

The Power of Western Fashion: Imagining Sexuality Urban Nairobi

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The youth sexual relationships in urban Africa are being socially constructed as an appropriate expression of intimacy, but also as a statement about a particular kind of modern identity. Kenya burgeoning commercial and the public sector have been embraced by global changes and today it has become a preserve or marketplace of sexual information, enticing eager audiences with expert radio programs, newspaper gossip columns, foreign romance novels. Ostensibly, such developments, tend to contribute to a sense of heightened voyeurism in regards to Euro-American and sexual practices and proclivities that directly inform local notions of what is pleasurable, beautiful and desirable. The female-youth bodies are a frequent subject of this often erotic discourse (a form of pleasure in it) that takes place both across and within gendered categories. Thus costuming the female body creates a permeable *space* for identity play.

Consequently, new forms of romance mediated by the internet and global economy tend to emerge and alter non-heteronormative sexualities in diverse locales; short-change the diasporic cultures and intimacies; triggered commoditized sex and romance in tourist circuits; and transformed and transgressed family relationships. Consequently, the results of what we have in urban Kenya, is the youth suffering with what I call ‘deranged cosmology’. This paper therefore, intends to discuss how the youth in urban Nairobi, communicate ideas about sexuality, pleasure and morality in a context veiled to outsider, at the same time examine the concept of *power and the politics of dress* by exploring the ways in which power is represented, constituted, articulated, and contested through dress.