation Program) in 1986, PRES (Economic and Social Rehabilitation Program) in 1994, PARPA (Poverty Reduction Strategy) in 2000, PARPA II in 2006, and finally PARP (Poverty Reduction Action Plan) in 2011.\(^{18}\) SAPs enforce the doctrine of government austerity for Mozambican society. SAPs also starve subsidies and infrastructural support for many homegrown sectors of Mozambican industrial and agricultural production (such as textiles, rice, and cashews) in favor of a “free market.” The term “free market” is an abstract concept but in practical terms what it really means in the context of SAPs is ensuring that national and local governments cannot make laws or policies that limit the entry and operations of the global private sector dominated by international finance and

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\(^{18}\) The effects of the first round of SAPs in Mozambique have been studied by political economists such as Hanlon (1996), Marshall (1992), and Plank (1993), and They have found that the first austerity program (PRE- Economic Rehabilitation Program) left many poor. While some Mozambicans welcomed the quantity and diversity of foodstuffs and consumer goods, the vast majority were hit hard with high rates of inflation, decline in purchasing power, and falling living standards. By 1990 infant mortality was the world’s second highest with one in three children dying before reaching the age of five (United Nations 1995: 12). A second austerity package in 1990, the Economic and Social Rehabilitation Program (PRES), provided some food subsidies but required greater austerity measures, which did not sustain enhanced economic performance: instead, industrial production slide 50 percent between 1989 and 1993 (Hanlon 1996: 64 and Marshall 1992: 15-16 and 70-4). In addition, PRE and PRES increased austerity and dependency on international aid ignited corruption. Two- thirds of public- sector employees were living in poverty and were responding to their worsening livelihood by pursuing economic strategies of bribery, moonlighting, or privatizing their services. Government soldiers took to looting supply trains. Frelimo officials used their positions and connections to secure contracts and resources to invest in privatized state assets. Street crime and organized crime paralleled the institutionalization of corruption. In the end, foreign debt, which was non-existent in 1982, ballooned from US$2.9 billion in 1985 to over US$5.5 billion in 1995, and Mozambique became the largest aid recipient in sub-Saharan Africa (Hanlon 1996: 16-17 and 118-19 and Plank 1993: 410).
multinational corporations. SAPs enforce the doctrine that this supposed free-market private sector will create economic development and lead countries out of poverty. Thus, as the logic goes, the cutting of government support for social and economic programs will make the Mozambican government more efficient and Mozambican society more self-sufficient and entrepreneurial. Austerity is viewed as an economic project that lays the pathway for economic development and sovereignty and as a social project that creates new forms of responsibilized and entrepreneurial subjectivities.

The IMF, Frelimo, and many international donors have declared Mozambique a success because the economy grew by an average of 10 percent from 1994 through the 2000s. The Bretton Woods institutions, the party, and many agencies have also concluded an overall reduction of poverty during the same years. Numerous economic reports with headlines like “progress in reducing poverty rates has been impressive” gave the impression that private sector growth reduces poverty. They projected that people living below the poverty line have decreased dramatically from 63 percent in 1997 to 53 percent in 2003 (Hanlon 2007: 8).

Recent scholarship repudiates the “success story” promoted by the IMF, Frelimo, and international donors as fallacious and self-congratulatory. They have also challenged the myths that link growth with development, and wealth creation with prosperity. These studies show that the economic growth that Mozambique has experienced has not equated decreased poverty. In fact, studies have demonstrated definitively that in broad terms the neoliberal era has greatly expanded income
inequalities and deepened poverty for most. Ratilal (2001) documents the persistence of poverty, along with Hanlon (2007) on the widening of socio-economic inequalities. O’Laughlin (2002) traces the continued patterns of forced labor and proletarianization from colonialism through austerity programs. Hanlon (2007) challenges the recent claims made by the World Bank, IMF, UNICEF, and the government that say Mozambique continues a “blistering pace of economic growth,” (World Bank; 2008, iii) and maintains “great strides in the reduction in poverty” (IMF; 2007, 4). For Hanlon the same reports fail to grapple with the obvious “paradox” that malnutrition is on the rise at the same time poverty is purported to be reduced. He offers four realities that the assessments fail to acknowledge: (1) people’s living standards are very insecure (2) socio-economic differentiation is increasing (3) people are consuming more cassava instead of more nutrient rich maize, which is increasing malnutrition, and (4) most people can not use the economic model to pull themselves out of poverty.

Hanlon describes a complicated picture of Mozambique that the donor and government assessments gloss over. He states that: “At the top are perhaps 7% to

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19 Ali (2009) II Conferência do IESE. Níveis e tendências da desigualdade económica e do desenvolvimento humano em Moçambique: 1996-2006 (in powerpoint). This study, translated as Levels and Tendencies of the economic inequalities and human development in Mozambique: 1996-2006, reveals that the concentration of wealth increased between 1996 and 2006. All of the regions in Mozambique have witnessed an increase in disparities in the Human Development Index, which is a measurement instituted by the United Nations Development Program as a better indicator of assessing the development of countries than looking at economic growth alone. This report shows that disparities are occurring between different regions and even between people living in the same regions. The process of inequalities is varied but what the study demonstrates is that these disparities are increasing in some cases and staying the same in others both between regions and amongst people living in the same region. Another study by Cungura e Hanlon (2010) in their article titled Poverty is not being reduced in Mozambique, uses official data from the Trabalho de inquérito Agrícola- TIA [Agrarian research study] between 2002 and 2008 that examined family and personal income and found incomes decreased in large part and that inequalities increased.
15% of Mozambicans with assets and jobs who are already doing well and can take advantage of the free market. At the bottom are half of Mozambicans who cannot properly feed their children, have no chance to use the free market, and are sinking deeper into poverty. In the middle is an insecure group, rising and falling according to the vagaries of the market and their health and desperately trying to stay out of poverty” (Hanlon 2007: 1).

A closer look at dance in Maputo reveals what is happening to this middle, insecure group. Austerity has ruined the dance institutions built during socialism. In their place, dancers and their groups compete for resources that donors allocate for contemporary dance and cultural heritage, and for gigs that Frelimo employs as state performances for their development projects and as entertainment for their social gatherings. Thus, dancers negotiate a cultural economy that offers money and opportunities through contemporary and traditional dances. Some are rising and others falling, or more aptly they are constantly fluctuating with the demands of their dancing gigs. Contemporary and traditional dance are avenues for dancers to attempt to shore up some income and social recognition.

**Dance impoverished**

Austerity as an economic policy of divestiture impoverished the dance institutions that were created in the 1980s. Austerity disassembled the basic institutional infrastructure that gave basic security of a livable wage, consistent opportunities for travel and performances, dignity and sense of common cause. Then,
dancers at the CNCD and END, but also in other groups, adopted alternative attitudes as laborers in a service economy and orientations towards their performances as services that are exchanged for cash but also for some of the basic securities and values assured through the dance institutions. The neoliberal environment engendered new subjectivities that can guarantee monetary and social value. Contemporary and traditional dances were the two genres that could guarantee such resources.

Most dancers in Maputo are suburbanos. They come from the suburbs, they live in the suburbs, and because of their occupation as dancers they face the same condition of precarity as suburbanos. Dance is still important for the state and party to communicate nationalist and political messages. Yet, now that the state-party have been re-oriented towards market values, the relation between dancers and the state-party have also shifted as an exchange between patrons (state-party) and service providers (dancers). Dance provides entertainment at events, parties, and festivities organized by state entities and the private-public corporations that they have created. Dance is just one more service among a series of many low skilled services. Dancers are low wage workers that are easily replaceable such as other lines of work as janitors, drivers, and secretaries. Thus, dancers and people dedicated to dance education in Maputo face the same essential problem: they have become laborers in a service economy.

The END and CNCD were always poor institutions but with the support from the Soviet Union and international socialism, they received infrastructural support and dancers had opportunities for education and performances. The END and CNCD
lost a reliable source of long-term support with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1992. They also lost the promise for institutional and infrastructural support from the Ministry of Culture because of the advances of structural adjustments programs. The Ministry of Culture, like most ministries, was encouraged to reduce its numbers of employees and to reduce salaries. They were forced to search for resources for their institutions and programs from the “market,” which in the context of culture in Mozambique means essentially two patrons of the arts: donor agencies and party elites. This shift had a dramatic impact on dance in Maputo and the cultural institutions such as CNCD and END. Previously, the CNCD and END had minimal security in terms of infrastructure and personnel support. In the new era, they had to rely almost exclusively on covering facilities, training, and production costs through the vicissitudes of the cultural economy dictated by the needs of donors and Frelimo elites.

Donor agencies support dance as part of their priorities to support civil society organizations and cultural heritage. Contemporary dance projects fit objectives to support civil society, freedom of expression, capacity building in education, and artist exchanges. Traditional dance rarely fits any of these development objectives. Instead projects that support traditional dance fit squarely in the category of cultural heritage and how such support foments a political culture of mutual respect between the state and society and promotes national unity. Therefore, there is split in donor funding between contemporary and traditional dance.
The National Culture Festivals are examples of donor funds used to support Mozambican cultural heritage. The first festival in 1979 was a monumental event that still lives in the memory of many Mozambicans. It was called the National Festival of Popular Dance and celebrated the first years of the “Total and Complete National Independence.” The term “popular” was an ubiquitous adjective when the republic was called the “Popular Republic of Mozambique” and everything from agricultural cooperatives, village life, and art were supposed to reflect the values of collective activity. The term “popular dance” also a radical intervention into the colonial Manichean divide between high art and folk/ethnic ritual expressions that drove deep wedges in class, race, and ethnicity. The first Festival experimented with new modes of understanding art and new modes of display. Dance was the artistic expression least likely to be considered art and most likely to be constructed as ethnic “custom” or “ritual.” Not only did the festival place dance performances on stage as a legitimate art form but the highest expression of Mozambican arts. At the same time, the term “popular dance” reflected a more humble view of arts as rooted with the daily activity of the people and not an elitist endeavor tied to bourgeois tastes.

The civil war and fiscal constraints prevented any more festivals until 2001 when the glory of the 1979 spectacle was rekindled. The term “popular” had been dropped for the two National Dance Festivals in 2001 and 2003. Instead the festivals were organized around the political objectives to promote unity and had slogans such as “Mozambican Culture: Pride in the Maintenance of Peace.” Another objective was to promote international investment in Mozambican culture. The 2007 festival in
Maputo was restructured to bring together and showcase more arts such as theater and music as separate from dance. This was followed by the National Festival of Culture in Chimoio (2009) and Nampula (2011), where the name and content changed even more to include more expressions including gastronomy, crafts, and fashion.

For the most part, contemporary dance projects promote the exchange of art, ideas, and culture between Europe and Africa. Contemporary dance also fits under development goals to support civil society and freedom of speech. These are nearly always European and United States development agencies who support these projects. The focus is to bring Mozambican artists and European artists together through short-term cultural exchanges, workshops, and performances. During the 1990s and 2000s, numerous high profile dance choreographers and educators have visited Maputo on these workshops, such as Max Luna (Alvin Ailey), Irène Tassembédo (Compagnie Ébène), Jowalle Zolar (Urban Bush Women), Francisco Camacho, Rui Lopes Graça (Companhia Nacional de Bailado Portugal), and Maria La Ribot, to name a few. These workshops focus on exchanges between foreign and Mozambican artists. They typically last a week and usually never longer than a month. While the projects are framed as exchanges, typically the foreign artists lead the workshops and choreographs a work at the end with the assistance of Mozambican dancers. The result of this collaboration is typically presented to the public at the end of the visiting artist’s stay. The exchanges are also valuable for Mozambican dancers and choreographers. Many Mozambican dancers such as Maria Helena Pinto, Augusto
Cuvilas, Gabriel Parnaiba, and Horacio Macuacua, have been able to build careers through the opportunities that came through participating in these workshops.

The most substantial dance project has been Kinani, the biennial festival of contemporary dance. Kinani has existed for the past fifteen years with support from the French and Swiss development agencies. Every other year Kinani brings together between forty and eighty contemporary artists (around ten dance groups) from around the globe to present their works in a week of performances at the French Mozambican Cultural Center. Kinani promotes exchanges among dancers from Mozambique and elsewhere (mostly Europe and other countries in Africa) and gives many Mozambican artists (around twenty to thirty) an opportunity to perform their choreographic works.

Donor agencies have provided many opportunities for Maputo dancers. But Maputo cultural institutions have not fared well during this period. Despite the flow of international dance teachers and choreographers that constantly circulate through Maputo, and to a much lesser extent other provincial capitals, Mozambican institutions have not benefited from exchanges.

Most dance professionals in Mozambique will privately discuss the deplorable conditions of their institutions. The CNCD dancers even publicly communicated in the daily newspaper *O Pais* (April 30, 2011, 11-13) their disillusionment with the company. A group of CNCD dancers who were active members since the 1980s were interviewed for the article. They lamented that they dedicated themselves to a career in dance and warned the next generation to select other occupations because although
society values dance performances, they treat dancers as indigents. The CNCD
dancers criticized both the callousness of the state and the public towards their
contributions to society.

The donor support for art exchanges have not significantly increased the
capacity of Mozambican dancers to compete on the international stage. Mozambican
dancers are unable to execute or communicate a basic knowledge of techniques that
are universally recognized as the foundation of the professional dance world.
Mozambican dancers lack competence in techniques such as classical ballet, Jazz,
contact improv, contemporary, and the myriad of modern techniques such as Graham,
Laban, Horton, Afro Cuban, Dunham, and Umfundalai that would create a shared
vocabulary with their international guests. Similarly, despite the important
achievements of many dance groups (END, CNCD, Milhoro, Xendiro) and
individuals (Maria Helena Pinto, Augusto Cuvilas, Gabriel Parnaiba, Horacio
Macuacua) Maputo lacks any institution dedicated to advancing the reproduction and
dissemination of Mozambican dances by developing methods in pedagogy and
performance. As a result, dancers suffer from low knowledge and basic skills
associated with a secondary education as well as higher education in the arts and
humanities.

Both the CNCD and END operate in run-down installations. The National
Dance School no longer has a dance faculty of teachers with post secondary training
and performance experience as they did twenty or even ten years ago. Both END and
CNCD suffer in quality because of the low achievement in professional skills on the part of their teachers and students/dancers.

Dancers argue that since the implementation of austerity measures, the Maputo dance world has degraded in terms of infrastructure, human resources, public perception, and the relationships between dancers themselves. Despite the environment of increased investment in the arts and education in Mozambique, despite the increases in tourism, and despite the increases in wealth, dance remains impoverished. A closer look at one institution, END, will help explain how dance has fared in the new cultural economy. Dance is neglected, left to its own devices, along with the rest of the suburbanos.

**Escola Nacional de Dança**

*Escola Nacional de Dança* (END) exemplifies many of the problems of degradation that affects the Maputo dance world. END was established by the Ministry of Education and Culture in 1983 along with the CNCD, the National School of Visual Arts (ENAV), and the National School of Music (ENM). END is under the direction of the Ministry of Culture. END is located on Rua Bagamoio. Under colonialism the street used to be named Rua Araujo and was the heart of licentiousness and debauchery in the city. The street was the home to bars and strip clubs with the names such as Texas and Luso, which still exists, served the merchant marines that constantly circulated through the port. After independence, the street name was changed to Rua Bagamoio, after the city and military camp in Tanzania, as
one of many attempts to alter the reputation associated with the street. The establishment of END in that area was an important piece of the effort to rework the urban landscape to conform to the nationalist revolutionary imaginary.

During the 1980s, END was one of the strongest dance schools in the region. END was a respected school despite being a small and resource poor institution in a country that was by and large isolated from the dance centers of the world. During the first decade the END had professors who were Russian, Cuban, Bulgarian, and from other African countries such as Guinea-Conakry. Its might came from the faculty, students, and a curriculum that presented, preserved, and elaborated on Mozambican-derived dance heritage and embedded this heritage within the expansive world of African diasporic dance. In other words, END in partnership with the CNCD placed Mozambique on the map. While still young it had the potential to produce dancers for the world stage. In this way, END was comparable to other schools in Africa and circum-African contexts, such as the Les Ballets Africains of Guinea, Les Ballets Senegalais, Folclórico Nacional de Cuba, Grupo Corpo in Belo Horizonte and Balé Folclórico in Bahia, the Haitian National Folklore Theater under Jean Léon Destiné and later Lavinia Williams Yarborough, the National Dance Theater of Jamaica founded by Rex Nettleford, Katherine Dunham technique and schools, and Dayton Contemporary Dance Company under Jeraldyne Blunden.

When END was established in the 1980s its value was intrinsic to the new democratizing practices to counter the century of citizen-subject. END established a curriculum based on ballet (Vaganova technique), danza cubana (Cuban modern
dance technique), and Mozambican dances. The school offered seven years of coursework in dance to youth from ages four until seventeen. The classes consisted of equal numbers of boys and girls, and parents from all levels of society sent their children to the school. There were students whose parents were ministers and parliament representatives and lived in the urban core. And there were students who lived in the peri-urban areas with their single mother who was a domestic worker.

The weekly schedule for studying at END consisted of two ballet classes, two modern classes, and two Mozambican dance classes. Each year the students would learn the history and dance rhythms and movement patterns of two to four popular Mozambican dances. If the students completed all seven years they would be expected to be able to execute 36 national dance forms. Through cooperation with the former Soviet Union and Cuba, END, at least ten former students went abroad for professional dance training.

The late 1990s and 2000s saw a dramatic decline in both the physical and curricular conditions of the school. The street and area of its location has also suffered significant change that affects the reputation of the school. Since the late 1990s, Rua Bagamoio, has reverted and superseded its former reputation. At night the street is raucous market for sex, drugs, and booze. The strip clubs are back. There are hotels with hourly rates but also makeshift spaces in buildings, hallways, and alleys that are used more frequently. When walking into END in the morning you have to hop over pools of urine and pick your way through used condoms. In the afternoon is the stench of urine baking in the midday sun. Rua Bagamoio has transitioned back to
the state of Rua Araujo as the defacto market for sex, prostitution, and strip clubs in the city

Educational exchanges with the former Soviet Union stopped and the school has had few exchanges with foreign institutions. The most qualified and best faculty members left to take higher administrative jobs, often outside of the area of dance. The faculty was slowly replaced by students who had graduated at END but had no other training or dance experience outside of END. All areas of the curriculum (ballet, modern, and Mozambican dance) suffered. The relationship between this young, inexperienced faculty and their students deteriorated. The Mozambican professional class that used to frequent the school stopped sending their children. By 2009 the building had fallen into almost complete disrepair.

The END always functioned under precarious circumstances with relatively few funds from the Ministry of Culture, but by 2010 END’s curricular and administrative conditions were miserable. The END administration consists of three women who receive salaries from the Ministry of Culture. They are the director, the assistant director, and the head of pedagogy. They are nearly the only END workers who are public servants. The monthly government salaries of administrates at art institutions under the Ministry of Culture earn between $200 and $500 a month--enough to support a family of four, but not enough to buy a car, to purchase a home, or to send their children to private schools. The school is nearly self sufficient in terms of covering faculty and staff salaries through matriculation fees. But this is only the case because faculty salaries are so low, between thirty to sixty dollars per month.
The faculty are mostly former students whereas in the past they were adults with significant years of dance experience, often times with the CNCD but also traditional groups, and a high degree of training. Today, the youthful dance faculty teach at END not for the work and money they get from teaching classes but from the pay they receive from performing at these public-private gigs for the party bosses. Nevertheless, they consider this gig money to be a temporary job that brings in a little money for personal expenses, while the majority live at home and rely on their parents and family members for housing, food, and matriculation for education.

The administrators are called on by the ministries, other government institutions, and party officials to organize performances at events. These dance events vary from state-sponsored commemorations to private weddings. The END administration is pressured to make the school “affordable” for entertainment services for the party and professional elite. END organize dances for public and private events in order to bring income for the teachers and maintain good relations with Frelimo colleagues and superiores. High level administrators not just in the Ministry of Culture but all of the ministries and government offices all the way up to the Executive and Parliament offices, expect the services of END as entertainers. Since all the government directors have events and ceremonies that they wish to publicize and since dance is one of the most effective way of creating celebratory climate to highlight their projects and achievements, then the END is constantly being asked to prepare performances.
This arrangement undermines the economic viability of the school because frequently the school will provide performances for cheap or no cost. The pedagogical and socio-cultural mission to research, preserve, and present Mozambican culture is also undermined because the school focuses much of its time on providing cheap entertainment. Many END teachers explained that when a minister, a vice-minister, or director of a national office comes and asks END to perform for such and such event they are obligated to do it. When I asked why the school was obligated, one teacher explained, “because if you don’t, you will be deemed as a bad colleague [camarada], not sufficiently Frelimo, and suspect about your allegiances. The next thing you know there will be accusations in the newspaper of corruption and incompetence, and puff...you are done. Your career is over.”

The teacher explained that her status as a good colleague, a camarada, depended on doing gigs frequently without compensation, or paid very little, just enough to keep the END dancers/faculty with enough money to have cash for cellphone credit.

In sum, the change in the quality of faculty and their compensation away from salaries and to side gigs is the main reason why in a relatively short period of time, from 1992-2000, END’s capacity as an educational institution of Mozambican heritage and professional dance diminished. By the 2000s it became a school with a faculty of youth who are passing their time in dance and using dance as supplemental personal income until they can get an education in a viable field and get a real job. This arrangement of a rotating, weak faculty is disastrous for the students, for the
parents, and for the field of dance. Equally as negative for the school has been the return of Rua Bagamoio as a prostitulo and the dilapidation of the ENDs facilities. Finally, the lack of educational opportunities from abroad and exchange of quality dance professionals from abroad has also lowered morale and quality.

**Entrepreneurialism and a “Culture of Work”**

Austerity represents the big shift in Mozambique in the past decades. SAPs increased inequalities and foment social conflicts along the historical fault lines of race, class, gender, ethnicity, rural and urban. The attempt by neoliberal politics to engender new subjectivities has also largely focused on these divisions. For example, Mozambicans have witnessed a retrenchment of performed citizen-subject divisions along class lines between those who are self sufficient and those who are not. The historically privileged elites and Frelimo professional class have the state apparatus and financial resources at their disposal to dictate the terms for who are considered sovereign subjects and who are not. One of the most important terms for Frelimo to define themselves and others is work-- as in the status of being employed but more importantly as the proper behaviors that make individuals employable and industrious. The political and economic elite have made work a dominant focus in the broadcast and print media. Through the media they deliver constant messages about the behaviors that constitute who is working to better themselves and the nation. *Suburbanos* and peasants are consistently framed as people who are not working hard enough or are too prone to “the poverty of the mind,” waiting for government hand
outs, rather than relying on their own virtues to create their own prosperity. Political discourses discipline populations (Foucault 1977) by inscribing suburbanos and peasants as lacking, not yet fully realized, still needing to prove themselves as worthy working subjects.

“Combating poverty” has been the government’s primary political slogan for at least the past decade. Government officials describe how they are dedicated to increasing economic growth and tell the people that they too have a responsibility for developing themselves and the country through working hard. “Combating poverty” anticipates most Mozambicans anxiety over the lack of employment opportunities. The government addresses this problem by giving speeches that discuss the importance of building a “culture of work” and “self-employment.” Nearly any day of the week, a headline in the daily newspaper Notícias or a television report on TVM (Telivisão de Moçambique), both of which are essentially state controlled, will feature stories about Frelimo officials discussing the virtues of work and the vices that hold the nation back. The media promulgates Frelimo’s discourses about “combating poverty” through individual hard work and self-reliance. The state controlled radio, television, and newspapers, make the programs and communications of the Office of the President, the parliament, and the ministries the most important news of any given day.

During the two terms of president Armando Guebuza from 2005 until 2015, he held “presidential dialogues” that the party organized throughout the country but that took place mostly in rural and peri-urban districts. These presidential dialogues
with local communities were meant to show the proximity of the party and
government to the concerns and conditions of the Mozambican population. During
this time nearly every day there were reports in the newspapers and television of the
president visiting such and such local community with images of helicopters and
motorcades swarming into the area, Guebuza giving political speeches and receiving
feedback from local people. Guebuza’s speech consisted of delivering the party’s
platform of “combating poverty” through initiatives in agriculture, education, health,
and infrastructure projects to build roads and extend electricity and water.

For example, on May 21, 2012 the daily newspaper Notícias printed the
headline on the front page “Take Stake in Work to Defeat Poverty”
The journalist Mussá Mohomed reported in the subheading that “more and more Mozambicans
should take stake in the fruition of their work, as a way for each individual or family
to guarantee his own livelihood and in this way end with the poverty in the
country.”
He then went on to write, “The President of the Republic, Armando
Guebuza, amply defended the position [that individuals are responsible to work their
way out of poverty] during the popular rally that took place in the districts of Boane,
Matutuíne, Moamba, and Manhiça in the Maputo Province. These rallies took place
in this part of the country as part of the presidential dialogues. For the Mozambican
Chief of State poverty exists in the minds of the majority of Mozambicans more than

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20 “Apostar no trabalho para vencer pobreza.”
21 “os moçambicanos devem apostar cada vez mais na realização do seu trabalho, como forma de cada
indivíduo ou família garantir o seu sustento e assim acabar com a pobreza no país.”
Mussá reported the president as saying, “What we have been seeing, what worries us most, is that poverty is inside of us. It comes from the head. It is in the mentality and, for this reason, people continue to be dominated by poverty. With this domination they don’t struggle nor seek to find new means of production.” The article continues to describe the president’s discussion of how the government is working to end poverty in the country through constructing schools, health clinics, hospitals, roads, and extending electricity as well as water and sanitation systems in rural communities, towns, and cities. The president ends the speech arguing, “But the government can’t do this alone. The citizenry should also do something. Work is a form of combating poverty.”

Frelimo’s discourses about combating poverty through work have been contested by alternative media sources and by Maputo professionals who are not dependent on Frelimo patronage. These critical voices refute the claims that the government’s economic policies are actually oriented towards decreasing poverty and contest the neoliberal ideology about work. Despite the government’s proclamations, the actual main economic platform of the government is to encourage investment.

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22 “Esta posição foi amplamente defendida pelo Presidente da República, Armando Guebuza, durante os comícios populares que orientou nos distritos de Boane, Matutuíne, Moamba e Manhiça, provincial de Maputo, no quadro da presidência aberta que acaba de realizar àquele ponto do país. Para o Chefe do Estado moçambicano, mais do que a falta de alimentos, água, energia, estradas, escolas ou salas de aula, na maioria dos moçambicanos a pobreza está na suas mentes.”

23 “O que temos estado a ver, o que nos preocupa bastante, é que a pobreza está dentro de nós. Ela vem da cabeça. Está na mente e, por isso, a pessoa fica dominada pela pobreza. Com este domínio não luta e nem procura descobrir novas maneiras de produzir.”

24 “Mas o Governo não pode fazer isso sozinho. O cidadão deve também fazer alguma coisa. Trabalhar é uma forma de combater a pobreza.”
from multinational corporations and their mega-projects in extracting natural resources like coal, wood, precious minerals, and hydro electric dams.

The party, government officials, and the entrepreneurial class have adeptly negotiated the nation's status as “darling” of the international donor community to maintain a centralization of state administration and a concentration of wealth in Maputo (Hanlon 1996, Dinerman 2006). This oligarchical Maputo consensus has also become increasingly reliant on rent-seeking and wealth-creation activities on the northern coastal frontier and on marginal and non-national forms of accumulation (Roitman 2005) such as smuggling, organized crime, and money laundering (Bayart et al 1999, Gastrow and Mosse 2002, and Hanlon 2001). Thus, Maputo is the center of wealth but it is highly dependent on the wealth-creation activities in the northern hinterland and coastal provinces-- especially the district of Nampula because of its natural and historical advantages as port of transit for licit and illicit goods, its natural resources of wood, minerals, and gas, and prolific production of cash crops, historically cotton and cashew. The Maputo consolidation of power that is increasingly reliant on coercion, extraction and illicit forms of wealth creation is far removed from the revolutionary and socialist imaginary that originally legitimated the Mozambican nation state.

The government’s economic policy in fact is based on resource extraction, rent-seeking activities, and the expansion of Mozambican labor within this economic system. Thus, the neoliberal ideology about building a culture of work and poverty reduction has largely fallen on a skeptical public. In his contributions to Savana in a
series called “Econimicando” the Mozambican economist João Mosca wrote an article titled “Poverty is being reduced?” [“A pobreza está a diminuir?”] (July 2, 2010). This title exemplifies the kind of ridicule of government rhetoric that is published in alternative media. Mosca frames his critique within the context of the ubiquitous government rhetoric about the war on poverty and Frelimo’s self-responsibilizing of the population. He writes:

[I will not] present definitions of the different types of poverty and the methods that quantify them. It would be interesting to know about the understanding of this concept uttered by so many. With or without a mastery of the meaning, combat poverty are the two most present words in our political discourse. It is presented as one of the principle objectives of the country. The tonic for this combat is placed at the initiative of the people, in their work and individual capacity and in their own self-esteem. There are still those who affirm that poverty is mental—in the minds of people. This is the growing focus on an individual paradigm, of the entrepreneurial Schumpeterian super-man, of the market and pure and hard liberalism. This is a very big (in)evolution for those who gave speeches about socialism, central planning and radical state-building (Mosca July 2, 2010)!  

25 Este texto não apresenta as definições dos diferentes tipos de pobreza e os métodos de os quantificar. Seria interessante saber sobre o entendimento desse conceito a quantos emitem esse termo. Com ou sem domínio do significado, combater a pobreza são duas das palavras mais presentes nos discursos políticos. É apresentado como um dos principais objectivos do país. A tônica desse combate é colocada na iniciativa das pessoas, no trabalho e capacidade individual e na auto-estima. Há ainda os que afirmam que a pobreza está nas mentes das pessoas. Este é o enfoque assente nos paradigmas do indivíduo, do empresário super man schumpeteriano, do mercado e do liberalismo puro e duro. É muita (in)evolução para quem discursou pelo socialism, pela planificação central e pela estatização radical!
Mosca points to the irony that the same Marxist Leninist party that fought for revolutionary change, is now the most ardent mouthpiece for capitalist accumulation and its deception. This irony is not lost on Mozambicans and poses a considerable problem for Frelimo who must appeal to Mozambican voters to continue to support Frelimo over other political parties, especially Renamo the main opposition that transformed itself from a rebel army into a political party. Yet, Frelimo has managed to win a majority in the last four presidential elections. One of their political strategies to gain support has been to glorify Mozambican ethnicities and present themselves as the embodiment of Mozambican cultural diversity. Frelimo has led a resurgence of Mozambican autochthonous locality and promotes the state as a partner in promoting local authority. This ideological strategy has the dual benefit of fitting perfectly within neoliberal policies of decentralization and also fitting a version of history that views Frelimo’s antagonistic policies towards customary rule and local autochthonous communities as the reason for the civil war.

**Ethnicity**

If austerity has enflamed class relations in Mozambique, as I have thus far argued it has, then Frelimo is relying on the celebration of diverse ethnicities to save the nation from further dissolution, or at least to gain consent from enough of the population to keep Frelimo in power. Whereas Frelimo severely disciplines and regales the population about work ethics, they pander to expressions of ethnicity to appease local populations.
The turn towards ethnicity starts with historical interpretations of the civil war (1977-2002). Most scholars and activists squarely sided with Frelimo and other anti-apartheid groups in placing the blame of the war on apartheid South Africa and Cold War allies’ invention and continued support of Renamo. Yet, a few interpreted the war differently by examining the local fractions, namely the struggle by traditional chiefs who were marginalized by Frelimo policies, that contributed to the formation of Renamo (Cahen 2000, Geffray 1991, and Lundin 1995). The French anthropologist Christian Geffray (1991) is the most ardent supporter of this revisionist interpretation with his research in the 1980s in Nampula province. Geffray downplayed the importance of the Cold War and apartheid. Instead, he argued that resistance against Frelimo was organized by rural peasants with the leadership of former chiefs. Dinerman (2006) refutes Geffray’s argument by showing how Frelimo’s actions with respect to chieftainships was more diverse than Geffray understood and, more importantly, that the ethnographic evidence in Nampula and other provinces does not support the claim that rural people took up arms against Frelimo, nor supported Renamo, because of their grievances over customary governance and customs. Nevertheless, the revisionist interpretation of the civil war authored by Geffray and others was taken up with great enthusiasm by Western donor institutions and also by Frelimo. Western donors took up the revisionist interpretations because it swept under the rug any more discussion of their complicity in the civil war, and because it fit with their political economic programs of decentralization. Frelimo, for its part,
needed a story about the civil war that would have some congruence with their current neoliberal orientation.

In the 1994, 1999, and 2004 elections Frelimo had a tough story to sell to the electorate: that Frelimo was still the party of revolution, which meant that they still stood for the sovereignty and stability of the nation and would provide for the common good, while the very services that Frelimo used to provide to the populace were being eviscerated or being outsourced to foreign donors. This made it extremely difficult for Frelimo to make appeals to parts of the nation that had long distrusted the party. Perhaps more importantly for Frelimo, they needed to shore up its traditional strong support from the working class in the industrial sectors in the Southern provinces and the veterans of the armed struggle, mostly from the northern province of Cabo Delgado. Frelimo needed a different story to explain the civil war and failure of the social transformation. Pointing to the West's complicity and active participation in Mozambique's destruction would not do because of Frelimo's dependence on those Western donors. Similarly, Frelimo was not likely to own up to how they had maintained the dual economy of colonialism, because that would contradict the very justification of its existence--that Frelimo had made ruptures from the colonial past. Therefore, according to Dinerman (2006) and West (2005) Frelimo's failure could be conveniently shoe-horned into one particular issue: that they had failed to respect Mozambique's cultural traditions, namely chieftancy and customary law, and had instead upheld abstract Marxist ideals. By arguing that the revolution failed because they were overzealous in making too many ruptures from the colonial past, Frelimo
essentially argued it was too “revolutionary” and told the populace that they needed to make amends for mistakenly marginalizing some of Mozambicans’ most significant political and cultural traditions.

Now, in the neoliberal present the nationalist narrative is different. It is expressed through a combination of Mozambique's newfound opening to the world, entrepreneurship, and recognition and preservation of traditions. This new discourse about culture and traditions emerged in conjunction with and aligned nicely with the donor communities priorities of democratic decentralization and civil society. If Frelimo socialism had stifled democratic participation and thereby squashed the creative and productive capacities of the nation, then postwar democracy and prosperity would promote the flourishing of Mozambican “civil society.” Customs, beliefs, and traditional authority practiced from long ago could stand in for civil society, and had the advantage of not needing to have authority confirmed through state-sponsored multiparty electoral contests, because the “ethnic groups” or “communities” adhered to their own internal democratic principles.\(^\text{26}\) This “resurgence of tradition” fits nicely in neoliberal techniques of governing that orchestrate the subjects’ conduct toward the self. If the populace could govern themselves through traditional customs, then not only is this a good translation of neoliberal self governance but it also met the needs of austerity measures that dramatically reduced state expenditures in social programs and state administration. The state could then largely remain absent from “responsibilities” in rural lives while

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\(^{26}\) This argument was put forward explicitly by the Swedish-Brazilian anthropologists Irae Baptista Lundin who worked on Ford Foundation projects in Mozambique. See (Lundin 1995: 10).
claiming that they were instituting a reform-minded democracy. Furthermore, the party and the state could say to the populace that their process of decentralization was making amends for the overzealous revolutionary Leninist-Marxists past that oppressed the rural populace with their “socialist” projects, which might have been the case for some, but it also neatly erases the “socialist” projects in the 1980s that maintained and actively reinforced the dual economy and forced labor that was a fixture of colonialism.

Twenty-first century politics are dominated by theatricalities over ethnicity. The anthropologists Juan Obarrio (2014) and Harry West (2005) have analyzed in separate accounts the theatrics between state-party officials and local peoples in Nampula and Cabo Delgado, respectively. They document how state officials gingerly and ceremoniously attend to the needs and life worlds of local communities. Officials will incorporate local cosmologies and customs into their political pitches about the importance of registering to vote or when promoting Frelimo as the party that best embodies a continuation of communal values and the spirits of ancestors. As Obarrio explains:

Hence, the state rewrote a history of decades by drafting new legal regulations, accompanied with concrete gestures on the ground such as the myriad ceremonies of recognition of chiefs that replicate those other political events in which high members of the ruling party sport ‘traditional’ attire and follow ancient spiritual rites in their quest to gain allegiance from local ‘communities’ (280).
West likewise describes exchanges between Frelimo-state administrators and local peoples in Cabo Delgado where the local peoples are able to draw the administrators into their narratives about sorcery. Locals will describe how particular individuals are creating problems or hindering development by turning themselves into lions and wreaking havoc on the villagers. By drawing administrators into their epistemologies about sorcery it forces administrators to engage highly localized interpersonal politics and to address such politics through the language and life worlds of local people rather than the state’s language of civil society and the rule of law. Both Obarrio and West demonstrate that Frelimo is invested in performances of a “magical state” (Taussig 1997) that uses ethnic identities and epistemologies, and synthesizes such performances of indigeneity with state modernizing discourses and revisionist representations of history.

Ethnicity is at the center of contemporary politics, but that does not mean that all the actors have shared meanings about what ethnic theatrics are standing for. Instead, state-society relations are still characterized by misrecognition and antagonisms over the meanings in these performances of ethnicity between the party-state and local populations. In his study of the civil war in Manica province, Stephen Lubkemann (2008) argues that the dynamics of popular participation in the conflict was ultimately driven by two forms of misrecognition. On the one hand, Frelimo initially “misrecognized local strategies of disengagement for support of the insurgency (2008: 108).” When Frelimo administrators attempted to establish state projects in the provinces they often found local people would flee the area or
disengage from the projects as much as possible. Frelimo too frequently mistook ambivalence towards Frelimo’s policies as support for Renamo when in fact local people were simply following long standing attitudes towards interventionist states—missionaries, Portuguese colonialists, concessionary companies, Leninist-Marxist cadres, or otherwise. Local people resisted such entities by taking flight.

On the other hand, the local populace misrecognized the Renamo insurgency. Local populations frequently wanted to minimize state presence because of how the Marxist-Leninist state continued the conditions of concessionary companies and forced labor. As a political movement Renamo lacked any coherent message or ideology to drive the movement. But local populations joined anyway because they misrecognized the “insurgency’s lack of a national political project for a vision of political order in which the local presence of the state would be minimized (ibid).” Thus, when people supported Renamo it was not necessarily about re-instating chieftaincies or against communism, or any other political vision Renamo or Frelimo projected, but had much more to do with their generalized distrust of the state and their particularized social struggles within their communities. Mozambicans took up arms not necessarily against Frelimo or for Renamo, but they were using violence to conduct everyday life. When individuals joined Renamo, Lubkeman argues, their decisions were based on a complex and multifaceted agenda of their own everyday social struggles and interpersonal negotiations, which frequently involved gendered, generational, and other micropolitical forms.
In sum, ethnicity has become the predominant cultural expression of twenty-first century Mozambican politics. Austerity has heightened the differences between the haves and the have-nots to the point that Frelimo faces complete collapse of its legitimacy. Yet, Frelimo remains unbeatable in elections. Frelimo relies on ethnic theatrics to gain consent from rural populations who also rely on ethnic theatrics to negotiate local claims with the state and draw the state into its epistemologies and life worlds. Ethnicity is performed through ceremonies that legitimize particular chieftain lineages over others, through taking up of local narratives about sorcery, through using local languages instead of Portuguese, through recognizing “customary laws” rather than civil laws to resolve local conflicts about property, marriages, crime, etc.

Dance is also ubiquitous in encounters between the Mozambican state and society and dance has an aesthetic and political force within these relations. Dance shapes the affective and cultural processes that make Mozambican politics possible and is not just a side-show to politics or a derivative of the resurgence of traditions in Mozambican state-society relations. Although this point is obvious to dance scholars and dance practitioners, the industry of cultural heritage that emerged in the neoliberal era, but which is firmly rooted in longer Modernizing and Primitivizing discourses, valorizes traditional dances on the basis of their reflection of larger, more important, structures. So the story goes that traditional dances are derived from social ceremonies and religious rituals and forever linked to such cultural and historical processes. Of course, nation-states capitalize on the supposed autochthonous locality of traditional dances and attempt to integrate this symbolism within their own
performances about the origins and future of the nation-state and the role the political party plays as the protector, progenitor, and future of the nation. The case of *nyau* informs us of a different story.

**Ethnicity and Class in Mozambican Popular Dance: The Case of Nyau**

The dance, *nyau*, is an example of how ethnic performances are fraught with antagonisms between the state-party and local groups, yet nevertheless ethnicity continues to be the predominate nationalist imaginary about national unity and progress. *Nyau* is paradoxical because it represents the energy and power of marginal groups who rebuke those who rule. Still, *nyau* is displayed by the state as the model ethnic and national subject. From this view, *nyau* is a complex cultural performance that exerts power in Mozambique’s tense, conflict ridden postsocialist politics.

*Nyau* is a traditional dance genre performed by the male Nyau secret society who are historically from the central province of Tete, but through migration Nyau secret societies also exist in many provincial capitals throughout the country. *Nyau* performances present masked male dancers who enact Nyau spirits that express humorous, dangerous, and menacing images. The energetics of the dance is explosive, and the dancers/musicians create rhythmic sound and movement that progressively evolves from calm to disorder, comfort to foreign, to maximize its effect of shock and disorientation on the audience. The performers are young, athletic, and from rural/ peri-urban, working and peasant class backgrounds.
One of the most significant cultural events for Mozambique in the 2000s was that UNESCO designated the male masquerade dance *nyau* as Intangible World Cultural Heritage. Mozambicans perform hundreds of distinct traditional dances that are associated with particular regions, specific ethno-linguistic groups, and performed for ceremonies and community events. The National Dance School teaches thirty six different traditional dances as part of their curriculum. To have one of Mozambique’s dances be recognized as World Cultural Heritage elevated all of Mozambican dance culture and was considered inspiring by most.

*Nyau* is also called *gule wamkulu*, which literally means “the big dance.” *Gule wamkulu* is the name for the dance that the Nyau secret society perform as part of their male initiation ceremonies. Learning the dance is a fundamental rite of passage for young boys to become men in the Nyau society. The Nyau society comes mostly from the ethno-linguistic groups of the Chewa and Nyanja who live in Malawi, Mozambique, and Zambia. In Mozambique, the Nyau society exists mostly in the province of Tete, which borders Zambia and Malawi. The word “Nyau” refers to the society and also the ceremonies, cosmologies, and performances of the men and women who belong to the Nyau society. *Gule wamkulu* is a dance specific to the male brotherhood and their initiation ceremonies, while women have their corresponding dance called *chinamwali*. So, *gule wamkulu* is just one dance albeit the best known and longest of the Nyau dances. While *gule wamkulu* is the more appropriate name for the dance, most Mozambicans simply call the dance *nyau*. I follow the majority of
Mozambicans and call the dance *nyau*. 27 I will also use the term Tete community because often times many different ethno-linguistic groups belong to the Nyau secret society and dance *nyau*. Also, the Tete community inhabit many Mozambican provincial capitals and not just the province of Tete.

During socialism, similar to under colonialism, the Nyau society and their dance *nyau* was suspect. Missionaries and colonial authorities saw the Nyau as backwards people and the dance *nyau* as barbarous. The Marxist Leninist regime identified the Nyau secret society as obscurantism and disparaged the *nyau* dance as a residual of tribalism fomented under colonialism. Now, during the neoliberal regime *nyau* has ascended status and is viewed the greatest expression of Mozambican culture because of having been designated UNESCO World Cultural Heritage. While the negative associations for *nyau* have been reversed in the new era, the way *nyau* is framed remains the same. *Nyau* is a traditional dance with its legitimacy is rooted to the cultural practices of the Nyau society that it represents and glorifies.

Only two other “elements” are currently designated as World Cultural Heritage in Mozambique, which are the Island of Mozambique and the music and instrument of Timbila. *Nyau* was designated as World Heritage by UNESCO in 2008 under the category of “intangible heritage,” which includes domains such as oral expressions, performing arts, rituals, festivals, craftsmanship, and “knowledge and practice concerning nature and universe.” Out of roughly 1,300 elements that are

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27 I will write “Nyau” (capitalized) to refer to the people who belong to the secret society and “*nyau*” (italicized) to refer to the popular Mozambican word used to reference the masquerade dance performed by the Nyau brotherhood.
given the status of World Heritage, 300 fall in the category of intangible heritage; all other elements are “properties” such as buildings, objects, or nature areas. Of those 300 intangible World Heritage roughly 100 are located in Europe, another 100 in Asia (China, Japan, India and Southeast Asia), 34 in Africa, 30 in Latin America, 20 in the Middle East, 10 in India, and 10 in Mexico and Central America. Many places have no intangible heritage designations under UNESCO, such as the United States, Canada, and Australia, and over half of the countries in Africa.

UNESCO’s intangible cultural heritage provides a concrete example of framing dance as representations of long-standing, coherent communities. What matters, according to UNESCO, is the celebration of the communities and the unchanging nature of their expressive practices. UNESCO defines intangible World Heritage as:

[T]he practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their

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history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.\footnote{http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00006}

Nyau provides the glue that cements a sense of belonging to the Nyau society. For UNESCO, the social and political context that is most cited as providing this continuity and sense of identity for nyau is how the dance is used by Nyau men to counter matrilineal hierarchies in society where male status is under threat.

Gule Wamkulu is performed in the season following the July harvest, but it can also be seen at weddings, funerals, and the installation or the death of a chief. On these occasions, the Nyau dancers wear costumes and masks made of wood and straw, representing a great variety of characters, such as wild animals, spirits of the dead, slave traders as well as more recent figures such as the Honda or the helicopter. Each of these figures plays a particular, often evil, character expressing a form of misbehavior, teaching the audience moral and social values. These figures perform dances with extraordinary energy, entertaining and scaring the audience as representatives of the world of the spirits and the dead.

Gule Wamkulu dates back to the great Chewa Empire of the seventeenth century. Despite the efforts of Christian missionaries to ban this practice, it managed to survive under British colonial rule by adopting some aspects of Christianity. As a consequence, Chewa men tend to be members of a Christian church as well as a Nyau society. However, Gule Wamkulu
performances are gradually losing their original function and meaning by
being reduced to entertainment for tourists and for political purposes.\textsuperscript{30}

This description highlights the anthropological and historical context in which nyau
dance events are performed. It emphasizes the context of community cultural
practices such as secret cults, male initiation, important events (harvest, funerals),
teaching morals and values, cosmology of spirits, and long-standing traditions with
their origins in ancient Bantu empires. It also identifies the political actors such as
colonialism, Christianity, state politics, and tourism, that nyau dancers have faced
throughout history and have taken up as characters in their performances. Nyau is a
community that faces constant threat from outsiders.

The UNESCO description, contradicts the very name of the dance gule
wamkulu, which means the “big dance.” Indeed, the times that I have seen nyau
performed have amazed me with its impact on audiences. The theatrical presentations
I have seen excel at evoking feelings of fear, menace, and shock. There is an obvious
play that occurs between the performers, the audience, and the state. Of course, not all
presentations of nyau are the same. Yet, nyau at state sponsored events like the
biennial National Culture Festivals generate tremendous political force from which to
analyze contemporary state-society relations.

\textit{Nyau on the Namicopo Stage: The New National Imaginary}

\textsuperscript{30} http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/RL/00142
The *nyau* performance at the Namicopo stage was a marvelous display of shocking and disorienting the audience and of the organization that went into evoking such emotions. At festivals *nyau* performances are given special treatment and space in order to heighten the affective force of the performances.

*Nyau* is performed by hinterland, peasant men who belong to a secret society that many consider a cult. The Nyau brotherhood govern their society with strict rules that demand the subservience of individuals to the community. The Nyau community is closed to outsiders and encourages the community to remain self contained, and self reliant. In this way, the Nyau secret society represents the ideal neoliberal community organization.

The Nyau brotherhood, however, is said to govern themselves through harsh and violent methods. For example, nyau dancers must remain masked and their identities concealed. *Nyau* are embodiments of spirits and ancestors and not performance by ordinary men. If dancers reveal themselves or share knowledge about the dance then they are severely punished through mutilation or death. Teachers at END told the story of one of their fellow faculty members from Tete who was punished. As told by END faculty, they asked their colleague Lucas\(^\text{31}\) to teach them some dances from Tete since END did not yet have any Tete dances in its curriculum. He taught *chinamwale* to the school, which is a female dance. The school went to the Nyau brotherhood elders and asked permission to learn *nyau*. They were denied. But they did get permission to watch a *nyau* performance in Maputo. At the performance

\(^{31}\) Not real name
the END faculty could identify Lucas because they knew him well and the way he danced but they did not acknowledge that they knew. The Nyau brotherhood reversed their decision to allow END faculty at the performance and blamed Lucas for transgressing the rules. Weeks later the Nyau brotherhood triad Lucas and convicted him of transgressing rules by teaching the dance to none initiated males, and revealing his identity at a performance. Rumor has it that he was sentenced to be buried alive but in the end his arms were cut off.

The irony of nyau is that it has become World and Mozambican Cultural Heritage, elevating it to the highest expression of Mozambican culture, but its history and present practices are marked by intimidation, threats, and violence. Violence and menace are integral elements of nyau performances. When nyau is performed at state-sponsored events this representation and imagination of violence takes center stage. It creates an intriguing tension between the nyau brotherhood, hinterland suburbanos and peasants, and state-party elites. In the case of Lucas, the faculty insisted that Lucas never taught them nyau nor did he reveal himself through the dance. They argued that the Nyau brotherhood used Lucas as an example of the power the brotherhood have over the state. They have the power to create menace and inflict actual violence that can stop or hinder state power. In the case Lucas the Nyau brotherhood were able to stop END from having any reach into their culture and send a message to the state that the Nyau brotherhood have control of their culture and community.
On the one hand, *nyau* stands for ethnic traditions and how the government promotes the autonomy and flourishing of these traditions. *Nyau* has become the symbol of ideal ethnic subjectivity and ideal neoliberal governance. On the other hand the poetics of *nyau* performances, which can be read both on stage but also off stage in the practices of the Nyau brotherhood, communicates a proud subaltern group who have the power to disrupt the state. *Nyau* has become an embodied performative expression of how *suburbanos* and peasant groups, especially men, are uncontainable and have the power to threaten state actors.

I was involved in dance performance project called Pós-Amatodos that toured across Mozambique in July 2011 with funding from the United States Embassy of Maputo. I toured with artists and dancers from Maputo, most of whom were from the CNCD, who performed three choreographed dances at the National Culture Festival. They performed at the same stage event in Namicopo, Nampula, directly after a group from Tete performed *nyau*. Namicopo was an exciting stage to perform at because of the six venues across Nampula, Namicopo was considered the “people’s stage.” It was in a neighborhood in peri-urban Nampula.

We arrive in the early afternoon to set up for our three performances, which would follow *nyau*, but we have no idea that *nyau* will perform. It is not on the schedule. It has been kept a secret for extra theatrical effect. When we arrive at Namicopo the festival production crew are finishing the lighting and sound fixtures. Slowly an audience starts to form around the stage. The overwhelming majority are children and young adults. Towards the back are gathered groups of men and women
who stay away from the crowd that builds at the front of the stage. While the
production crew finishes their final touches, a festival announcer steps on the stage
and starts to talk to the audience. She says that this is the third afternoon of what will
be four straight days of performances, but tonight is the most special for the diversity
of performances that will be shown. She further pumps up the audience by inducing
them into a call and response. “Namicopo Oye!” she shouts. The audience shouts
back, “Oye!” which is a common spoken refrain at rallies similar to “viva!” She
continues “Festival Nacional de Cultura, Oye!” “Oye!” the crowd shouts back in
unison. The scene is calm with rows of children sitting ten feet away from the stage.

The announcer calls out the name of the next group from Chimoio province,
the crowd cheers and three boys and one girl in their teens come out wearing the
colorful t-shirts of the National Cultural Festival issued by the Ministry of Culture, as
they registered at that head office. Each group is evaluated by a panel of judges who
sit in the VIP box twenty meters in front of the stage elevated. On Sunday, the last
day of the festival, the winners will participate in the final performance at the
stadium. For each group this is their chance not only to make an impression on the
audience but hope for the possibility to be chosen for the final performance on
Sunday. The three boys and one girl come out demonstrating enormous hip flexibility
and acrobatic skill. The tallest boy in the middle balances a bicycle wheel on the top
of his head. The audience goes crazy with the trick. They respond with delight to the
boys’ tricks on stage and the infectious rhythm. A larger audience starts to build
around the stage.
After an hour and after several groups have their moments of glory, dusk starts to descend, but there is still plenty of light. The announcer typically talks between performances but she is nowhere to be seen. The silence seems to agitate the crowd. Four men wielding batons, baseball caps, and wearing scarves over their faces, who appear to be crowd control for the festival but are also thugs, threaten to beat members of the audience with their batons. Four police officers in uniform also start to shout orders at the crowd. Something big is going to happen. A caravan of Toyota 4x4s arrive and out pops bodyguards and public officials in their expensive Western and daskiki business apparel. Also a few round women in full printed cloth dress and head wrap attire come out alongside their men. They are marvelously adorned by their attire and in turn adorn the men whom they accompany. The men and women saunter to the VIP booth and take their places high up above the crowds. I recognize the Minister of Culture, Armando Artur, and someone else informs me that the Governor of Nampula has arrived as well. The Governor and Minister take their spots in the Portuguese armchairs at the front, in the middle, looking regal, plush, and well adorned [use different word, or skip it earlier] by chairs, stage, fellow male colleagues, personal assistants, wives, bodyguards, and cars. Now the specter of excitement is raised even further.

The audience becomes embroiled in pushing and pulling and jockeying for position. The baton-wielding thugs beat the audience back to clear a space between the stage and the VIP box. Their threats further excite the audience and cause greater waves of pushing and pulling. There are also several police officers who do not
participate in the beatings, but are actively pointing fingers and yelling threats for audience members to be still. The baton-toting men and the police enhance the performance by adding more actors who are attempting to excite and control the audience. The announcer’s absence, and the presence of the politicians, the judges, the police, the thugs, all work to create frenzy. The audience participates actively in the creation of this frenzy. Every time they are provoked to move, whether through verbal threats or pushing from batons, they not only shift back but start to over-exaggerate their movements.

Suddenly from the audience’s right hand side come running four cowboys—men wearing boots and black cowboy hats with sunglasses. The cowboys wear the same colored black boots, black hats, white shorts, and yellow Festival t-shirts that read “Mozambican Culture: Pride in the Maintenance of Peace.” On their black cowboy hats reads “Tete Bad Boys.” The Tete cowboy quadruplets with their boss outfits and menacing faces push the audience clearing a circle twenty meters in diameter right in between the artists’ stage and the big men’s stage. The cowboys seem to be choreographers or production managers, they give orders to the thugs, to police, to festival workers. Dust swells from the stage right and four dancers come flying out, dressed in full masked regalia and larger than life. There is one dancer for each cowboy choreographer. The musicians, who are on the stage, attack their instruments creating a marvelous quality in sound, as the acoustics from the stage is excellent. Two of the dancers are dressed with large plumes of feathers, straw skirts, and also straw covering their legs and arms. They wield rusted machetes in both
hands. They clang the machetes together and swing them back and forth at the audience who shriek in horror. We now know why the VIPs have descended on Namicopo; the nyau performance has arrived to steal the night.

This act of nyau at the Namicopo stage required considerable coordination between the Nyau brotherhood, the festival organizers, the journalists, politicians, and audience. If the act had been performed on the stage the audience would never have had to confront the baton-wielding thugs, nor the police, nor the “Tete Bad Boys” cowboys, or at least not so directly. When these individuals cleared a space on the grounds they did it by confronting the audience and threatening them and sometimes enacting physical violence. This proved enormously effective in stirring the emotions of the audience and getting them riled up. While no doubt the nyau dancers and brotherhood have explanations rooted in cosmology and ritual about how the performance must occur on the ground (not on the stage), there is also no denying the great effect on the audience and environment of transitioning the event from stage to ground. Strictly in terms of heightening the theatricality, by bucking conventions, it was an enormous success. One thing to consider that illustrates how the nyau performers do pay attention to theatrical form is that while the dance occurred on the ground the musicians were on stage next to the microphones and where the acoustics were best not only for the musicians but also for projecting the sound. The dance might have to take place on the ground according to “traditions” but this does not stop the musicians from using the best possible arrangements and technology to better project their sound.
The arrival of the Mozambican officials, like the Minister of Culture and possibly the Governor of Nampula, also heightened the emotions. Their arrival at the moment *nyau* was to begin was not happenstance; there was a great deal of coordination to make sure this occurred. Other details indicate that the “Tete Bad Boys” were actively involved in orchestrating the event to the maximum effect. The announcers who had previously been active in informing the audience and ramping them up for the other dances were suddenly absent. There was no information telling the audience what was going to happen next. Instead, the thugs and the police just started pushing people away from the stage. It would have been much more effective and polite to announce through the loudspeakers that *nyau* was going to perform next and the production are asking everybody to clear a 20 meter diameter space between the stage and the VIP box so that the *nyau* performers can come in and dance. But that would not have created the desired effect of confusion and fear. I would suggest that the “Tete Bad Boys” were actively involved at the level of the Festival production staff, the Festival organization staff, and within the ranks of Frelimo, to orchestrate the arrival of the authorities, the pushing of the crowd, and the silencing of the Namicopo stage production. If one understanding of choreography is the mobilization of movement for the creation and amplification of meaningful and emotional response, then the “Tete Bad Boys” are master choreographers. They were able to place in motion the authorities cars and bodies to arrive at just the right moment. They were able to move the bodies of the crowds in a way that agitated the crowd and made them anxiety ridden. Then, the choreographers arrived in character,
as the “Tete Bad Boys” cowboys they further revved up emotions with their menacing presence and threatening the audience. Further confusing is the fact that the four cowboys are all dressed exactly the same. It appears as if one man is everywhere, when in fact there are four of them. This adds to the dramatic effect of their menacing looks and “Tete Bad Boys” logo named on their hats. Ironically, they are wearing official Festival shirts that reads on the back “Mozambican Culture: Pride in the Maintenance of Peace.” There is something tongue and cheek about these four cowboys all dressed in black boots, black cowboy hats, looking thuggish with a gangster message of “Bad Boys” wearing festival shirts with a bureaucratic political slogan that essentially says pride of our culture in the maintenance of peace. All of this “backstage” and “onstage” coordination has to be recognized as a skilled crafting of a spectacle with an intention to enact and play with power.

After the spectacle had been orchestrated, it was relatively easy for the dancers to arrive and create the desired effect of disorientation and shock. When they came running in they immediately engaged the audience, especially the two plumed-dressed figures with machetes in hand. Two dancers clanged their machetes and two others rang the *chocalhos*, hand shakers made of masala and shells. Then they postured around allowing all to gaze at their fantastic dress and wonderful peacocked bodies. They assumed different positions on the “stage,” some sitting down and others standing around, while one by one they would perform their own piece. The flicking of the dust is an important element not just in nyau but much of Mozambican dance. The higher the dust and the more that is stirred up the more accomplished the
dancer is considered. Along with the costumes, the dust plays an important role in creating an otherworldly environment. It creates this haze all over the scene that aids in distorting time and space. After the dancers are done they run off just as they had arrived. The cowboy choreographers walk confidently and clap their hands, letting the audience know that the performance is over and they too can clap. Meanwhile the masked baton-wielding thugs continue to wrestle with the audience who are ecstatic. A television journalist who has plopped himself in the middle of the performance to film the event drops his camera down. He shakes his head back and forth looking at the chaos and reflecting on the performance. He looks at scene and shouts with a wry smile, “É Demais!”—“Its too much!”

**Conclusion**

Structural Adjustment Programs and austerity are crucial political economic factors that led to the ascendance of *nyau* as cultural heritage and as the ideal representation of ethnic and national identity. Austerity is an economic policy of divestiture as well as a social project to make Mozambicans self-sufficient subjects. Austerity impoverished the Maputo dance world by divesting from the CNCD, END, and other cultural institutions, which left the dancers and teachers less secure, less valued for their contributions to society, and left to their own devices to seek dance employment (gigs) in the service economy. The Maputo cultural economy only supported two forms of dance: contemporary and traditional. European and other international donor agencies supported both but separated them into distinct
development objectives. Contemporary dance was supported under objectives to strengthen civil society, freedom of expression, and education services. Contemporary dance also met objectives to support cultural exchanges between Mozambicans, Africans, and Europeans in the arts. Traditional dance was supported under entirely different development objectives to promote the preservation of cultural heritage. Mozambican state-party actors are also patrons for dances but only for traditional dances.

The cultural economy, then, is split along the lines of rural-urban and classes that resembles once again the bifurcated citizen subject under colonialism. As suburbanos, all dancers live precariously but a few are able to break into the professional class through their participation and advances in contemporary dance. Most Maputo dancers rely on their skills as performers of traditional dance to earn income and gain social status through performances at state-party events and festivities. Yet, because dance is a part of the service economy their compensation at these gigs are low and they are never able to break out of their social-class status as suburbanos. The Maputo cultural economy is a service economy. Dancers are low wage, low skilled laborers that depend on short term work at events. Frelimo has adopted a harsh, neoliberal, schumpeterian orientation towards suburbanos and peasants through their disciplinary discourses about how “poverty is mental” and Mozambicans are responsible for cultivating “a culture of work.” Under SAPs, class divisions have increased dramatically and conflict between urbanos and suburbanos reach ever increasing levels of dehumanization and violence.
Mozambican politics are characterized by Frelimo’s disciplinary discourses about work and Mozambicans interpretations of these discourses as acts of deception to assure Frelimo’s power and predatory practices. Mozambican politics are also characterized by theatrical encounters between state and local actors where each are attempting to establish the terms of their relationships. Furthermore, ethnic performances can be characterized by misrecognition and conflict as much as by shared meanings and commonalities.

Austerity has enflamed class relations in Mozambique, but Frelimo and foreign donors have banked on ethnicity to stabilize the state and build national unity. Whereas Frelimo severely disciplines the population about work ethics, they pander to ethnicity to gain election votes and prove to the donor community that they are supporting autochthonous communities and helping them become autonomous. Here is the intersection between class and ethnicity in twenty first century Mozambican politics. Frelimo can not resolve economic inequalities, even if they wanted to which it is not evident that they do, so they appeal to the “customary” to shore up support from the populace. Nyau enters within this context as an exemplar of how Frelimo and the donor community are building national unity and investing in local communities through the support of cultural heritage. While, austerity, elections, class divisions, postsocialist revisionism are the context for nyau’s ascendance, it does not yet explain how nyau as a dance shapes this complex environment.

Encounters between the state and local populations are pastiches of multiple temporalities and spatial imaginaries, and it is important to understand that
misrecognition is a constant fixture of these encounters. Furthermore, state power since colonialism attempted to impose ethnicized identities and spaces for the purposes of conquering rural populations, gaining consent, and folding them into capitalist accumulation of labor and resources. Nyau is the embodiment of a complex history fraught with violence and authoritarianism. At the National Culture Festivals nyau performers appear to be content with their position as the “lead acts.” In fact, their performance at the Namicopo stage shows how the Nyau brotherhood are coordinating with festival staff, the police, politicians, the press, and audiences to heighten the aesthetic experience of witnessing a nyau performance above all others. The performers are engaged in poetic play with their subaltern positions as hinterland renegades and the elite positions of state officials. In their performances on stage, as well as off stage performances as is demonstrated in the story about the END professor Lucas, nyau performances captivate audiences through their display of disorientation and menace. Nyau performances operate on many levels such that nyau dancers are the incarnation of ancestors and spirits but also the embodiment of locality and working and peasant class power to threaten state power.

Nyau performance at the Namicopo stage illuminates how citizen-subject remain unsettled despite the regeneration of citizen-subject divisive architecture in Mozambique under SAPs. New and old subjectivities are still obtainable, still up for grabs, still performative. Ordinary people who find themselves segregated into ghettoized spaces, systematically targeted as criminal suburbanos or unwieldy backward peasants, and under the disciplinary power of the state’s neoliberal
apparatus to create a new entrepreneurial class and ownership society, have their own resources to intervene and reshape these terms. The expressive performing body in dance employs these new and old subjectivities as its prime material for fashioning selves and communities that persevere through austerity and sometimes even thrive.
Chapter 4

*Um Solo para Cinco: Meanings of Nakedness, Meanings of Dance*

### Introduction to *Um Solo para Cinco*

The choreographic work *Um Solo Para Cinco* [A Solo for Five] presented in 2004 by Augusto Cuvilas (1971-2007) was one of the most significant art events in Mozambique in the last decade. At the time, Augusto Cuvilas was an accomplished dancer who had trained at the *Escuela Nacional de las Artes* in Cuba, had performed for many years at the *Companhia Nacional de Canto e Dança* (CNCD) in Mozambique, and was pursuing a graduate degree at *Université Paris- VIII* in France. From 2000 until 2005 Cuvilas was the de facto artistic director of the CNCD where he was in charge of dance training and the production of new works.

Although not his first work, *Um Solo para Cinco* would establish Cuvilas as an promising choreographer of international standing. For nearly a year Cuvilas worked with five female Mozambican dancers, four of whom were from the CNCD, to make the piece. *Um Solo Para Cinco* debuted in Maputo in November, 2003, at the Mozambican French Cultural Center without much fanfare. Two months later the piece traveled to Madagascar where it was promoted as a choreographic work of the CNCD at the Fifth Sanga: The African and Indian Ocean Choreographic Dance Competition, or alternatively translated as Choreographic Encounters of Africa and Indian Ocean, funded by the *Association Française d’Action Artistique* (AFAA) under the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*France Diplomatie*). *Um Solo para*
Cinco won first prize from the festival jury, only to have the honor rescinded by the Malagasy authorities who deemed the piece immoral.

Um Solo para Cinco places on stage five black women performing everyday movements of work and play in an idyllic African scene. In the dance, different women fetch water with pails, jive clap on a park bench, saunter across the stage with an umbrella as if walking a long road to attend church, and stand expectantly as if waiting for transportation. The dancers are Mozambican maidens, in Portuguese called *donzelas*. They perform familiar tasks that represent the social lives of black unmarried poor women in Africa. But these idyllic scenes break down, become more frenetic, and eventually fall apart into something incoherent and anguished. The dancers repeat and revise scenarios where they move from calm to frenzy, comfortable to strange. The performance ends with two flood lights piercing through a dark stage and illuminating two aluminum basins, the kind used for bathing and washing clothes, which are filled with a silky, milk-like substance that resembles *musiro*, a paste made from the Quipalo tree used by northern women as a natural beauty product to protect their skin and keep it smooth. The dancers are standing inside the basins, writhing in convulsions and thrashing violently, immersing their black naked bodies into the milky substance.

Nakedness was the source for much of the controversy and success of Um Solo para Cinco. When Cuvilas and the dancers returned to Maputo, religious figures and Mozambican state officials denounced the piece as immoral and un-African. The religious figures went further with their criticisms to argue that the fact that the work
was supposedly produced by a state institution (CNCD), and represented the nation at an international festival, demonstrated that the Mozambican state was morally depraved. The CNCD and officials in the Ministry of Culture felt obliged to distance themselves from the work and from Cuvilas.

In response to the religious and conservative repudiation of the work, many Maputo audiences, which included journalists, artists, and professionals who work at civil society organizations and development agencies, saw Augusto Cuvilas as a victim of state censorship and religious dogmatism. For the next three years, European aid agencies supported the circulation of *Um Solo para Cinco* on tours across Africa and Europe. In the international art world, *Um Solo para Cinco* became a posterchild for how conservative African regimes threatened freedom of expression and the arts.

One European development organization, the Dutch agency HIVOS, financed Cuvilas’s dance company, called *Projecto Cuvilas*, with nearly $150,000 USD annually for three years. Cuvilas was able to pay rent for a dance studio and provide salaries for five dancers, one manager, one technician, and himself as the artistic director. The rest of the money went towards production costs for one choreographic work per year. This support allowed Cuvilas to gain independence from state art institutions (CNCD), to earn a foothold in the competitive world of international

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32 While this might seem like a lot of money, it is fairly small compared to the budgets of European companies. In addition, art infrastructure in Maputo (rehearsal and theatrical spaces, lighting, sound, and production costs) have been almost fully dismantled and privatized. Therefore, operation and production costs are frequently much higher than in European and North American contexts where some companies can rely on the history of public investment in art infrastructure.
dance, and to find his voice as a provocative artist with powerfully critical pieces. By 2007 Cuvilas completed two full-length works: *Tango de la Muerte* [Tango of Death] and *Fim* [End]. At the time, these dance pieces were also provocative events that caused excitement for many and consternation for others.

Cuvilas was shot dead by the municipal police in front of his house in the *Bairro dos Pescadores* with his three-year old son by his side in the afternoon of December 27, 2007. The way people retell the circumstances of his murder is that three thieves attempted to enter into Cuvilas’s house. Cuvilas called a friend who called the police. Upon arrival the police saw a young, thin, black man with dreadlocks and shot him with their AK-47s. Cuvilas died on his doorstep, killed by the Maputo police either through misidentification, as the police say, or through political assassination, as many *Maputenses* claim.

No evidence has emerged of foul play in the death of Cuvilas, but the circumstances around the event and the patterns of violence directed towards other critical voices are too obvious to ignore. People I talked to pointed to five simple facts that prove to them that Cuvilas’s death was orchestrated or at least not an accident: the circumstances of Cuvilas’s death are too peculiar; the power of his art is too obvious; the history of security forces’ malicious surveillance and violence directed towards critical intellectuals and civic groups are too prevalent; the budget of the security forces is too huge and without any transparency; and the paranoia of the regime is too palpable. Whether accidental or orchestrated the gruesome facts of his
death communicated a message advantageous for the regime: if you are too independent and too vocal you will end up dead.

Why was Cuvilas’s work interpreted as subversive in the first place? How did it become an affront to the status quo of the political regime? The simple conclusion drawn in the press and by many people whom I talked to has always been that the source of its subversiveness was nakedness. Nakedness could provide shock and outrage at the transgression of codes of decency. Just the idea of female nakedness in a Mozambican dance generated antagonistic positions in which women’s bodies were signs of moral status. While nakedness was central to the controversy produced by *Um Solo para Cinco*, its presence alone does not explain the dance’s power or subversiveness. Instead, closer attention to the aesthetic form of *Um Solo para Cinco* - its theatrical presentation and the expressive performing body – and audience responses to this aesthetic form reveals that the energetics and movement patterns expressed in the piece communicated dissidence. The moment of nakedness in *Um Solo para Cinco* was just one more element in a series of many repetitions and revisions of the aesthetic form that triggered feelings of precarity. What made *Um Solo para Cinco* particularly radical was that it ignited the collective emotional imagination of living through the postsocialist neoliberal austerity of the 1990s and 2000s.

This chapter presents three perspectives of *Um Solo para Cinco*: the view of Cuvilas, the interpretations of religious leaders, and my own analysis. These three perspectives represent the range of people’s reactions to the work. The first explains
how *Um Solo para Cinco* was understood as a dance that advocated gender equality and freedom of expression. The second explains how *Um Solo para Cinco* was received by conservatives as a dance that symbolized the society’s and the state’s inability to provide a moral direction. The third is my perspective as a dance critic informed by an understanding of the way that energy patterns and movement stimulate the audience’s imagination and memory of their own experiences. I explain how many dancers and audience members in the Maputo art world understood *Um Solo para Cinco* as a critique of the neoliberal state. The first two perspectives perceive nakedness as the driving narrative for the dance. The third articulates how the meaning of *Um Solo para Cinco* is expressed through an embodied experience within the poetics of form—how things are done in the performance.

Dance is multivalent and can have numerous, frequently contradictory, interpretations depending on the experiences of the participants/viewers and the contexts of the performances. But not all interpretations are equal. In the case of *Um Solo para Cinco*, the first two perspectives about the naked female dancers as interventions into gender inequality or expressions of immorality have received abundant attention in the press. These are the dominant frames for understanding *Um Solo para Cinco*. The third follows an alternative frame.

Moreover, the three different perspectives I present below will expose a gap between how Cuvilas and conservatives discussed *Um Solo para Cinco* and how it was experienced by participants and audience members. This gap illuminates the difference between public and intimate knowledge and shows that Maputenses are
careful to conceal knowledge that could be considered subversive. Artists, in particular, are leery of making radical critiques. By framing *Um Solo para Cinco* as a work about gender and freedom of expression, Cuvilas was minimizing the risks of being considered subversive. Public discussion of gender equality and artistic expression are politically safe; they do not make demands on the regime. In contrast, public discussion of the failure of the postsocialist transition and the predatory practices of the neoliberal state are dangerous. They could end your career or get you killed. This gap between public discursive framings of *Um Solo para Cinco* and people’s embodied experiences illustrates that criticisms of the neoliberal state are communicated and broadly disseminated in the current era. *Um Solo para Cinco* coalesced people’s feelings of precarity (see Introduction) at the level of energy, rhythm, and movement patterns and further contributed to making these feelings public in an authoritarian environment where such feelings are not easily expressed. The nakedness in *Um Solo para Cinco* portrayed how people in Mozambique experience neoliberalism and how they relate to a political regime that has left them stripped.

**Meanings of Nakedness in *Um Solo para Cinco*: Three Perspectives**

*Cuvilas’ Published Perspective*

Women’s bodies, whether in dance or in life, can signify many different ideas. I argued that in *N’Tsay* women signified ideals about the nation, victory, liberty, and tradition. One interpretation of the nakedness in *Um Solo para Cinco* is that it was a
sign of gender equality and freedom of expression. The people who supported Cuvilas, such as Mozambicans and foreigners who work for aid agencies that make up elite civil society, believed that women should be afforded the same rights as men and saw the nakedness as artistic liberty. Cuvilas and the five female dancers helped shape this interpretation by communicating in the press that they wanted to confront the sexualization of African women in dance by creating a theatrical experience where the women would appear nude but without erotic movements and displays. They emphasized that the piece was a manifesto about the importance of artistic creativity and that women are rarely afforded this right in society.

In an interview on February 25, 2004 with Filipe Gil, the editor of Cultura Suplemental of the main daily newspaper Noticias, asked Augusto Cuvilas to elaborate on the purpose of Um Solo para Cinco. This is my translation from Portuguese.

Filipe Gil: Um Solo Para Cinco (A Solo for Five), your new work, put you at the center of a polemic. It was censured in Madagascar, on the same stage on which it was honored for the second best work in a continental festival. What did you concretely want when you created this audacious masterpiece?

Augusto Cuvilas: Um Solo Para Cinco is something that has been percolating in my head, as societal problem that often times is not spoken about in this country. Mozambique is an extremely male chauvinist country. This is very camouflaged, but the country is very macho.
Although I am proud to be in a country with a woman leading one of the key ministries, which is the Ministry of Finances (Luísa Diogo, who is now the Prime Minister), it still bothers me a lot to be living through the machismo that exists here. Men in Mozambique benefit greatly from the fact that women are viewed and treated only as a woman, in ways you cannot see when the woman is a woman and when besides being a woman is a competent person.…

**Filipe Gil:** Are you an advocate for the feminists, from an artwork in which women exhibit themselves more in the body than the soul?

**Augusto Cuvilas:** I am not claiming feminist ideas and have nothing to do with it. And, the idea that I promote also deals with the women’s souls, not just their bodies. Above all, I wanted to better understand women’s predicaments and expose a body that often we treat as a sexual object that women have no rights to express themselves. The idea of sex ignites à priori when we look at women, while forgetting that beyond sex there are many other qualities. Even small things speak to a physical culture, such as bodybuilding, etc. For example a man can go kilometers with a naked torso and it is no problem but a woman with her breasts exposed, even in her own backyard [*quintal*], is an affront to our culture. We forget that, before the outsiders brought textiles and fashion from
abroad, here we Africans lived in loincloths. Where is this African culture that people talk of? The censors cannot come talking to me about culture because what happens is that we have a selective culture.33

This is one interview of many where Cuvilas and others claimed that the intended critique of Um Solo para Cinco was about machismo in Mozambican society. Specifically, when pressed about why nakedness was important for the piece, he talked about how he intended to call attention to the hyper sexualization of black

33 [Filipe] “Um Solo Para Cinco, a tua nova peça, põe-te envolto numa polémica. Foi censurada em Madagáscar, no mesmo palco em que foi consagrada segunda melhor num festival continental. O que é que querias concretamente quando criaste esta obra ousada?”

[Cuvilas] “Um Solo Para Cinco é uma coisa que já vem me trabalhando a cabeça, por ser um problema da sociedade e que muitas vezes não se quer falar neste país. Moçambique é um país super machista. Isso está muito camuflado, mas é muito machista, este país. Embora eu me orgulho de estar num país com uma mulher a dirigir um dos ministérios-chave, que é o do Plano e Finanças (Luísa Diogo, agora também Primeira Ministra), incomoda-me muito estar a viver o machismo que aqui se vive. Os homens em Moçambique beneficiam-se muito do facto de as mulheres serem vistas e tratadas apenas como mulher, de maneiras que não se consegue ver quando é que a mulher é mulher e quando é que para além de ser mulher é uma pessoa competente...”

[Filipe] “Estás a ser advogado das feministas, a partir de uma peça em que as mulheres exibem-se mais no corpo do que na alma?

[Cuvilas] “Não estou a reivindicar ideias feministas e não tenho nada a ver com isso. Também a ideia que faço passar também vai na alma das mulheres, não apenas no corpo. Eu quis, antes de mais, entender melhor a situação da mulher e expor um corpo que muitas vezes, quando o olhamos, a primeira coisa que pensamos é ser um objecto sexual que não tem nem direito de se expressar. Quando olhamos para uma mulher à priori nasce a ideia de sexo, não se equacionando que por detrás disso há muitas outras qualidades. Até em coisas pequenas, fala-se de cultura física, culturismo, etc., em que não há problemas um homem fazer quilómetros de tronco nu e se for uma mulher com mamas fora nem que seja no quintal afirma-se que isso não faz parte da nossa cultura. Esquecemos que, antes dos de fora trazerem tecidos e modas para aqui nós os africanos vivíamos todos de tangas. Onde é que está a cultura africana, para as pessoas que falam dela? Os censores não me venham falar de cultura porque o que acontece é que nós temos uma cultura selectiva.
female dancers. In the interview Cuvilas slips from dancers being sexualized to
women in general being sexualized. Cuvilas argued that in Mozambique women are
treated as sexual objects for the display of male audiences and *Um Solo para Cinco*
attempted to disrupt this gaze or at least call attention to the singular sexualized optic
of Mozambican audiences. So, in public statements Cuvilas focused on how
nakedness in *Um Solo para Cinco* called attention to problems of gender equality,
freedom of expression, and the sexualization of the female body. This assertion
centers on the naked female dancer, and the meaning of the work is communicated
through the narrative of the naked body. Given this interpretation, it is no surprise that
it offended many religious people. All they could imagine was naked women dancing
and the many associations of promiscuity and exploitation that nakedness evokes.

*Religious Perspectives*

Many religious leaders used the controversy in Madagascar to shed light on
immorality in the society and the impotency of the state. Many of the critics of *Um
Solo para Cinco* had not even seen the performance. Nevertheless they articulated
their own imagined experience of what the nakedness meant in the performance. *Um
Solo para Cinco* received protests from religious organizations and rebuke from state
and party officials.

António Luís from the Christian church *Igreja Velha Apostólica de
Moçambique* saw the performance as a threat to public morals and to biblical
teachings. He argued that the government ought to censor the piece and if they did not
then “it is as if a father watches his daughter walk naked through the street.” Another man, Telvina Madala Zinba, a member of the Catholic Church, argued in an interview for a newspaper that at no moment should the state permit such a situation to happen again. When asked about the fact that many modern states allow or even promote artistic expression in their countries, he responded that this immorality comes from Europe. In addition, Zinba responded, “This youth of today pursue what is in vogue, and if anybody says anything then they dismiss us as old-fashioned.”

To imagine the details of the performance many relied on photographs in newspapers and the descriptions by journalists about the polemic in Madagascar. They also relied on the widespread emotional imagery of nakedness as the act of stripping or being stripped. Stripping is a titillating act of shedding clothes and is seen by many as licentious. However, it can be argued that to be stripped is a sign of dispossession of one’s humanity. The religious critics used this imagery of naked and stripped to argue that society should be protected from vulgarities created by capitalism and materialism and that the state, religious institutions, and public figures ought to play a paternal role of imposing principles of decency. Amade Issufo, a member of the Islamic Chadulia Mosque, articulated such a view through his imagination of nakedness in Um Solo para Cinco:

“I didn’t see the work, but if it is true what I have heard then it is immoral to appear naked [pelada] on the stage, because it is necessary that people

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understand that our cultural, ethical, and religious values should be above whatever artistic or political stance.... The fact that the National Song and Dance Company presented a performance under such conditions in which the five dancers presented themselves demonstrates that Mozambican society is stripped [desprovida] of all of our cultural, moral, and ethical values that always had characterized our country” (Jornal Noticias, February 2004).

Amade Issufo used strong language to communicate his reaction. The word pelada loosely translates as naked in that it refers to a person without clothes. But pelada is more aggressive than naked. Pelada has two different meanings depending on the agentive emphasis. There are those who strip and then those who are stripped.

Those who strip are subjects with agency, thus indicating that the person who is stripping him- or herself is creating a provocation. A person who purposively displays themselves as pelada is threatening the norms such as a man riding shirtless on a motorcycle defying the possible risks and the codes of public decorum. Peleda is a person provoking concupiscence such as women and men dancing with tight, revealing clothing at a nightclub or in a music video. Pelada is the sense of agency a professional stripper receives through her or his work. In addition, in some parts of Africa, women have presented themselves naked to shame male leaders. The scholar

35 Mesqiuta Chadulia, disse nunca ter visto o bailado e que mesmo se tivesse a oportunidade escusava-se de assistir porque é um atentado à moral e aos valores religiosos. (“O Governo deveria interditar a exibição do bailado.”) “Não vi a referida peça, mas se é verdade o que ouvi é imoral aparecer pelada no palco, porque é necessário que as pessoas entendam que os nossos valores culturais, éticos e religiosos devem estar acima de qualquer manifestação. O facto da Companhia Nacional de Canto e Dança apresentar o bailado nas condições em que se apresentam as cinco integrantes é uma demonstração de que a sociedade moçambicana está desprovida de todos os valores culturais, morais e éticos que sempre caracterizaram o país.” (“O Governo deveria interditar a exibição do bailado.”)
Judith Van Allen (1971, 1972, 1976) studied how Igbo women circa 1929 organized anti-colonial protests by “sitting on a man” or “making war,” which consisted of conveying at male leaders’ compounds and dancing and singing protest songs, sometimes while naked. While I have not yet seen similar evidence in Mozambique, it is another example of potential situations where women gain agency through stripping or appearing naked.

By contrast, those who are stripped by someone else are victims, people who are vulnerable to an outside force that acts violently upon them and is visibly seen on their body. If a person is pelada in this sense then he or she is stripped of humanity, becoming something closer to an animal. Pelada in this sense is used to describe how a chicken is plucked of its feathers to be prepared for cooking. Pelada refers to the state of deprivation of street children who have been stripped of their families and a caring environment, as evidenced by their soiled and torn clothing. The word pelada can also have a racist and classist charge implying that a person lacks education, culture, and civilization: people who are “pelada” are ones who don’t eat with knife and fork, who don’t read books, who don’t wear suits, who don’t have their own 4x4 to drive to work, and who do not have work.

Issufo also stated that the fact that the National Song and Dance Company (CNCD) would create a performance with five of its dancers naked on stage is proof of how Mozambican society is stripped [desprovida] of all of its cultural, moral, and ethical values that always had characterized the country. In contrast to pelada, desprovida is a sophisticated term that describes the act of taking away a foundation
or resources. It conveys a lack of credentials of fundamentals that would make something or someone legitimate, truthful, or substantial. *Desprovida* does not have the double meaning of dismantle and undress that “stripped” has in English. But the image of tearing off fundamentals has a similar image to the tearing off of clothes. The idea is that Mozambican society has been stripped of its foundation: torn of the values that made the country truthful and honorable in the past.

Issufo evokes the frustrations felt by Mozambicans about the recent transition to neoliberal reforms. He refers to the pride of gaining independence through armed struggle, the honorable values in establishing a government oriented for the workers and peasants of Mozambique, and their resilience after suffering under a civil war partly fabricated by apartheid South Africa and Cold War allies. The values of this lived history have been stripped away by a government that no longer offers moral direction and a society that has been stripped of its moral compass.

*An Alternative Perspective*

This imagery of naked as stripped of humanity and dispossessed was repeated frequently both by critics of *Um Solo para Cinco* as well as by its defenders. Advocates argued that it was precisely the capacity of *Um Solo para Cinco* to communicate this imagery of destitution and violence that was the value of the piece. But such imagery did not come from nakedness alone. Instead, this much more subversive critique of the neoliberal regime was communicated through the embodied experience of the performance and its associations with the embodied experience of
living and working in the current era. To examine this embodied interpretation of nakedness, I will focus on interpretations given by a focus group of dancers who presented research about *Um Solo para Cinco* and other Mozambican dances as part of the course I taught for a professional dance program, *Programa Apoio À Dança* (PAD). In the focus group one student, Élio, interpreted the moment when five women dancers appeared naked on stage as a threshold moment when the women had reached their limits. They appeared naked on stage as if to say, “If this does not work, then there is no other way of making ourselves understood.” Nakedness signified that a limit had been reached, the dancers could take no more, and they could find no other way to communicate their frustration. This sense of exhaustion with limitations was the culmination of everything that came before it. The scenarios that came before the moment of nakedness are more significant for the meaning communicated in the performance and need to be analyzed further. The moment of nakedness was just one, the final straw, in a series of other very important moments.

To understand nakedness as a signifier of the condition of being plucked and stripped rather than as a free-standing symbol of either liberation or moral depravity requires us to interpret the nakedness as a kinesthetic and haptic experience by the audience, which has been following the energy, the movement and the staging of the dance during its performance. First, I must explain more about the nature of dance as a form of communication and how dance expresses meaning. Then, I will describe and analyze the poetics of form of *Um Solo para Cinco* to have a better understanding of the sensory experience of the dance. This description will illuminate the gap
between *Um Solo para Cinco* as a dance about gender equality and moral depravity and *Um Solo para Cinco* as a subversive critique about the neoliberal regime. Public discussions of *Um Solo para Cinco* definitely focused on nakedness as the dominant narrative, but an embodied interpretation of *Um Solo para Cinco* considers the affective force of the energy and movement patterns.

Afterwards, in the following chapter, I will return to the interpretation of *Um Solo para Cinco* and the moment of nakedness by the dance student Élio and a focus group of experienced dancers and teachers. Through their discussions of *Um Solo para Cinco* I will examine how the work coalesced people’s feelings of precarity via energy, rhythm, and movement patterns. They associated the rhythmic quality of *Um Solo para Cinco* within their own feelings of humiliation in working as a dancer in the cultural economy. They work many “gigs” in this economy from performing on stage for state sponsored events, dancing at nightclubs to promote products, and participating in works by international choreographers who travel through Maputo.

**The Meaning of Dance Is in the Embodied Experience**

I argue here that the meaning of Um Solo para Cinco is situated in the embodied experience of the dance. While I don’t discount the stated narratives about Um Solo para Cinco, it is important to compare and align such narratives with other impressions of the feelings and thoughts associated with the energy and movement patterns in the work. The kinetic energy of the dancers on stage is indexical of a kinetic imagination for audience members, it points to patterns of energy that
audiences associate with certain habits. This kinetic imagination is a truth, or another truth, that is not based in language: reason and thought communicated solely through verbal discourse. Associations made between the kinetic energy on stage and the kinetic imagination of audience members is a truth that is, to quote the dance scholar Joan Acocella, “in the very bones of the dance, which our bones know how to read, if we let them” (2001: 16).

Joan Acocella wrote this phrase to argue for the importance of recognizing the communicative, affective, and social force of dance on its own terms. She has in mind the pervasive tendency, mostly in dance audiences in Europe and the United States, to think that the meaning of dance events needs to be revealed by the choreographers themselves, or maybe some other experts who can explain the intent of choreographers. “This implies that the truth of dance lies somewhere other than in the dance, that the dance is a sort of side-effect, whereas the real event is the intellectual process that supposedly underlies it” (12). Taking Acocella’s lead, I argue that we cannot rely on the artist statements alone to explain the meaning of works, but as critics, and responsive and engaged audiences, we must honor the integrity of dance as expressions through movement. We must attempt to write descriptions and interpretations of their works that stick as close as possible to the kinesthetic qualities of the dances themselves. However, this does not mean ceding our creative and intellectual abilities as interpreters, as writers. We must endeavor to capture movement in our writing.
A reverse view of the over-reliance on verbal and written statements about dance, often seen within communities of dancers, is that dance can communicate more directly than language. This is a common view among those who think of language as less accurate or more prone to manipulation. Acocella argues that the fetishization of dance as beyond language is also not valid. Instead, humans operate in multiple meaning-making experiences—dreams, music, mathematics—and dance and language are just two of these. Acocella makes a stand for appreciating and investigating dance for its extraordinary expressive potential. This is a potential that, she argues, is not discursive but lyric. “Like music, it is a force field, an orchestration of lines of force, lines of energy, and that is the only way to start understanding it” (2001: 13).

Too frequently the power of dance is dulled by discursive framings that superimpose predisposed suppositions, such as: Um Solo para Cinco has naked dancers, the artists say that the work is about gender equality and sexualization of women, therefore that is the narrative of Um Solo para Cinco. This kind of predetermined conclusion overdetermines the dance and misses the kinetic and aesthetic experience it creates. An integral part of telling the story about the power of Um Solo para Cinco is tapping into the kinetic energy and kinetic imagination that it created.

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36 A denigration of verbal language and its relation to popular media (radio, journalism, the Bible, proverbs, etc.) is also prevalent among visual art theorists who extoll the power of visual arts, especially in their abstract and modern guises, to shock audiences and communicate at a higher level than the stultifying mass culture’s reliance on language.
We can understand *Um Solo para Cinco* through its energetic unfolding of certain moments that engage the audience haptically and kinesthetically, resonating with their experience. Kinetic imagination is the audience’s response to movement and touch on the stage based on their own experiences or imagination of those movements and expressions. The seated audience is not engaged haptically (touching) or kineasthetically (moving) with the dance, but they are using their imaginations and their experiences to give meaning to the interactions that they see and hear on stage. Joan Acocella gives a wonderful example of how an Act II pas de deux in George Balanchine’s *Midsummer Night’s Dream* engages the haptic and kinesthetic imagination. The patterns performed by the two dancers resembled the idea of lived love. The male and female dancers perform a long series of repetitive movements where the man lifts the women, she taps her feet together, and he puts her down. As Acocella elaborates:

Rhythmically, it is like the beating of a heart in a body at rest. Pictorially, it is like a beautiful confinement: she is running, he is catching her. Dynamically, it is gentle and precise, like an action they both know how to do, have done a hundred times. So this is the feeling of great power in a quiet state, the calm of having plenty and not having to use it up. There are many things that fit such a pattern—a full stomach, a trust fund—but one of the most obvious things is married love, and that, of course is why this dance is the way it is: because it is being given at a wedding, the wedding of the lovers from Act I, and it is intended to show the peaceful ways of *lived* loved after the storms of love’s
discovery. Nothing in the dance actually represents married love; nothing in
the dance represents anything. What is happening is that the dance is drawing
on patterns of energy that we associate with certain habits—habits that, in
turn, further down the road, we associate with marriage [italics in original]

The association of this repetition of pas de deux balletic movement to marriage is a
deep one, something Acocella argues must have a strong biological basis—by which
she means something that we experience as energy, rhythm, and habit at the level of
daily human activities but also at the level of bodily process, all the way down to the
chemical and cellular level. While I am not sure about how to measure or describe the
effects of dance at the chemical and cellular level of an audience, I think Acocella
struck an important point about how the patterns, rhythm, and energy of dance
connect with people at the level of habit and embodied experience. When analyzing a
dance and its significance for audiences and a society, dance scholars have long
emphasized describing and interpreting the associations between the embodied
experience of the dancers and the audience (Novak 1988, Adshead-Lansdale 1999,
Reynolds 2007).

For Acocella, Balanchine created meaning about the way we might experience
a long romantic life partnership as a lived love-- one that takes the mental and
physical skill acquired through daily embodiment of qualities such as persistence,
patience, and dedication, just like the embodiment that it took for the male and female
ballet dancers to train over and over in order to execute with energy and precision the
pas de deux. Acocella’s analysis is an excellent example of explaining how movement excites the realm of possibility and imagination to apprehend aspects of our lives that exist at a deep level of habit and embodied practice.

In sum, while dances, such as Balanchine’s *Midsummer Night’s Dream* or Cuvilas’ *Um Solo para Cinco*, operate in multiple meaning-making experiences, the embodied is the most readily recognized yet the most difficult to articulate linguistically. The discourse around *Um Solo para Cinco* in the newspapers and daily conversations are not necessarily wrong, they just represent one level of the meaning making experience. Too frequently, public interpretations of dance impoverish the sensory, haptic, kinesthetic levels of meaning. The next section is an attempt to reinvigorate these embodied experiences of *Um Solo para Cinco*.

**Description of the Poetics of Form in *Um Solo para Cinco***

*Um Solo para Cinco* is abundant in material and symbolic content to give sensory and emotional feelings of comfort and familiarity. The props, costume, and staging are made up of material, such as a park bench, an umbrella, the stage floor covered with dried leaves, the colorful and bright cotton dresses, aluminum buckets used for domestic activities like washing and carrying water, and five young (late teens, early twenties) black Mozambican women. The cultural content of much of the activity is easily identifiable: the whistling, humming, and singing of traditional songs; murmurs like gossip in a village; hanging out with girlfriends on a park bench; passing time with playful childhood games; clapping rhythmically together and
singing; waiting endlessly for transportation; and performing daily domestic chores like washing clothes and carrying water. All this content gives a scene of young, Mozambican, humble (read poor), black girlhood and womanhood. The piece exudes comfort and familiarity because of the characters it depicts, Mozambican maidens, and their idyllic African rural space.

Many elements contributed to creating a sense of nature as well as a soothing, dreamy environment. The dancers wore cotton flowing dresses, pants, and blouses—in colors of red, yellow, white, and grey—that gave the scene a gentle appearance. The stage floor was completely covered with dried leaves as if the scene were a forest in autumn. However, the floodlights inundated the stage with a violet color that dissimulated the leaves to appear fluffy and soft. When the dancers moved they brushed up against the leaves creating a dry, crisp sound that contrasted nicely against the soft appearance of the violet light. The more force and speed of their movements the more dust would turn up, but the lighting would make it look like a plume of violet steam or smoke as opposed to dust. The light would switch every so often from violet to yellow allowing the leaves to appear as they were—a light brown.

Each segment investigates a different scenario of the maiden character. Dancers saunter across the stage with aluminum pails balanced on their heads as if crossing paths on a rural road. They wait on a park bench or a bus stop. They sit together clapping and singing, with their legs crossed to the side, in a proper feminine position. They repeat scenes of maiden’s life in similar typical activities, but sooner or later in each moment there are slight revisions to the scenes. For example, while
crossing paths on a rural road with a pail on her head one dancer stops sauntering, lays the pail down, sits down, stands up, makes jerky, erratic motions with her arms and head, and then continues to repeat the pattern. Every quotidian movement is eventually disrupted with repetitive patterns of fast, jerky movements. As the piece reaches the moment of nakedness, the intensity of the disruptions, the glitches, the dissimulations also increase.

Nakedness occurred in the piece in the 15th minute of a 25-minute performance. For me it was the last moment before the dancers appear naked that is most revealing of the power of repeating and revising the donzela (maiden) image and scene. Twelve minutes into the performance two women remove the bench from stage right. Another dancer solos under a lamp spotlight and then exits stage left. The floodlights change from natural back to violet and allow five seconds of nothing but the image of bright fluffy leaves. Simultaneously appearing from opposite ends of the stage, two dancers walk across the stage, one at an angle and the other more or less straight across. From stage right one dancer has a small water bucket balanced on top of her head. From stage left another dancer strolls with a black umbrella as if coming home from church, umbrella in hand to protect against the bright sun. They cross each other at the center of stage and then move off stage allowing another five seconds of nothing. Then they reappear again walking across stage towards their separate destinations. They repeat another time.

This scene is reminiscent of any ordinary day with women walking to and fro, carrying out chores and meeting social engagements. Then the dancer with the bucket
comes out onto the front of stage right, removes the bucket from her head, places it on the ground and sits typically as country women do with their weight on one hip and legs folded to the other side. The other dancer with the umbrella walks to the back of stage left, turns to face the audience, and stays standing as if tediously waiting for a bus to arrive. The dancer with the bucket shifts to sit with legs straight out in front and straight back, facing the audience. She pauses and then moves again. She then stands up and moves two feet over and sits again. The dancer with the umbrella starts to pace slowly in a circle. It appears that the dancer with the bucket cannot get comfortable or accomplish her task. The dancer with the umbrella will never catch a ride. They both start to speed up. The dancer with the bucket reiterates the movement of finding a place to sit, placing the bucket on floor, sitting, placing bucket on head, standing. The other dancer stops pacing and places her umbrella upside down on the ground and gives it a spin.

What was a calm quotidian scene is now frenetic and maddening. The dancer leaves her umbrella and writhes as if in convulsions. As they both move from standing to sitting they start to displace the leaves more and more, and plumes of smoke fill the stage. The dancer grabs the umbrella again and starts to roll aggressively through the leaves, displacing them farther across the stage. Finally the dancer with the bucket exits stage left just as another dancer with a bucket on her head enters back stage right, strolling across. We are left alone with the dancer who has again left her umbrella upside down lying on the ground. It has filled with leaves. She spins and rolls. Her loose white blouse opens exposing her breasts. Her gestures
and bodily positions turn frenetic and senseless. After ten seconds she stands up, picks up the handle of her umbrella and lifts it over her head, allowing the leaves that have accumulated to dump out over her head, getting stuck in her hair. She has reached her limit, she turns and exits the stage.

The floodlights transition from violet to cobalt blue. There are ten seconds of silence and stillness. Then from stage left we see a bucket appearing, the head of the woman appears and then disappears. Her hip and torso appears from behind the side curtain and then her head with the bucket on top follows. She is spinning counterclockwise making slow circular movements forward and back. Her whole body appears with the bucket balanced on top of her head. She continues this clockwork movement, but now her head and bucket venture out away from her hips, and she spirals up and down. She walks out and rotates in a circle while also bending up and down, and head and shoulders spiral diagonally out away from the body. Her breasts, buttocks, and pubis are visible. A second dancer appears exercising the same movement pattern with a bucket balanced on her head and naked, but she walks slightly quicker, moving ahead. Then sequentially the third, fourth, and fifth dancers come out enacting exactly the same circular, spiraling movements with buckets balanced on their heads. They stick together as a group, forming a mass of bodies and buckets slowly circling each other, and moving up and down. When they reach center stage, their movements become more exaggerated, they quicken and extend themselves, including sitting on the ground and then standing up on tippy toes with arms reaching out. The execution of these movements seems difficult and the
audience gets a sense of the dancers’ skill to pull it off. The dancers reach their limits by falling off their toes to the ground. They can go no higher, no lower. They can turn no faster. They stop and simultaneously remove the pails off of their heads. Their coordination disintegrates and they fall into the leaves and collide into each other. The scene is reminiscent of previous moments when one dancer could not catch the bus, or when the other dancer could not sit still or accomplish her task. What started out as serene descends into disorder.

The last five minutes of *Um Solo para Cinco* do not come to a resolution. Instead, the piece reiterates this moment of nude women with pails. The bodily movements are similar variations of spiraling motions. However, one variation in the props is significant. In the last three minutes the dancers bring out two large aluminum tubs, constructed of the same material as the pails. The dancers immerse themselves in a silky white substance like milk. The substance is reminiscent of *musiro*, which is a white paste made from the trunk and branches of the Quipalo tree. Women from the north, mostly the *macua* group, are known for wearing the paste on their face, like a spa facial massage, that protects their skin from the sun and keeps it smooth and healthy. Four dancers place themselves together in the small space of the tub, immersing themselves in the white paste and continuing the spiraling movements, rubbing up next to each other. The other dancer continues frenzied movements on the stage with the leaves. Then the four women leave the tub and fall in the leaves on stage, which the dust mixes with their wet bodies, giving off a messy, viscous white gleam. The solo dancer enters the tub and continues her frantic
movements in the white substance. The group of four women eventually enters in the other tub that is placed under the lamp. They are still while the woman in the other tub continues her aggressive movement patterns. They stop and face the audience, still standing in the tub. They are breathing heavily, and you can see their bellies and abdomens expanding and contracting rapidly. They bow to audience applause.

Many elements contribute to making the final scene erotic: the tub; the lighting; the effect of the white substance on their naked bodies; the possible association of the substance to musiro, which is a symbol of feminine beauty; the close space that keeps the dancer’s skin in close contact; and their spiraling movements. But in terms of the structure of the piece, the final scenes continue to immerse the audience in both comfort and angst over the ordinary. Key to these dual feelings of comfort and anxiety is how the dancers embody each activity. They are all young black women with beautiful bodies. Their activities of collecting water, washing clothes, playing games, singing songs depict domestic work and play that match the duties and frivolities of young maidens. The dancers embody the ideal of maiden servility and perform dutifulness to household daily tasks as well as outside social obligations, such as entertaining neighboring children, attending church, being employed in the service economy. There is beauty in their emulation of this maiden behavior. But what could be moments where the dancers represent ideals of beauty, or perform erotically, is displaced by glitches and interruptions that make the scenes strange and disturbing.
At first the change in repetition is interesting, but after a while it is irritating to watch. We are made aware of the pretense of ideal maiden -- of all the hopes, expectations, and demands placed on young women. Nakedness is a threshold moment when the women have reached their limits in attempting to meet expectations. The piece explores the absurdity in the pretense behind embodying the perfect Mozambican maiden. In everyday life in Maputo, the simple activity of waiting for a bus is endlessly complicated by long waits, over-packed buses, deplorable behaviors from fellow riders, sexual advances and bribery by men. The social and structural chaos around catching buses makes any pretense of maiden behavior not just unrealistic but absurd. No wonder the dancer representing this activity turns erratic and ends the scene looking crazed. What follows is more nonsensical behavior: continuing the spiraling movements in the cramped space of aluminum tubs with milky white substance, or moving frenetically in leaves. The audience gets no reprieve from the absurdity in these last scenes.

Regardless of the publicity and debates that framed *Um Solo by Cinco* as a performance about gender and Africanness, these were not the only narratives expressed in the work. In fact, the affective force of the performance depends on narratives about labor, race, and class that are expressed through the figures of Mozambican maidens. The dancers are unable to meet the expectations of daily chores, and through the attempt to meet such expectations their movements disintegrate and they eventually implode on themselves. By the final scene they have immersed themselves in a white, milky substance. They are bathed in a symbol of
African beauty and purity, themselves symbols of African beauty and purity. They have whitened themselves, appearing more like freakish ghosts than chaste maidens. The whiteness of the viscous substance nullifies them. It contrasts, maybe even negates, the blackness of their skin, which is imbued with signification on both the dance stage and on the national stage. Whiteness seems to be an erasure of their overburdened bodies as cultural representations. This final scene of basins filled with what looks like musiro that covers the women’s naked bodies is especially challenging for the audience. Perhaps it is a scene that draws to the imagination a long history of assimilation and racial whitening. Or perhaps by bathing in musiro the dancers are playing more with the Mozambican maiden as a symbol of beauty and traditions. What is certain is that as the lights dim the audience is disquietly left with a violent scene where five Mozambican dancers have reached their limits.

2.4-- Conclusion

Um Solo Para Cinco was a significant art event because of the sensational presentation of female nakedness and because of its subversive critique about deprivation in neoliberal Mozambique. While nakedness attracted attention from audiences and state agents, it was not enough to pose a criticism about the regime. Instead, Um Solo para Cinco’s political subversion was communicated through the poetic form of the maiden characters and the energy and movement patterns that moved from scenarios of calm to frenzy, familiar to strange. This poetic lead-up to the moment of nakedness framed the dancer’s naked bodies as one more element in a
sequence of many formal elements that communicated being fed up with personal and social deprivation, and exasperated because the conditions for such deprivation were not being recognized. Therefore, the nakedness in *Um Solo para Cinco* speaks to social meanings about destitution and dispossession, rather than other contexts where nakedness can communicate meanings about close connections to nature, freedom from social conventions, or provocation of sexual desire.

While the public debates focused on themes of gender equality, freedom of speech, and representation of African culture, there were many instances where the public explored the embodied experience of nakedness, the experience of being an object stripped by others. The religious voices illuminated how nakedness in the dance intersects with the wider social experience of living through the neoliberal transition. Nakedness [pelado] and stripped of everything [desprovido] provide a perfectly suited metaphor for the humiliation of being a father and having to “watch his daughter walk naked through the street.” Therefore, *Um Solo para Cinco* had this amazing semiotic snowballing effect where the nakedness of female dancers stood in for, not just the sexualization of women, but also a more general embodied experience of objectification and exploitation felt by many Mozambicans. Even men who despised the idea of *Um Solo para Cinco*, because they viewed it as obscene, had felt resonance between the experience of female nakedness and a society exposed and left adrift.

The religious voices found that *Um Solo para Cinco* was an affront to religious and moral values. But it would be wrong to dismiss their perspectives as
merely religious fanaticism intolerant of art and freedom of expression. Issufo Amade used language that corresponded with the poetics of *Um Solo para Cinco*. Even though he strongly disagreed that public nakedness should be tolerated, he suggested that such an act “demonstrates that Mozambican society is stripped [desprovida] of all of our cultural, moral, and ethical values that always had characterized our country.” He is using *Um Solo para Cinco* to argue that Mozambique had been a country characterized by cultural, moral, and ethical values but that this situation has changed in the current era. *Um Solo para Cinco* and the religious voices indicate at least a partial agreement with the similar experiences of the transition from independence, brief period of socialism, and neoliberal reforms.

The great social value of *Um Solo para Cinco* for Mozambique is to make nakedness a symbol for people’s experiences with neoliberalism and their relationship to the political regime. Nakedness is an expression of a public feeling linked to the austerity measures and structural adjustments programs that have increased insecurities for most. In the next chapter, I will illuminate this point by examining interpretations of *Um Solo para Cinco* by a focus group of dancers and teachers of dance. In the focus group one individual also interpreted the moment when five women dancers appeared naked on stage as communicating an exhaustion with limitations. The classroom was captivated by his articulation of the relationship between his own experience of trying to make it in Maputo and the expressive performing bodies of the maidens in *Um Solo para Cinco*. Through their discussions of *Um Solo para Cinco* and their work as dancers in the cultural economy, they return
to this image of nakedness as a sensory experience of dispossession and humiliation. Nakedness becomes a public feeling that best describes the experience of austerity and structural adjustments. I follow how a moment of nakedness in the dance event is interpreted by this comment, “If this does not work, then there is no other way of making ourselves understood,” which in turn becomes enmeshed in the emotional struggles of labor and work for the choreographer, dancers, and audiences. The dancers’ nakedness on stage resembled Elio’s own experiences of being “stripped” of all his possessions and “plucked” like a chicken before being cooked and consumed.
Chapter 5

Feeling Plucked: Labor in the Cultural Economy

Introduction

Conservatives and liberals placed different values on *Um Solo para Cinco*, but they both attend to the lived experience within Mozambican history and the significance that nakedness plays in the social imaginary of this history. A dancer, Élio, who is the subject of this chapter, and the pious Muslim discussed in Chapter 2 both evoke feelings of deprivation that can be indexed as nakedness. In this chapter, through the social imaginary of nakedness [pelado] and stripped of everything [desprovido], I look closely at Élio’s social experiences of servility and humiliation to illuminate how nakedness in the dance intersects with wider social experiences of being black and lower class in Mozambique.

*Um Solo para Cinco* expresses the experiences of precarity for Maputenses, and it is linked to the neoliberal reforms of the past decades. Precarity in Maputo is the struggle to stay alive and keep going. While all Maputenses might experience some form of precariousness, capital often accumulates in pools of historically privileged groups, which shields the professional class and urbanites from many insecurities. The Mozambican sociologist Carlos Serra and his colleagues (2001 and 2003) identify how Mozambique is split between two groups: those whose basic survival is secured (*mundo não problemático*) and those who have to fight each day just to meet the basics without any guarantee for tomorrow (*mundo problemático*).
For the majority of Mozambicans the basics of shelter, food, water, clothing, transportation, and employment are problematic. Neoliberal reforms have disproportionately allocated precarity to *suburbanos*, migrants, poor black rural women, and dancers to name a few. Thus, precarity is neither universal nor arbitrary but, instead, is evident in the destruction of specific localities (nations, states, regions, neighborhoods).

This chapter follows the life and labor of one dancer, Élio, as he struggled to survive in the cultural economy of Maputo. This focus on Élio illuminates how precarity has been allocated to Maputo dancers. For Élio, *Um Solo para Cinco* defined his own exhaustive experience of trying to move to Maputo to work in the arts and to build a career as a dancer and teacher. The energy and movement patterns and the moment of nakedness in *Um Solo para Cinco* resonated with his experience of precarity. In the past decade he was constantly under threat of homelessness as well as being dispossessed of clothing, documents, and basic goods.

Working as a dancer has its own particular social and psychological impact of dispossession. Élio weighs the pros and cons between working for a state-sponsored event as a dancer for the opening ceremonies of the All African Games, or participating in the performance of the world renowned choreographer Maria La Ribot, who will present her choreography *PARAdistinguidas* in Maputo. Both situations entail humiliation. Working for the state means putting up with abusive directors and being insulted constantly, but the pay is fairly good, and for many it is worth the hardships. Participating in international projects of performance and
workshops offers opportunities to make connections and gain experience in the prestigious circles of contemporary dance, but it provides little monetary benefit, and an artist risks being dismissed as non-artistic and exploited for the benefit of the foreign performers. Élio choses to work with Maria la Ribot while his colleagues chose to work for the All African Games. Élio’s experience in participating in La Ribot’s performance illuminates the hierarchy of the international dance world and the differences between the African and European scene.

Precarity can be seen in the destruction of specific localities such as Maputo’s dance institutions, which has left Maputo dancers without the training and educational support to meet international dancers as equals. Maria La Ribot’s performance in Maputo demonstrates how international market forces heighten the distrust and tensions Mozambicans feel towards foreign choreographers and donor art projects. Maria La Ribot’s *PARAdistinguidas* displayed five naked female white dancers while Augusto Cuvilas’s *Um Solo para Cinco* displayed five naked female black dancers. Though there was a range of responses to both, many in the capital city’s social scene interpreted the nakedness in *PARAdistinguidas* as an expression of white privilege and the structural inequalities that inscribe Europeans as innovators and progenitors of the avant-garde. These same urbanites interpreted *Um Solo para Cinco* as an emotionally potent representation of labor and a critique of the decades of imposed austerity.

Élio
Élio is a 28-year-old dancer from the city of Beira in the central province of Sofala who moved to Maputo around 2006 to pursue a career in dance. After nearly two years in the capital, he was forced to return to Beira out of hunger and desperation. I met Élio in 2010 when he was a student in my classes Documentation of Dance and History of Mozambican Concert Dance for the professional and curriculum development dance program called Programa de Ápoio à Dança (PAD). He had returned to Maputo at least two years earlier, had managed to find jobs, and was building a portfolio.

In their final presentations and papers, the students analyzed the performances and posed a researchable question or puzzle that they then could work through when interviewing people. The students were able to do this with varied success since there was a wide disparity of educational levels among them. Some had finished high school, some were studying in Mozambican universities or preparing to study abroad, and one student had completed a Bachelor’s degree in Brazil. The majority had not finished high school, and many had resigned themselves to believing that such an accomplishment was outside of their abilities and social status. Élio said that he finished high school, but when we started to work on his university applications he admitted that he had lost his diploma and did not know how to ask for a copy back in Beira. Élio had given up on applying to university, deciding it was out of his reach.

37 Not his real name.
Élio was insecure in Maputo. For one class exercise, preparing a personal statement for college applications, Élio wrote about his decision to leave Beira for Maputo:

I took the most important decision of my life in less than a minute. I sold my personal objects; I had to lie to my family, and on the next day I travelled to Maputo. Before leaving the house I opened the door, looked inside; I could not see any reason to change my mind and nothing that gave me anxiety for a minute. I bought the bus ticket for 850 meticais (28 U.S. dollars), which left me 60 meticais (2 dollars) for food on the trip. I arrived at 8:00 in the evening. The bus left me at Museu in the center of the city. It was cold and tons of people were in the street. Before I thought of where to go, I took in that moment of liberty, I took in the decisions of my own life. I felt reborn. I passed the night in the club called Luso in the company of female friends who worked as strippers so I didn’t have to pay to get in.\textsuperscript{38}

Élio’s retelling of his arrival in Maputo was not all that different from the stories of the other students who had migrated from the North to seek better opportunities in Maputo. He had to lie to his family not because they would not have allowed him to go to Maputo but because they would not have approved his going to become a dancer. He saw no future back home in Beira, left impulsively, basically had no money to eat, and relied on people whom he knew from his home city of Beira for housing and a way to get by. He talked about how his first months in Maputo

\textsuperscript{38} Personal communication with author through an exercise in the class Dance Practicalities. July, 2011.
revolved around a strip club, which caused him anxiety because it only confirmed his family’s understanding of dance’s low position. The next two years Élio obsessively went to any dance class, seminar, and show he could smuggle his way into. But he was never able to gain enough stability, a place to stay or a job for a little income, and was forced to return to Beira or face living in the streets. As Élio explained in his personal statement for the class:

In these times I lived moments of uncertainty; although I knew what I had to do, I had no way of how to do it…. I went through bad times, to the point that I went two days without food while rehearsing for a performance. At some point in the middle of the rehearsal I fell. The group panicked, I was strangled by their looks of pity. I had social difficulties. I felt like I was never understood by people nearby me, and always thought that there was never much effort on their part to understand me, just judge me with insinuations that I was crazy and lost for having accepted the difficulties and sacrificed to be in Maputo.39

He spent months with no work, no place to live, and not enough food, until “I listened to my body instead of my heart and quit.” He returned to Beira where he was able to live with his family again. After a year he received an invitation from Projecto Cuvilas to participate in seminars in the northern city of Nampula. He studied under Cuvilas and eventually got a contract to work for the company in Maputo. After

39 Personal communication, July 2011.
Cuvilas’s death, the manager of the company, Juliana, who was also Cuvilas’s partner, kept the company going for another two years. Élio worked on a piece for the company called “Home--Under Construction.” During the production Juliana became gravely ill. She abruptly left the country in 2009, suffering from what people describe as a psychological breakdown. The dancers were left to finish the production. Juliana left Élio to live and take care of Cuvilas’ house, along with Cuvilas’ brother and immediate family who had custody of the house. Élio cared for the house for the next two years. For this time Élio had a place to stay, which allowed him to focus all his time on dance. He was teaching dance exercise classes three times a week, working on dances for well-known Mozambican choreographers, and studying at PAD. For PAD, Elio would take three dance practice classes daily in ballet, modern, and Mozambican techniques, and one hour of theoretical dance class such as Documentation of Dance. For this class he was preparing a research project and presentation about *Um Solo para Cinco*.

Two months before his presentation to the class about *Um Solo para Cinco* Élio arrived home in the evening to find locks and a notice of seizure tacked on the door by the municipal police. Earlier that day I was at the dance studio for the PAD program attending to an ongoing struggle with the administration of the building about our contract to use the space. Another dance student came to the studio looking for Élio. This other dance student was not taking classes at the time because he was

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40 Not real name.
working for an upcoming performance choreographed by Narguiss\textsuperscript{41}, Cuvilas’s estranged wife. I said I didn’t know where Élio was but that he would arrive for sure. The student told me that Narguiss had returned to town, she studied and worked abroad and was in Mozambique infrequently, and that he needed to talk to Élio immediately about something important. I told the student that I would inform Élio. I went on with a hectic day and completely forgot to tell Élio about the message when he arrived. When I remembered, I told other students to tell Élio to get into contact with me about something urgent. I neglected to draw the connections between Élio living in Cuvilas’ house and Narguiss being back in town. Narguiss had slowly been working through the courts to obtain ownership of Cuvilas’ intellectual and physical property. She had won court approval, and that day the police would seize the property from Élio, who was the caretaker of the home for Juliana and Cuvilas’ brother. The message had not reached Élio, and he arrived home to find all his possessions locked away inside the house. This included all his clothes, the money he had saved, and his personal identification, the equivalent of a driver’s license, passport, certificates of education—in sum, his whole identity was seized and stripped away. When he pleaded with Narguiss to recover his possessions, she denied that she had anything to do with it and sent Élio to the police who had his possessions. When he went to the police they asked for proof of his identity. When he said he didn’t have any documents because they were seized in the house, they

\textsuperscript{41} Not real name.
threatened to arrest him and charge him as a criminal for lacking proper identification.

Élio was in dire straits the next day. He was understandably angry that I had not relayed the message so that he could have at least removed his things from the house. I too felt responsible for not sensing the obvious connection and telling him to contact the other student about details. I gave him some money to get by and figured out a way to get some money from the program so that he could continue. This was just the latest in a long list of setbacks that Élio had experienced in the six years of trying to live in Maputo. He became depressed. For a good month he talked little, stared into space, and had trouble attending classes. Élio used the very same words that Amade Issufo used to criticize *Um Solo para Cinco*. Élio had read the newspaper articles when he did his own research into *Um Solo para Cinco*. Élio told us that he had been left “naked” [*pelado*] and was “stripped of everything” [*desprovido*]. The feeling of deprivation is evident when he employed these terms, *pelado* and *desprovido*, to describe his life. Élio was too vulnerable. He lacked resources to defend himself from the actions taken by Narguiss, the threats from the police, and from homelessness.

Élio relied on fellow PAD students and friends for support. Many chastised him for not saving money and not having a backup plan, knowing full well that at any moment he could be evicted from the house. Of course, it was easier for those who had family in Maputo to criticize. Élio had to rely solely on the community of artists and foreigners who could offer him occasional support. Eventually a prosperous
Portuguese artist and patron, whom he had worked for in theater productions, offered him a room in the back garden of her house in town.

Two months after these events, Elio gave his presentation on *Um Solo para Cinco*. As he talked to us that day, he was still hurting and expressed the rhythm and energy of his life in Maputo, not just the moment of being shut out of Cuvila’s house but everything since he arrived in 2006. He was always on the verge of losing it: losing a place to exist in the city; being forced to go back to Beira for fear of hunger and homelessness; losing people close to him because of how they “judged” him with “insinuations” and didn't understand the “sacrifices” he had to make; losing himself to depression. The dancers' nakedness on stage translates directly to Élio’s feeling of being stripped of everything, like the condition of street children, something less than human, on par with a chicken being plucked before eaten.

**Élio’s Interpretation of Nakedness in *Um Solo para Cinco***

Although he did not discuss his own situation, Élio’s description of the poetics of *Um Solo para Cinco* helped those of us in the class to relive the performance and ignited meanings of co-occurrence of precarity between Cuvilas, Élio, and the dancers on stage.

Élio hesitantly approached the front of the class. After excusing himself for being late and explaining how he had lost his flash memory stick that had his paper, he shrugged off his bad luck and started his presentation:
I am going to talk about Augusto Cuvilas’s *Um Solo para Cinco*. To start with the piece is abstract. There are no historical facts even though it does have a theme. The choreographer simply proposes situations based on cultural elements, but it is not a story. For those who see the piece, it does give them the possibility to make an analysis.\footnote{Transcription from audio recording of presentation. Recorded November 23, 2011 by author. Translation of presentation from Portuguese to English by author.}

Élio was the last of the students to give a final presentation on historical performances in Mozambican concert dance. In class discussions Élio offered the most impassioned arguments and insights. He was one of the students I depended on to add spark to a conversation with his questions and analyses that were often half-baked but wonderful nonetheless for getting the rest of us to think. Élio brought an emotional intensity to his presentation because of his own personal story and connection with Cuvilas.

So I am going to talk about the story, well actually since it does not have a story I will talk about the moments that exist in the piece. Starting out with the lighting, it gives us a reference to something. There are two intense focuses of light [lamps hung over the stage and visible to the audience] that are separate but that you understand are somehow connected. One light is on one side and the other on the other, always giving the impression that they are somehow connected.

Élio continued to give a beautiful description of the piece that helped me with my own description of *Um Solo Para Cinco* discussed in Chapter 4. He talked about the
foliage and how it made a crisp, rustling sound when the dancers moved through it.

He discussed the lush violet and blue lighting, the dancers’ cotton blouses and
dresses, the bench, and the buckets. Élio continued:

Another prop that was important was the buckets. The buckets, the sounds the
women made, and the movements that the dancers used were…how would
you say…typical and traditional. The fact of having the pails balanced on the
top of their head. And the sounds that were made with the pails, they created a
call and response in a kind of argument of sounds, as if they wanted to say
something, even with those sounds, it was not just a banging of sound. Even if
it wasn’t ordered or regular in terms of rhythm, there was a communication
among all of them. It was a collective effort, and you felt it had a life, it had
an energy.

Élio was the first in the class to identify the development of energy patterns from
comfort to disquiet to delirium, and how the whole piece was comprised of different
moments that repeated and revised this development. All the design elements in
lighting, props, sound, and clothing collaborated with each other to make a scene that
would at first bring solace and then disrupt that comforting scene. Together these
elements conveyed meaning. This consolatory feeling was strongest in the first twelve
minutes when the dance repeated pleasurable enactments of familiar songs, sounds,
scenes, bodily gestures of work and play, and the maiden-character type. Élio
described how the sounds were particularly important:
There were voice sounds and then there were songs, typical songs that would remind you of past times from other eras. When people would hear the songs they would say, “ah I know that one from this time” and “oh I know that other one from that era.” And then there were the vocal sounds and whispers. The whispers would remind you of discussions that you know from a community of people who… nenenenene…and everybody talks at the same time and with an energy that nobody is listening to the other. There would be rumors where people would ask, “why did they do this?” The whispering and songs gave the piece an energy that was really strong.

Although Élio was having difficulty in the presentation organizing his thoughts and speaking clearly, he had us captivated. We were reliving the performance, we were deep in the sensory imagery when he brought us to the crucial question:

I will present a question, and on the basis of this question I will set up all my points that are involved in the piece (que está em volta de peça). So the question is: the effect of taking off the clothes, what effect did taking off the clothes create? We are presented with an open question. Because there is nothing sequential in terms of a story but there are parts that you can identify, here is one moment, here is another moment and here is another. Cuvilas offers moments. And then there is a culmination of all these moments, like a climax. We have reached a limit to all these moments, and a limit to the question that he has presented. It is not a development but a limit we have
reached. We took so long to arrive here. Okay, we have arrived at this point. That is the sensation it gives when they appear naked and in the beginning it was the impact of arriving at the final point of what they intended with respect to each one’s point of view (era o impact final o que se pretendia como quem diz). As if to say in this moment of nudity, ‘if this does not work then there is no other way of making ourselves understood’ (de fazer se entender).

We all began to move in our chairs in excitement, biting our tongues because Élio had not finished his presentation but we all wanted to jump in. Élio’s own response to what he felt at the moment of nakedness in the piece resonated with the class. Élio was able to encapsulate in a single thought the emotional and intellectual impact of the work. The moment of nakedness was about reaching a threshold of deprivation and the limits of communicating one’s precarity and being understood.

Élio’s analysis of *Um Solo para Cinco* as reaching a threshold of deprivation has several layers of concurrence with what he knew about Augusto Cuvilas as well as Élio’s own life experiences. Because we had the opportunity to know Élio well, we understood that his personal experience had informed his analysis of *Um Solo para Cinco*. The emotional power of his presentation was directly related to the feelings and significance of the experiences that they index in his own life. We were reminded of Élio’s decade-long struggle to survive in Maputo as he describes the moment in *Um Solo para Cinco* when the dancers reach a state of desperation and appear naked on stage. It is a struggle that brought him opportunities but also placed him in constant situations where he moves in and out of homelessness and dispossession; he
is mistreated as a social pariah and misrecognized as a morally and mentally deficient in his character. Eventually, he accepts his own precarious situation, just as the dancers do by appearing naked. He embodies the dancer’s nakedness on stage as his own, just as his verbal expression indicates: “If this does not work, then there is no other way of making ourselves understood.”

All fused together are Élio’s hurt, Cuvilas’ hurt, the dancer’s hurt, the fictitious hurt of the figure of a Mozambican maiden unable to complete a task, the contextualized hurt of each audience member. Although the specifics of each person’s deprivation are different, the shared experience of the performance, and Élio’s presentation of the performance, created a unity among us, an integration of our collective experiences. The dancer’s nakedness on stage, Amade Issufo’s nakedness from the change in Mozambican values, Cuvilas’s nakedness at death, Élio’s nakedness from constant precarity, all our own nakednesses were experienced together at the level of energy and patterns.

Dance is distinctive from other fields of communication and sociality, and one of its strengths is how the body and movement excite the realm of possibility and imagination to apprehend aspects of our lives that exist at a deep level of habit and embodied practice (Turino 2008). The patterns and forms in Um Solo para Cinco, such as the scene where a dancer labors to accomplish the simple chore of collecting water but finds herself caught in a maddening repetitive sequence of sitting down, placing a pail on the ground, relocating the pale, and rearranging herself, resembles Élio’s own experience of trying to make it in Maputo and laboring to produce art.
This meaning of frustration associated with daily existence is communicated through how the dancers perform patterns of rhythm, energy, and force that are analogous to Élio’s experience of trying to secure a home, hold on to his possessions, and work as a dancer. The patterns resemble those of people who work in the service economy, such as young peri-urban and rural black women who provide domestic service for households and artists who market their services for the state and donor agencies. Thus, the meaning of *Um Solo para Cinco*, or the most significant meaning of *Um Solo para Cinco* for this group of dancers and teachers, is situated at the level of how the labor on stage resembles their own race and class position off stage in the cultural economy.

**Dancing for the State--The All-African Games**

Despite the social and status differences among the PAD students and teachers witnessing Élio’s presentation, everyone shared a common experience—the labor of dancing and creating art in Maputo. Élio’s final analysis, “if this does not work then there is no other way of making ourselves understood,” functioned as a sign about nakedness as a description of the experiences of being fed up with the Maputo cultural economy.

Every student and professor in PAD was working for different projects, or *biscatos* [gigs] as they like to call them, while at the same time studying or giving classes for PAD. They all shared their stories of the troubles they encountered in working as a dancer. Many were working for several months on the mass
choreographies that were performed at the opening and closing ceremonies of the All-African Games [Jogos Africanos] held in Maputo in September and October 2011.

This is the biggest sporting event in Africa, with the exception of the Africa’s Cup, a biennial competition among a selection of national soccer teams.

The opening ceremonies and dance portion were under the direction of Frelimo stalwarts in the area of culture and dance; these ceremonies were financed by the organizing committee of the games, which received its budget directly from the Ministry of Finances. The games were one of the government’s most important political priorities of 2011. The dancers were paid the equivalent of roughly 250 USD per month for rehearsals five days a week, which was really good money for the dancers. The average monthly income for a family in Maputo is 120 U.S. dollars per month. Their work for the opening ceremonies guaranteed the equivalent of twice the average monthly family income. Group leaders who were in charge of organizing one portion of the mass choreography were earning upwards of $500 per month with the promise of a bonus at the end.

Almost all of the teachers at PAD were employed for the All-African Games during this time, which was a good gig for the students and professors who were guaranteed income for three months. Nevertheless, Élio decided not to sign up for this work. He rehearsed the first month and then skipped out. Early on he complained about the abusive behavior of the directors and the long hours that went far beyond what was originally communicated. He argued that this would be just the beginning.
of the humiliation and he wanted out before it got closer to the date of the opening ceremonies.

In the months before the games, the main newspapers celebrated the coming of the games and highlighted the preparation. A few newspapers, however, published articles citing concerns over disorganization, infrastructure not yet constructed, and the possible boondoggle of corruption. Élio warned that as they got closer to the opening ceremony the real abuses would start to take place and the massive corruption would be revealed. Élio claimed that while the equivalent of 250 dollars sounded good at first, the hours the directors would demand and the conditions under which they would work would make that wage seem ridiculous. The other students confirmed that because of the traffic congestion they spent two hours to get to the stadium for rehearsals and then another two hours to get home. In addition, frequently they would spend eight hours at the stadium, exposed to the cold in the evenings (winters in Maputo can drop to 40 to 50 degrees Fahrenheit at night), and most of the time they stood around doing nothing because of the confusion in organization.

One student explained that every day a director would humiliate the dancers and group leaders. One day a director spoke over the loudspeaker about how the dancers smelled like animals. She demanded that they purchase deodorant, or at least use lemons to squeeze the juice and place it under their armpits. The directors compared the dancers to drunkards, prostitutes, and street-children. Several students confirmed that, sadly, such accusations were warranted by some dancers who were especially unruly and constantly drunk. But, they argued, the poor working conditions
decreased their incentive to take the directors seriously. In addition, they maintained that the directors in part created the rowdy behavior of the dancers since they were treated with such disrespect. Daily, the students and teachers complained of the demeaning treatment that was entailed in working on the mass choreographies for the All-African games. But they needed the money, and the pay was relatively good.

Working for International Choreographers of Contemporary Dance--Maria La Ribot

The cultural economy of dance is split between traditional and contemporary genres. All of the PAD participants were lucid about the possible pitfalls in working for the All-African Games opening ceremony. They had done enough gigs with state and party elites to know what to expect. The same is not true with participating in projects funded by international donors. Dancers seek out these projects because they offer an avenue to break out of traditional dance and into the contemporary genre that brings more prestige. But very few attain the new class standing that comes with contemporary dance. Many dancers are ambivalent about donor art projects and exchange programs because they believe these programs offer false hopes that can never be fulfilled. The story of Élio’s participation in Maria La Ribot’s choreography exemplifies the bind that Mozambican dancers frequently find themselves in when working with international choreographers. They are trapped in a system of international exploitation and race and class discrimination.
At first Élio felt vindicated when his colleagues complained. While he seemed to have taken the moral high ground by turning down the work, in fact, he had found a different gig that he thought was more advantageous. After he laughed at their misfortune, the others found out about his alternative gig, which was to work for two weeks on a performance in September (at the same time as the All-African Games performances) with the internationally renowned choreographer Maria La Ribot. Swiss and French agencies were funding La Ribot’s tour to Johannesburg and Maputo.

La Ribot is a choreographer of contemporary dance who was born in Madrid, Spain, trained in her formative years (1975-1984) in classical ballet, modern, and contemporary in Madrid, France, Germany, and New York. In the late 1980s and 90s she established herself in Madrid as a contemporary choreographer. She made a splash with her humorous striptease called Socorro Gloria! (1991) and earned tremendous recognition with her solo series 13 Distinguished Pieces. She then worked all over the world with prestigious Museums (such as the Reina Sofia in Madrid and the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris), with companies (such as the National Centre for Choreography in Montpelier), and with renowned artists (such as Mathilde Monnier and Gilles Jobin, who is also her partner). In the 2000s she moved to Geneva and now teaches at the Haute Ecole d’Art et de Design as her home base.

In terms of prestige and opportunity to work with a world-renowned choreographer, Élio had made the right choice to stay away from the All-African Games. But after many weeks of Élio explaining his gig with la Ribot, it became clear
to both the group and much to his dismay to Élio himself that he was enduring the worst humiliation of all. Over the period of two months, PAD students and teachers had debated the merits and detriments of the All-African Games with Élio chuckling at their stories of abuse and disorganization in working for party-state projects. But after PAD students and teachers had seen Élio’s participation in Maria La Ribot’s performances at the Mozambican French Cultural Center, they were keen on analyzing the perils of working with international choreographers and comparing the different pitfalls between party-state and foreign art projects.

La Ribot brought four dancers and lighting, sound, and video technicians to produce the newest in her Distinguished series that was called PARAdistinguidas. La Ribot had built a name for herself doing avant-garde work. She was well known for working on the intersections among visual arts, theater, and dance. She was also making a name for herself in challenging masculine conception of artistic authorship by making pieces that investigated the gender politics of the patriarchal art world. She created works where she appeared naked and challenged the audience with the sexual desire. In PARAdistinguidas, the five European dancers performed naked, which in Maputo created many comparisons to Um Solo para Cinco. PARAdistinguidas incorporated twenty volunteer “extras” on stage to complement the five dancers (including La Ribot) plus the theatrical presentation of the audio, lighting, and prop work. Élio was one of the twenty volunteer “extras.” La Ribot and her group arrived in Maputo a week before the performance to select and work with the extras. Élio had heard the call to work for La Ribot through the Mozambican French Cultural Center,
which was also the theater for rehearsals and the performance. Usually when foreign artists come to do workshops and perform in Maputo, the selection process and criteria are murky. But La Ribot had a publicized announcement calling for participants in her dance performance and warning that the participants would have to be comfortable with nakedness. This turned away many dancers who were leery of being involved in something that might repeat the *Um Solo para Cinco* polemic.

La Ribot and her group led workshops for a week, which according to Élio were basically instructions and rehearsal for the final performance. When the class asked Élio about what movements La Ribot taught in her workshop, Élio explained that they were being prepared as *figurinos*, extras, for the performance. They inquired what it meant to be “extras.” He was vague. In an attempt to explain one scene he described European dancers on stage performing movements while the twenty Mozambican extras walked through the audience with wooden folding chairs. They entered on the stage, placed the chairs around the dancers who then took the chairs and arranged them around La Ribot’s body in a complicated, balanced chair sculpture. The students understood that their roles as extras seemed like stage crew. Élio explained that La Ribot had her technicians who set and struck all the major theatrical staging arrangements. Instead, as “extras” they actually appeared on stage, but he had a difficult time articulating what they exactly did on stage.

The PAD students and teachers understood only after they saw the performance for themselves. In class we started a lively discussion about La Ribot’s *PARAdistinguidas* in Maputo and her use of “extras.” The class decided that “extras”
was the wrong word. Perhaps if they were participating in a film they could be considered extras. In film, they would provide a landscape of anonymous people, a backdrop, a setting from which the cast performs. For theater, the class decided that the more correct term was to call them props, or human props. None of the twenty human props danced; instead, they moved around to form the setting of the piece.

*PARAdistinguidas* is a hybrid dance and theater performance in the sense that at certain times the dancers are moving as dancers and at other times they are actors with spoken lines and improvisations. But unlike most theatrical productions, the dancers/actors move in and out of the performance and audience space. They talk to the audience, encourage the audience to interact with them, and then, based on the audience’s interactions, they will talk among themselves. Then they return to dance movements. The “extras” rarely interact with the five European women when they are dancing. Instead, they hold boxes from the market (such as a big box of Brillo pads), move chairs, or just stand around. Throughout the hour-long performance the five white European women are the protagonists. The twenty black Mozambican “extras” (both men and women) are part of the stage setting, they move props, and they are props for the dancers.

The class was disgusted with La Ribot’s *PARAdistinguidas* because they saw it as blatantly racist. They understood that if the piece was performed in Europe and most of the “extras” were white, it would have had a different effect. But performed in Maputo, the piece was racist in their eyes because of the structure of five white protagonist dancers and twenty black human props. The more they discussed this
formal structure and the effect it had in different scenes, the angrier they got.
Together the class analyzed *PARAdistinguidas*, comparing it to other jobs in the cultural economy.

At first Élio defended the work. He argued that La Ribot and her dancers communicated many social justice issues in *PARAdistinguidas*. For example, one of the most important themes in the piece was to depict acts of torture and the dehumanization of war. The piece then linked the acts of torture to the current war in Iraq and detention centers in Guantanamo Bay. In addition, Élio spoke fondly of La Ribot, her dancers, and crew as really wonderful, conscientious, open people, who were genuinely concerned about them (the “extras”) and their lives in Maputo. The PAD students and teachers understood Élio and agreed with him. They too shared experiences of working with foreigners who were cool, progressive people. But the art projects are nearly always structured to privilege the foreigners. They argued that frequently their subjugation is not direct, in contrast to the experiences of the dancers who worked at the All-African Games who were called “animals” and told they stank. The directors would insult them directly and be upfront about their superior positions as bosses and the subordinate positions of the dancers. The students and teachers argued that Élio’s subordination in working on the process of *PARAdistinguidas* was more subtle; his subjugation happened indirectly at the level of habit and institutionalized racism. Nonetheless, they considered the racism exhibited in the final product to be blatant.
La Ribot reproduced the colonial hierarchies of white masters and black servants in the structure of the performance. In every scene the white dancers displayed their superiority as artists and intellectuals, which was reinforced by the muted and rudimentary presence of the black human props. I asked the PAD students and teachers why they thought it did not occur to La Ribot and her group that they were displaying the legacies of colonial hierarchies on stage. They argued that this is how institutionalized racism works in the arts. They argued that European and other foreign artists consistently erase or distort the infrastructural and historical differences between themselves and Mozambican dancers. For La Ribot and others, they explained, *PARAdistinguidas* does not represent structural privilege on stage, they merely perform their rightful place as the most innovative and advanced artists, and Mozambican artists take their place as artists emerging.

Mozambican’s participation in donor projects illuminate how precarity has impacted international art circuits differently. Their participation brings the gutting of their own institutions into sharp relief with the continuation of support for foreign institutions. Foreign artists who come to Mozambique through development agencies have had years of educational and infrastructural support to propel their careers. All this support is subsidized by government and non-governmental institutions in their home countries, but also often times the historical wealth of their families pays for the kind of specialized training necessary for youth to make it into the highly competitive world of dance. The classical and modern dance worlds of Europe and the United States are notoriously classist in that families with means are able to purchase the
training and thus entry of their children into prestigious careers. As a young adult, La Ribot trained in prestigious private and public institutions in Madrid but France, Germany, and New York. The institutional support and the historically privileged backgrounds of many artists does not diminish the hardships and struggles that dancers endure to make it. But dance in the West has strong institutions to prepare and support the process.

In contrast, the infrastructural support for Mozambican dancers consisted of two weak institutions, the National Song and Dance Company (CNCD) and the National Dance School (END), whose ability to train and educate has been greatly diminished since the structural adjustment measures in the late 1980s, the effects of which continue. Mozambicans, like Élio, piece together dance training through their participation in traditional groups, the brief seminars and workshops that swing through Maputo and far less frequently through provincial capitals, as well as nightlife parties and celebrations. This training means they are highly skilled dancers but they lack the technical specifics and vocabulary to be recognized as professional dancers. The PAD students and teachers argued that while international choreographers aren’t necessarily responsible for the historical and infrastructural disparities between them and their Mozambican contemporaries, they are responsible for the actions they take in response to such disparities.
The PAD class discussed several scenes in *PARAdistinguidas* that offended them. One scene called “La Revolución” reenacts a scene of torture, historically referencing Japanese treatment of prisoners during WWII in Asia, to investigate inhumanity and evil in war. The five dancers are dressed in white dress shirts and khaki pants, the same clothes they used since the opening of the performance. The five dancers are phenotypically white, they have blond or red hair and blue eyes. They all have milky, pink skin tone. Three of them, including La Ribot, are freckled. They are slender, lean, with long legs and arms that are typical of classically trained ballerinas. Mozambicans viewed the Ribot dancers as iconic of Aryan super women. The PAD students called the *PARAdistinguidas* dancers “*branquinhas,*” which is a diminutive form that means something like little white girls. The term “*branquinhas*” connotes that the dancers were not just white but *über*-white.

In a scene called “La Revolución,” the dancers performed partnering work that required exquisite skill in balance and weight equilibrium. La Ribot plays the lead role as a sadomasochistic interrogator of prisoners of war. She wraps a long cord around the bodies of her fellow dancers and creates tension in the cord between herself and her victims. The dancers generate poses that emphasize a long, slow, agonizing tension between perpetrator and victim. At times, La Ribot handles the genitals of the victims, and places them in sexually subordinated and violated positions. Victims and perpetrator frequently switch roles so that there is no clear distinction between who is dehumanizing who.
The positions require considerable skill in partnering to produce—the kind of skill that comes from long-term trust between dancers that cannot be produced in short-term workshops. So at first, the black human props do not participate in the partnering. But between five and ten extras enter the stage and take positions around the dancers as they are performing the tortured positions. Then the human props are integrated into the violence and dehumanizing positions, always in the role as victims. At one point, Élio finds himself on his knees. He is forced to bend over forward, head on the ground, buttocks up in the air, as if to be sodomized by the white dancer who stands over him. He is at the mercy of the dominating interrogator. Black unskilled prop is raped by white skilled protagonist. Arguably Élio was not a prop in the rape scene. He had made his way up the ladder of the production to become an actual actor. Still, Élio’s colleagues cast doubt on whether this was a role that he should have been willing to play.

Élio’s colleagues described his participation in this scene with excruciating detail. While they were talking, Élio sat shaking his head, covering his eyes in shame, repeating in agreement with them. Then there was an exchange between Élio and three colleagues that nearly broke him.

Élio: “Yeah, it was really…as you say…a scene of violation…it was humiliating.”

Colleague 1: “They raped you Élio. I was humiliated just watching the scene. It made me sick.”
Colleague 2: “You were raped, theatrically speaking, but really you got fucked over man. How much did they pay you for this?”

Élio: “Yeah,” shaking his head and looking down, “enough for food and transportation for the days we worked.”

Colleague 3: “That isn’t work. That is a sham [batota].”

Colleague 4: “That is our work. It is what we are accustomed to as work, a few crumbs and a heap full of humiliation.”

Élio: “That’s true.”

Colleague 1: “Those white girls [branquinhas] danced nude but they left you naked [pelado]. They stripped [desproveram] all of us of our dignity with that performance.”

To have his colleagues articulate through verbal descriptions what he felt, but was hiding or not yet able to articulate, was really too much. The PAD class realized that their description was itself humiliating and tried to make amends. They made efforts of solidarity with him so that he knew he was not the only one who suffered such humiliation. All of their work as dancers, whether with the state or foreigners, presents opportunities but always humiliation and subjugation of some form. Élio’s colleagues made sure that he was humbled—that he was reminded of how he originally took the moral high ground by refusing to work for the All-African Games and announced he would instead be working with a world-renowned choreographer of contemporary dance, as if such choreographers were any different. But they also made sure he was not alone in his humiliation. Even the colleague who was most
upset, had the harshest criticism, gave a final statement that let Élio know that they were all offended by the performance. His rape was their rape. La Ribot unreflectively displayed the fact that Mozambican dancers do not have the technical ability to be anything else but props in her piece. She shamefully displayed that they lack the training, education, and institutions to share the same stage as anything else but props.

**The Performance of White Matronics in Maputo**

One of the classmates used the same words as Issufo Amade to describe Élio’s rape scene in *PARAdistinguidas* and to describe how the performance displayed the institutionalized racism of the international dance world. The fact that both *Um Solo para Cinco* and *PARAdistinguidas* included female nakedness drew further comparisons in the PAD class. The PAD teachers and students saw La Ribot’s nakedness as a piece about white privilege. The act of nakedness was just one more element among many that communicated that white dancers are the most innovative and the proprietors of contemporary arts.

The moment of nakedness in *PARAdistinguidas* started with the five women at the very back on a dark stage. The women have their backs to the audience. The light transitions slowly as the women walk backwards towards the audience. Gradually the women’s naked bodies are revealed. The next eight minutes involve the dancers performing classical and modern movements and playing overtly with the fact that they are naked and that they perform iconic dance movements with precision.
and skill. For example, at one moment they place themselves with their backs towards
the audience. They cross their legs and bend over slowly. Their legs are long and
slender, and they have petite, muscular buttocks. The audience can view, if sitting
close enough to the stage, the dancer’s anuses and vaginas as they are bent over. Or,
if sitting farther back, their bending over ignites the imagination of displaying
themselves pornographically. The dancers play with this position in ways that draw
attention to how ordinary, provocative, and virtuosic their movements are.

The two dances, PARAdistinguídas and Um Solo para Cinco make an
interesting study of contrasts. The five female dancers of PARAdistinguídas who
appeared naked on stage were classically trained and über-white, compared to the
more curvaceous bodies of the Um Solo para Cinco performers who also appeared
naked on stage. The lighting for La Ribot’s production was clear and bright compared
to the luscious tones and darkness of Um Solo para Cinco. The stage for
PARAdistinguídas was bare compared to the leaves, buckets, tubs, and lamps of Um
Solo para Cinco. Both works had moments of anguish and severity, but
PARAdistinguídas lightened the heavy moments with playfulness and humor, while
Um Solo para Cinco countered them with scenes of familiarity and comfort.
PARAdistinguídas was self-consciously staged as dance with classical and modern
dance movements on display compared to the movements of everyday chores and
rural life interrupted by the sharp and erratic iterations in Um Solo para Cinco.

PARAdistinguídas and Um Solo para Cinco differently approached
sexualization of women in dance. La Ribot went back and forth between normalizing
the naked body—nakedness as a matter of fact without any intentional erotic overtones—and playing with the fact that female nakedness is rife with sexual connotations. Thus, at times, the dancers made their naked bodies a matter of happenstance, not important at all to the dance movements, or just a matter of routine as if they were wearing clothes. This was similar to how Cuvilas made the moment of nakedness just one more variation on a series of moments where the dancers further developed the previous theme of familiar chores disintegrating into chaotic frenzy.

But La Ribot also called attention to the visual display of the dancer’s sex—genitalia, breasts, and glutes—by placing themselves in sexual positions, or the calling to mind of pornographic imagery. La Ribot at times displayed women’s sex as an object to be viewed. Cuvilas always downplayed the pornographic potential of the women’s bodies. La Ribot’s piece complicated and played with how the female dancing body is fetishized. Cuvilas seemed to be more interested in, yet not necessarily successful at, making a piece where the female body is erased of sexual desire. In other words, La Ribot plays with the gaze of the audience. She acknowledges with humor the possible pornographic situation of their naked bodies, but implicates the audience in our voyeuristic disposition to view naked female bodies as objects of sexual desire. The dancers are merely bending over; it is we the audience members who view this movement as sexual, who think that we see women’s anuses and vaginas.

*PARAdistinguidas* performed in Maputo without any comment or concern about morality and values, whereas *Um Solo para Cinco* created a firestorm. Given
PARAdistiguidas's play with explicit imagery and the gaze of the viewer, it might have been more open to condemnations.

In fact, La Ribot does create considerable controversy in Europe and the United States. She is known as an artist who creates pieces to intervene in the history of patriarchal visual arts through her non-representational works. The NYU performance studies and dance theorist André Lepecki (2006) wrote about one of La Ribot’s performances Panaromix (2003) at the Tate Museum in London. He analyzes how La Ribot confronts the representation of modern art. She creates works that do not fit the vertical plane, she places frames pinned to walls with uneven dimensions, and she uses materials such as cardboard that do not usually belong in art spaces. This is an extension of her earlier works in the Distinguished Series that deconstruct the theatrical stage by messing with the theatrical aspects, such as the proscenium, clothing, and stillness, to imagine a new art product unhinged from conventions. Lepecki argues that La Ribot, and another work done in the same year by Trisha Brown, are interesting for their political toppling of “Papa Pollock” who, as the narrative goes in Western Art History, toppled all conventions through his macho dripping liquid paint from a large brush (understood as resembling a phallus and ejaculation) on the vertical canvas (as opposed to horizontal). The point is that Pollock’s actions were informed by an “extremely problematic gender politics” that the cannon of visual art has adored and reproduced with enthusiasm for decades (Lepecki 2006: 66). Quoting Rebecca Schneider, Lepecki explains that La Ribot confronts the “founding father patronics,” which refers to how the art world figures
this lone American man as singlehandedly responsible for the supremely avant garde act of liberating art from the canvas and setting the entire performance-based art of the twentieth-century into motion. To do anything outside of “founding father patronics” is illegible as art, he claims.

According to Lepecki, La Ribot contributes to the toppling of patriarchal visual arts through her non-representational performances. La Ribot attempts to make her performance illegible as art—at least, as understood by the norms of the art world. She incorporates objects that are not ready-made but rather random and banal, indistinguishable from the very objects the audience brings into the room. She moves in “micromovements” that emphasize stillness and the subtleties of the body such as shivering, trembling, pulsations, and hesitations. The naked body enhances this attention to minor details and also challenges the theater as a teleological exercise: “one contained within a linear temporality marked by a clear beginning and aimed at closure” (67).

Lepecki’s analysis of La Ribot helps to explain how she makes interventions in her performances in London and Philadelphia, but if the location shifts to Maputo then the effect is quite different. In Maputo, another aspect of the teleological “founding father Patronics” is illuminated—its whiteness. If whiteness is the embodied practice of historically accumulated privilege and cultural constellations, as scholars have argued (Lipsitz 1998), then it is precisely this historically accumulated privilege that imbues La Ribot with avant-garde credentials to appear naked on stage and use humans as props.
Both *PARAdistinguidas* and *Um Solo para Cinco* were interpreted as representations of national culture and racial identity. The main issue for the critics of *Um Solo para Cinco* was that this was a piece produced by the CNCD and by a CNCD choreographer using CNCD dancers at a festival that showcases the best in dance around Africa. This fact was enough for critics to demand responsibility on the part of the Ministry of Culture and government to censor the piece, resulting in a more substantive debate about the role of the state and Mozambican culture. The naked black female dancers degrade Mozambican culture, in part, because of a long history of how black women's bodies have been at the disposal of foreign consumption and desire.

The frame shifts dramatically between London and Maputo when La Ribot is backed by two of the largest European institutions. *PARAdistinguidas*, in the context of touring in Africa, but also possibly in Europe as well, is a representation of European culture and racial identity. The two main funders of contemporary dance in Maputo, Institut Français and The Swiss Arts Council ProHelvetia, are very clear about why they send works like *PARAdistinguidas* to Africa. Pro Helvetia has been at the forefront of promoting Swiss culture and identity abroad since 1939. The institution was structurally reformed under the Cultural Promotion Act of 2009 but the objectives are still the promotion of artistic creation in Switzerland, contribution to cultural exchange at home, and dissemination of Swiss culture abroad to foster cultural outreach.  

43 The Institut Français exists to promote the French government’s

43 http://www.prohelvetia.ch/Home.20.0.html?L=4
“diplomacy of influence.” It is instrumental in projecting France’s influence and cooperative activities, and as a center of expertise and advice to “emerging” countries and their emerging arts. The Institut Français is actually just a more current manifestation of a long, ever changing bureaucratic structure designed to promote French language and culture and to attest to the flourishing state of French thought and artistic life. Previously the Association Française d’Action Artistique (AFAA) performed this role bringing together a range of leading figures to promote French art worldwide. Then the AFAA merged with the "Association Pour la Diffusion de la Pensée Française" (ADPF), giving rise to the creation of Culturesfrance in 2006. Under the twin authority of the Ministry of Culture and Communication and the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, the role of Culturesfrance was to support French cultural action worldwide. Culturesfrance was replaced by the Institut Français in January 2011. La Ribot’s career is boosted when her work is associated with and supported by Institut Français and Pro Helvitia, two international giants in the arts. Beyond the direct income that La Ribot and her artists make by touring PARAdistinguidas, they also gain social and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984) for themselves and the foreign governments who sponsor the tours.

The CNCD dancer and writer Virgílio Sithole wrote a review of PARAdistinguidas titled “La Ribot: The Distinguished of Artistic Nudes” in the weekly newspaper O País (October 1, 2011). After describing the piece he too made a comparison to Um Solo para Cinco. He described how Cuvilas’ piece faced public

fury from religious and state officials as well as obstacles by state agencies and asked why this was the case with *Um Solo para Cinco* while not a peep was made about *PARAdistinguidas*. I quote at length from his article:

“PARAdistinguidas” is a work worthy of removing our hats, not only here in Mozambique. Still, the lack of protests and repudiation by those civil and religious organizations, which is perfectly within their rights, leaves me with questions after viewing “PARAdistinguidas.” Without entering into questions about morality, but just sticking with what is art and the different treatment of similar cases I am left questioning:

Are we able to present artistic nude works in Mozambique without repudiation and prohibition? Why is there a duality of criteria in the analysis (permission) between the content of national artists and foreigners? If both works present nude female artists on stage why were there protests of rejection in the presentation of the work “Um Solo para Cinco” and none for “PARAdistinguidas”? Could it be that the latter work was presented by white women (without wanting to be racist)…? Is there legislation that prohibits citizens to create and present works with nude artists? If the artistic nude exhibited in Um Solo para Cinco is a “threat to our cultural integrity”, the artistic nude in PARAdistinguidas is not? Is or is there not creative censorship
in Mozambique? Are there arts (dances) that are for Mozambicans and others that are for foreigners? If so, which one is what?  

Like the students in the PAD classroom, Virgílio pointed out how race was the predominate sign for the naked women’s bodies in both *Um Solo para Cinco* and *PARAdistinguidas*. Mozambicans have no investment in how white women are represented in theater or elsewhere. Black women, on the other hand, are highly contested symbols. As we have seen through *N’Tsay*, black women in Mozambican dance can represent traditional values, victory, freedom, unification of the nation, resistance.

White female dancing bodies and the black female dancing bodies are not the same, whether in Mozambique or in other parts of the world. Dance scholars have thoroughly documented the sordid history of black and white bodies on the modern stage. For the progenitors of modern dance the black body is a site of “not-ness” (De Frantz citing Morrison, 2004: 20) from which white subjectivity draws to assert modernity, civilization, and superiority. Modern dance was created in large part by

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45 Virgílio Sithole, “As Distinguidas do Nu Artístico”. *O País*. October 1, 2011. Pp 17-19. “Depois de assistir à apresentação da ‘PARAdistinguidas’, uma obra de se tirar o chapéu, no solo moçambicano, porém, sem honras a reacções, entenda-se, manifestações de repúdio ou proibição, por quem de direito, das organizações da sociedade civil e religiosas, como vivente das artes, sem querer discutir questões ‘morais’, mas sim, artísticas e as diferenças no tratamento de casos semelhantes, resta-me questionar: Já podemos apresentar obras de nu artístico em Moçambique ‘sem direito’ a repúdios e proibição? Por que há dualidades de critérios na análise (permissão) dos conteúdos dos artistas nacionais e estrangeiros? Por que houve manifestações de repúdio na apresentação de peça ‘Um Solo para Cinco’ e não houve no espectáculo ‘PARAdistinguidas’, se as duas obras apresentaram artistas-mulheres nuas no palco? Será por a primeira peça ser apresentado por mulheres brancas (sem intenções racistas) e para as negras moçambicanas é vetado? Há legislação que proíbe os nacionais de criar e apresentarem obras com nu artístico? Se o nu artístico exibido em ‘Um Solo para Cinco’ é ‘atentado à nossa integridade cultural’, o nu artístico em ‘PARAdistinguidas’ não o é, se foi apresentado em solo moçambicano? Há ou não há censura criativa em Moçambique? Há artes (dança) que é para nacionais e outras para estrangeiros? Se sim, qual ou quais?”
white upper middle-class American and European women who used the image of black and brown bodies and their “primitive” cultures as foils to project their new modern dance as a high art form on par with ballet in theatrical status but leagues ahead in terms of creative and individual expression (Daly 1995, Desmond 1997, Gottschild 2003, Manning 2004). They also appropriated non-western dance into their own making of modern dance to create a sense of the new, a break from conventions, while concealing such borrowing as a process of creative genius (De Frantz 2004, Gottschild 2003, Manning 2004). In the dance world, the figures of the white female matrons of modern dance loom large—albeit not to the same extent as the teleological “Papa Pollocks” for visual arts, and it is still crucial to consider how males disproportionately occupy high status positions in the dance world. Yet, for example, Merce Cunningham, a white male, developed his style, which emphasized “non-narrative,” chance movement, and musical impulses, as a rejection of the overly psychological style of Martha Graham, a white female who seemed to dominate early modern dance (Baunes 1998, Ramsay 1995). White women have defined modern concert dance.

The white female dancer arrives in Mozambique already overdetermined as a subject intellectually and creatively distinguished. Therefore, nakedness in the context of white bodies on stage is far more pliable as symbol of artistic expression, separate from the arena of culture, ethnicity, and politics, than black bodies. The PAD students and teachers joked about how seemingly easy it was for La Ribot to make anything up on the stage and then call it interventionist. They could imagine in a
different context PARAdistinguidas being a critical work. But from their perspective in Maputo the presentation of five über-white women of PARAdistinguidas was a demonstration of essentialized identities and inequalities. While both Um Solo para Cinco and PARAdistinguidas framed their performances as interventions, in terms of their actual performances, only Um Solo para Cinco communicated a critical analysis of power and had a political effect. In Maputo, PARAdistinguidas was a novelty piece whose primary effect was to affirm the superiority of the European arts as the object and sign of innovative and interventionist art.

Conclusion

This chapter explores the many levels of precarity for Mozambican dancers as exemplified by Élio and his colleagues of students and teachers in the PAD program. Precarity consists in the necessity to struggle to stay alive and keep going. When I met Élio he had been in a decade long struggle to secure housing, food, and social relations that could sustain his residence in Maputo and his career in dance. He had successfully nurtured positive social relations with people who assisted him in his struggle, such as Juliana, Cuvilas’s brother, a Portuguese patron, and the PAD program. These alliances were always temporary and could easily not be enough to support him given the obstacles he faced in Maputo. The Maputo police, for example, took advantage of Élio’s dispossession to further harm him. Another obstacle for dancers is the rivalries in the highly competitive dance environment. Even though
Narguiss was a fellow dancer she was unwilling to help Élio, and it was possible that she purposefully displaced him.

Thus, this chapter demonstrates that precarity is not just an existential problem—we are all human beings whose life is contingent and without guarantees—but life affects people differently depending on the social locations in a highly stratified and segregated Maputo. Suburbanos and migrants like Élio face basic obstacles of housing, food, employment, and the police that make everyday life a struggle for survival. The Mozambican sociologist Carlos Serra and his colleagues (2001 and 2003) call this daily-lived struggle a problematic world, *mundo problemático*. From the perspective of Élio and the majority of Maputenses, the basic issues to sustain life are problematic, they are daily insecurities. Serra argues that Mozambique today is split between those whose basic continuation is secured (*mundo não problemático*) and those who have to fight each day just to meet the basics without any guarantee for tomorrow (*mundo problemático*).

Precarity, then, is the uneven destruction of many localities (nations, states, regions, neighborhoods). Most Maputenses might feel the effects of precarity, but the manifestations and intensities are unevenly distributed between *suburbanos* (*mundo problemático*) and *urbanos* (*mundo não problemático*). This chapter showed how precarity is disproportionately experienced across the world of international dance. After the CNCD and END were systematically destroyed through decades of Structural Adjustment Programs, Mozambican dancers have found themselves unprepared to participate in international exchanges as equals with the well-trained
foreigners who come from European and North American institutions. Most Mozambican dancers are highly skilled but do not have the technical training or educational backgrounds in broadly recognized forms that international artists have attained through their institutions. Thus, Mozambicans rarely meet foreigners as equals and often occupy precarious positions that lead to their humiliation. The international exchange and performance programs that occur in Mozambique consistently treat Mozambicans as “emerging” artists or, even worse, as non-artists, human props, to be used as stage material for European or American productions. Élio’s participation in Maria La Ribot’s *ParaDistinguidas* project illuminates the kind of humiliation suffered by Mozambicans when they work with foreign choreographers. While La Ribot’s performance was blatantly racist and her work with Élio was particularly degrading, the PAD students and teachers assured Élio that his experience was not unique and that they all have participated in similar events. International market forces generate structural differences that make art exchanges and participatory projects ineffective and, as in Maria La Ribot’s production of *ParaDistinguidas*, frequently damaging.

This account of La Ribot in Maputo highlights the differences between the African and the European scene. La Ribot received acclaim from publics in Europe and North America for her interventionist and progressive works. She also gained critical acclaim from dance scholars such as André Lepecki. Yet, for the audience that saw her in Maputo she represents the international market forces in Mozambique, and she also represents race and class exploitation. International market forces create
economic problems that systematically disenfranchise dancers in Maputo while promoting European and American artists as the most innovative, the greatest performers. From the view of Maputenses I interviewed, becoming an interventionist artists for Europeans like La Ribot and her dancers is as easy as appearing naked on stage. Their white bodies and the backing of institutions such as ProHelvita and Institut Francais give them artistic privileges that are not afforded to black and brown bodies.

*Um Solo para Cinco* represents on stage what Élio lived in real life. It represents precarity as predominant ongoing economic problem and helps define precarity in the uneven destruction of many localities, rather than a generalized existential problem. The nakedness in *Um Solo para Cinco* was one of the most cogent images in the Maputo art world in the twenty-first century. Maputo audiences did not respond to *PARAdistinguidas* like they did to *Um Solo para Cinco* because Mozambicans are not invested in how white females are represented on stage. White bodies in *PARAdistinguidas* do not symbolize the nationalist ideals that were embodied through works like *N’Tsay*, nor did they portray feelings of deprivation. Instead, they were viewed as novelties and symbols of white privilege. The nakedness of black dancers in *Um Solo para Cinco*, however, provided a critical analysis of power and had a deeply emotional impact and political effect.
Conclusion

Resolutions in *Nyau* and *Um Solo para Cinco*

Resolutions to Mozambican Political Struggles

Mozambique was faced with a daunting task after independence. Frelimo attempted to maintain stability for an economy and state apparatus that was undergoing dramatic and rapid change. Frelimo also had to do something new and innovative to interrupt the colonial capitalist economy and social and state institutions that created deep divisions and inequalities. They intended to build a new society. The most important goal for many in the leadership was to interrupt the system of citizen-subject that enforced categories of privilege and disfavor not only through “race” but also legally, economically, and spatially. They turned to a Marxist Leninist interpretation of socialist governance. The result was an interventionist state that was quite contradictory: partially progressive, mainly conservative, and mostly authoritarian.

Mozambique also faced a horrendous civil war fomented in large part by apartheid South Africa and its Cold War allies that brought the government to collapse and led to seemingly endless economic and political policy of Structural Adjustments. The austerity of these structural adjustment policies reasserted the legacies of colonial social divisions. They enflamed class relations and turned to ethnicity to stabilize the state and build national unity. Whereas Frelimo severely disciplined the population about work ethics, they pandered to ethnicity to gain votes in elections and to prove to the donor community that they were supporting
autochthonous communities and helping them become citizens. Under these conditions today, a small minority of the population are doing all right, but the majority live either in conditions of precarity or have no chance to pull themselves out of poverty in the given economic environment.

The arts also follow this general trend. Austerity has greatly impacted the arts for the worse. The CNCD and END flourished when Maputenses had the newly implemented institutional infrastructure and cooperation with the Soviet Union and international socialism. As soon as the state retreated from support and the Soviet Union collapsed, the CNCD and END entered a difficult transition that by the 2000s ended in stagnation and near destitution. Lacking institutional support, Mozambican dancers turned to the only two avenues for patronage: dancing gigs in the service economy, and international donor agencies. Both avenues have created a split between contemporary and traditional dance genres that echo relations of citizens and subjects in the new era.

Contemporary dance offers more avenues to embody social positions as citizens than traditional dance. Augusto Cuvilas made gains through contemporary dance and became an icon for innovation and entrepreneurialism in Mozambique. But most Mozambican dancers have been shut out of such channels and instead produce works under the rubric of cultural heritage. In many ways, Maputo has returned to where it started when Frelimo rolled into Lourenço Marques and took control. Concert dancers perform subjectivities based on class and ethnicity, re-affirming segregated social space and social positions. In the peri-urban areas are traditional
dance forms that signify the customs and long-standing practices of rural and culturally conservative Mozambicans. In enclaves in the urban core, contemporary dance is associated with a professional class that which leads Mozambique out of poverty through their development projects that support civil society and international exchanges.

What kinds of options are there for Mozambicans in the current environment of neoliberal economics and politics? What kinds of options are there for Mozambican dancers in the ethnicized, racialized, and gendered Maputo art world? This dissertation answers these questions through examining the historical and political significance of three dances and analyzing what kind of political subjectivities are expressed through the narratives, energetics, and poetics of these dances. All three dances define their contexts and are not just reflections of these contexts. *N'Tsay* defines resistance as a heroic female figure who embodies the new habits that will dismantle the colonial legacy of ethnic, class, and gender divisions. *Nyaup* defines resistance as an unruly, ethnicized subject who disorients state power in the postsocialist era. *Um Solo para Cinco* defines neoliberal present as a situation of being stripped; being targeted by a social and economic order to work and live in a system of precarity. The dances define the political struggles their performers and participants are engaged in relation to authoritarianism and state power. They offer different locations in relation to state power and different resolutions for what counts as political action-- how to assert agency and how to resist.
The CNCD’s *N’Tsay* is a dance about a female heroine, representing all the people of the continent, suggesting that the people of Mozambique will find a way to stand up to the violence and wretchedness of the present as they stood up to it in the past. In this respect, the Nyau brotherhood’s “big dance” and Augusto Cuvilas’s *Um Solo para Cinco* (2004) is a continuation of *N’Tsay*. Samora Machel foretold the durability of colonial structures of power and *N’Tsay* hailed the power of Mozambicans to collectively resist. *Nyau* and *Um Solo para Cinco* reframed what collective resistance might look like in the era of austerity.

*Nyau* is about hinterland, renegade males and their endurance over many state powers-- Frelimo just being the most recent. They call on the spirits of the ancestors to once again assert power over both the rulers and the ruled. *Um Solo para Cinco* is about women and *suburbanos* and their struggles to reveal the structural violence enacted on their daily lives and bodies. *Nyau* communicates prowess and menace. The *nyau* dancers explode, in contrast to the *Um Solo para Cinco* dancers who implode. Both performances take the audience through scenarios of calm to frenzy, order to disorder. But the resolutions to the performances are very different. *Nyau* radiates through the audience causing a feeling of fear, menace, and ecstasy. *Um Solo para Cinco* disintegrates in front of the audience causing a feeling of fear, anxiety, and disgust. The *Um Solo para Cinco* dancer reached a limit that cannot be passed. She resolves to come to terms with these limitations through presenting herself in her most vulnerable, most intimate form. She reveals herself completely to the audience. By contrast, the *nyau* dancer remains concealed, taking on a spiritual form, something
outside and higher than this world. He is not confronted with limits. He imposes limits on the audience. He is the ultimate transgressor of limitations. He can’t be touched. He can’t be matched. Through virtuosic bodily expression he can move through anything. He is uncontainable.

So far this dissertation has discussed nyau and Um Solo para Cinco separately. I conclude the dissertation by discussing them together-- as inhabiting shared embodied practices and expressing shared social and political imaginaries. The energy and movement patterns that communicate public feelings of fear and awe in nyau and public feelings of disquiet, disintegration, and dissimulation in Um Solo para Cinco constitute interrelated nodes of signification that enter into circulation with many nodes of signification derived from energy and movement patterns. Nyau enters into circulation with Um Solo para Cinco. The explosive male renegade meets the imploding maiden. This corporeal dialogue happens despite the racial legacy that structure dances into primitive/modern dichotomies-- despite the fact that nyau was recognized in the space of cultural traditions as UNESCO’s intangible World Cultural Heritage whereas Um Solo para Cinco succeed within the space of elite art dance. Um Solo para Cinco and nyau are bound together as “structured movement systems,” to use the concept of the dance scholar Cynthia Novak (1988). We turn now to

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47 Dances are systematic, like languages that build relationally and contextually within a grammar of kinesthetic, rhythmic, and spatial elements. Their power-- the power of their practitioners and audiences to use them to define and transform their social contexts-- depends on this grammar among dances. Their force depends on how they situate themselves relationally to other aesthetic forms in the expressive performing body, the choreographic arrangement, and theatrical presentation.
glimpse how two supposedly distinct dances are bound together through their expressive performing bodies and poetics of form.

**The Male Renegade**

At its most basic, the choreographic structure, of *nyau*, danced by male performers while wearing masks, is a circular group form with alternating solos in the center of the circle danced rhythmically to percussions. Each *nyau* solo follows a similar dance sequence but with each tweaking and riffing in subtle ways. In one *nyau* dance routine, a dancer who sits on the ground on the edge of the circle stands up and sways back and forth, gazes towards the audience. The percussion instruments, behind the circle or to the side, maintain a steady beat only increasing in intensity and elaboration when cued by the dancer’s movement. The dancer begins to run forward with elongated steps to mark out an elliptic trajectory about ten meters within the perimeter of the circle. For the next minute he travels back and forth on this elliptic trajectory.

First, he just clears the space while kicking up dust by sliding and dragging his feet across the ground. The flicking of the dust is an important element not just in *nyau* but also in much of Mozambican dance. The higher the dust and the more that is stirred up, the more accomplished the dancer is considered. The dust plays an important role in creating an otherworldly environment. It creates a haze all over the scene that aids in distorting time and space. He then slows down and struts around, although a bit off balance and clumsy as if he were drunk. But this clumsiness is a
ruse, for in a couple seconds he will let loose with athleticism and precision of body isolation that makes it clear that he is in control of his faculties. After circling in this space, as if marking it, he then stops and stands facing the audience only swaying back and forth as he did in the beginning. The percussions become a bit quieter, and fewer musicians play while the others are on standby. He is about to pounce.

He executes a fast-paced, forward-moving shuffle with the right leg horizontally flinging dust eight meters in length and the left leg sliding in front. The left shoulder dips down and the torso faces to the right giving him the leverage he needs to spray the dirt and slide forward. His head remains cocked up and straight ahead. His arms make sharp, strong, thrusts back and forth, like a rooster flapping his wings in a violent fight. He continues straight forward, getting closer to the edge of the circle, then comes a crucial weight transfer from the left leg to the right. He scrunches lower, his body sucks up all the energy that was once directed towards spraying the dirt. He springs his right leg so that his thigh nearly touches his chest, he then continues to swivel the right leg out and simultaneously hops off his weight-bearing left leg to transfer to the right leg. But in that moment of hopping to his right leg, he suspends himself in the air while twisting his torso around. In this moment he is flying. Having completed the weight transfer to his right leg, he then starts to spray dust to his left.

He finishes his solo by increasing the weight transfers from left to right, countered by his torso moving in the opposite direction and suspending himself in the air. Now instead of traveling straight forward and back he is sliding in a curvilinear
direction, making hairpin turns back and forth, like a snake slithering across the sand, like an alpine skier tearing apart a slalom course. He leaves behind in the dirt a series of “S” figures on the ground. This is a shuffle like James Brown sliding back and forth across the stage at a furious pace. This is a shuffle like MC Hammer flamboyantly dancing to “U Can’t Touch This” (1990). This dance sequence is like a sambista who creates an illusion of floating magically across the floor, like a hovercraft, when in fact it is the rapid succession of kicks and weight transfers that slide the dancer from one place to another. The feet are in constant contact with the floor, even while making dramatic weight transfers from left to right. The nyau dancer ends his solo once it has reached a fervor. He bends over and touches the ground with his hand, like a soccer player who has a ritual every time after he scores a goal to give thanks for his skill/luck. He then turns away from the audience, and audaciously trots back to his colleagues sitting on the ground. He hops in the air and plunks himself down on the ground. The next one gets up and repeats the dance sequence but adding his own variations to the pattern and demonstrating his own virtuosity. He then expresses another character, a different spirit-ancestor.

The Male Renegade Meets the Mozambican Maiden

Nyau is prowess. It is about the spirits and ancestors who have power in the present. It is about male bravado. It is beautiful. By contrast, Um Solo para Cinco is frailty. The first 12 minutes of Um Solo para Cinco are pleasurable because of the extraordinary enactments of familiar songs, sounds, scenes, bodily gestures and
movements, and character types that are continually repeated and revised throughout
the piece. Key to the pleasure is how the dancers take the audience through everyday
scenes of Mozambican maidens who are engaged in mundane activities of work and
play. At first the change in repetition is interesting, but after a while it is irritating to
watch. We are confronted with energy and movement patterns such as endlessly
waiting, constant acceleration, spinning out of control, countering circular forces, and
rolling erratically and violently. It is about maidens who are trapped, unable to
complete their tasks.

Both of the dances, speaking just about the energy and movement patterns, are
about creating scenarios of transformation, about setting up possible images of
transcendence. Energy is one of many tight knots that bind the secular and the
sacred in African and diaspora contexts. One link between nyau and Um Solo para
Cinco, then, is how audiences evaluate the energy: how aesthetic boundaries are
created, how those boundaries are transcended, how the performed body expresses a
transformation of the routine, and how the performed body brings resolution.

*Nyau and Um Solo para Cinco* have similar energy patterns but provide
different corporeal interpretations about the possibility for contesting power and the

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48 Studies have long identified how dances of Africa and the diaspora express belief in the corporeal
inhabitance of spirit. Just to cite one scholar, Yvonne Daniel, who studies circum-Atlantic Caribbean
dances and other African-derived aesthetics, states that “African legacies presume that dancing and
music making give relief from the sufferings inherent within social realities. African dance rituals
provide energy, endurance, perseverance, and agency in the splendor of expressive body movement”
(2013, 16). This energy is something audiences expect from performances and participants expect from
events where they dance. In certain contexts, like at religious ceremonies, the dancer’s energy might be
the embodiment of divine spirits or ancestors, but in other contexts, like at a nightclub, the dancer’s
embody the more terrestrial spirits of human feelings and emotion. Nevertheless, the energy is
continuous across these contexts.
possibility of human transformation in the face of authoritarian state power. Both
dances display intense transformations. They both establish a repetition of dance
sequences. Then the dancers create a sense of normalcy, or familiarity, by sticking
with this sequence. But then they follow this calm with an acceleration of routine and
a transformation of the boundaries that were previously established. The timing and
force of this transformation are explosive-- in a rapid, volatile manner.

The Nyau dancer has the routine of marking his space, standing awkwardly
but coolly in the middle, then bursting into his shuffle, and then after establishing a
routine of the shuffle (something more or less predictable) he detonates into
numerous body isolations that do not follow the previous rhythm from the shuffles
but are performed at erratic intervals. This is the last moment when the dancer erupts
into weight transfers and counter directionals that are too rapid and fickle to make
sense of. He ends in this final surge, giving it all and leaving it all on the stage. The
force is so intense, the timing is so furious, the use of space is so large that the Nyau
dancer’s energy radiates out across the audience, like a supernatural being, a Nyau
spirit overloading the senses of the poor audience. This is the moment of resolution to
the performance. It ends through transcendence. The final surge is a moment when
what was normal or familiar transforms into a thousand fragment pieces, flying out,
too big and too fast to take it all in through the eyes.

Now consider the kind of explosive energy of Um Solo para Cinco and how
this energy is resolved. The female dancers establish a routine of maidens going about
the business of their mundane activities. But their collecting water in a pail, waiting
for a bus, is a ruse. Progressively, over the period of minutes, the repetition of chores is disrupted with glitches like frenetic spins, fidgeting, and irrational sequences of finding a place to sit, placing the pail on floor, sitting, placing pail on head, standing. This is a slow detonation. More like a disintegration and fragmentation of the previously established routine. But the force, timing, and space of the choreographic sequence all increase in intensity. The spinning of the umbrella increases. The sitting is done with a heavy plunk and the standing with a leap. The dancers once occupied a specific location on the stage but now take up the majority of the space. They too end in a final surge, giving it all, and leaving it all on the stage. Their once neat hair is completely unraveled. The dancer’s blouse rips opens exposing her breasts. The leaves go flying and shrouding the stage in dust. The two dancers walk defeated off the stage. All five dancers then reappear, this time naked. This is their moment of transformation. It is shocking, but is done quietly and gently, not bombastic like nyau.

Nyau ends with the transcendence of the dancer/spirit. Um Solo para Cinco ends with the disintegration of the person. Nyau expands outward. Um Solo para Cinco contracts inward. Each dance is a wonderful example of body politics deployed in dance movement sequences, which communicate Mozambican memories of historical shifts and experiences of contemporary social life.

Here we glimpse the power of dances to define and transform their social contexts. The expressive performing body pose energetics and rhythmic imagery that project subjects and structures from social, political, and economic life. Ethnicized male subjects offer a form of resistance to state power by creating menace and
disorder. This form and depiction of resistance is very different than the Spartacus ideal that is offered through *N’Tsay* where one charismatic figure leads the charge against oppression and then unifies and organizes the masses. The genuine Spartacus is typical of nationalist narrative not just in Mozambique but across Africa. In contrast, *nyau* embodies a politics that resembles the post-independence rebellions and civil wars where the objective is not to overtake the state, frequently knowing that such objectives are not possible, but to inflict chaos through strategically targeting infrastructure and people that will optimize emotional and psychological disorientation. Terror and disorder were the goals of Renamo, for example (Lubkemann 2008).

Given this powerful figure of the uncontainable, male renegade in *nyau* performances and its centrality in Mozambican festivals and official celebrations of Mozambican culture, then we should be even more impressed with the power of *Um Solo para Cinco*. *Nyau* has become the new national icon because of the postsocialist discourses about the “customary,” because of historical revisionism about Frelimo’s authoritarian past, and because of neoliberal projects of decentralization. It has replaced *N’Tsay* as the most lauded expression of Mozambican identity and resistance. *Nyau* has moved up the ladder in the system that still inscribes individual worth within performances of citizens and subjects. Tragically, *Um Solo para Cinco* has disappeared from public view after Cuvilas’ death, although fortunately it continues in the memory of many urbanites and artists who have accorded it the status as a cult classic. The figure of the imploding maiden and her quiet but unsettling
revelation of nakedness is a unique response and an alternative subjectivity to national and global imaginaries. Judging from the two different responses from state authorities, *Um Solo para Cinco* offers a profound model of political struggle while *nyau*'s politics has been easily incorporated within the deception of the magical state. This fact should give us pause and think more deeply about what arts, what modes of social life, ought to be left to market forces and what ought to be actively supported and why.
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