

BLACK WOMEN SAVING WHITE MASCULINITIES: THE MASCULINIZING EFFECTS OF PORTUGUESE MIGRATION TO ANGOLA

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ABSTRACT

Informed by an ethnographic study on the recent Portuguese work migration to Angola, this paper starts from the observation that a specific type of intimate relations between migrants and hosts was subject to intense social scrutiny within the migrant community: the one composed by middle-aged Portuguese men and younger Angolan women. This type of relation or, more precisely, the chatter it generated among Portuguese migrants, serves here as entry point to think about the discursive remodulation of white masculinities in the migratory context. Building on literature on post/colonialism, cross-border intimacy, and the interrelation between international mobilities and masculinities, I interrogate what race, nationality, economic class and age did to the social (re)construction of what it means to be a (white/Portuguese) man in this particular time-space. I further argue that the identity configuration as white Portuguese is constructed as meaningful in relation to three subject positions – Portuguese/white women, Angolan/black women and Angolan/black men – that play either a complementary or a contrapuntal role with it. The article makes two main points: that the chatter analysed hints at the masculinizing effect of contemporary Portuguese migration to Angola; and that this revalorization of white/Portuguese masculinities is done with an eye on the past, i.e. on colonial scripts and imaginaries.

Keywords: masculinities, North-South migration, cross-cultural intimacy, whiteness

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