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'Making men fall': queer power beyond anti-normativity

Thomas Hendriks

'We love *normal* men!' (L. *tolingi mibali normal*), my interlocutors frequently exclaimed when chatting about sexual tastes and preferences.[1] In urban Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), many self-identified 'effeminate' (F. *efféminé*) men and boys effectively desired what they called 'normal' men. In practice, their lived relationship to the 'normal' was therefore quite ambiguous. As sexual and gender dissidents, they frequently found themselves excluded by existing social and cultural norms. Yet rather than opposing dominant sexual and gender normativity, they generally managed to seduce potential partners by playing *into* the latter's normality. As such, many had become experts in triggering queer potential within what is usually taken for the norm.

In modern social thinking, norms are nevertheless often thought of *in opposition to* a space of freedom that is more or less curtailed by and through processes of normalization. From this perspective, transgression is seen as an implicit or explicit act of resistance against the norm. This is particularly clear in dominant strands of Western queer theory, where a political and analytical investment in *anti*-normativity has – paradoxically – become a field-defining norm. Queer theory effectively 'troubles' the normality of the normal (Butler 1990; Warner 1999). More specifically, it defines itself as a critical reflection on and against 'heteronormativity' – the systematic imposition of heterosexuality as 'the' norm in different areas of life.[2] More intersectional approaches foreground the articulation of race, class, age and ability with gender and sexuality, but 'queer' continues to be seen as '*whatever* is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant' (Halperin 1995: 62).[3] In everyday academic parlance, 'queer' is indeed another word for 'anti-normative' and usually denotes desires, practices, socialities, identities and activisms that seem to *oppose* heterosexist gender norms.

While critiques of what is seen as 'normal' in specific times and places are absolutely necessary for enabling more liveable futures, the dominant investment in anti-normativity as a radical politics might overlook alternative possibilities that, as queer scholars Robyn Wiegman and Elizabeth Wilson put it, seek 'to encounter normativity on something other than oppositional terms' (Wiegman and Wilson 2015: 2). In the introduction to a special issue about 'queer theory

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[1]Throughout this article, I use the abbreviation *L.* to mark words and phrases in Lingala and *F.* for those in French.

[2]Note that queer theory also argues against 'homonormativity' – new forms of gay respectability that seem to exclude sexual others – and 'queer normativity' – the institutionalization of queer studies that produce their own exclusions (Duggan 2002; Halperin 2003).

[3]The oppositional conception of queer is equally present in queer of colour critiques – although sometimes watered down to '*non*-normativity' (Ferguson 2004) – and decolonial queer studies – invested as they are in *dis*connecting and *dis*obeying (Bakshi *et al*. 2016).

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without anti-normativity', Wiegman and Wilson therefore call for rethinking the relationship between queerness and normativity. What, they ask, do the intimate equations of 'queerness' and 'anti-normativity' foreclose or prevent? And what *other* relations between 'queer' and the 'norm' exist *alongside* or *beyond* the 'anti'?

Wiegman and Wilson's call has been met with significant criticism in queer studies – mainly for 'straightening' the tools of queer critique and unhelpfully lumping together diverse strands of queer theory under one monolithic label of 'antinormativity' (Halberstam 2015; Duggan 2015). Yet, especially for scholars who combine queer critique with ethnographic sensibilities, their questions remain relevant. Particularly in African studies, a more capacious understanding of both queerness and normativity would be welcome. While canonical queer theory remains a predominantly Western- and US-dominated academic practice, Stella Nyanzi rightly asks: 'Whose right is it to determine who, what, where, when and how queer is?' (2014: 66). This article argues that the theoretical and political identification of queerness *as* anti-normativity quickly becomes a liability when trying to do justice to actually existing queer dynamics, forms and potentials – particularly, but not only, in past and present African realities.

Ethnographic work from several African contexts indeed suggests that there is nothing inherently 'queer' about same-sex sexual desires or relationships. They can simply be taken for granted as the way things are, seamlessly fit into same-sex friendships or exist alongside heterosexual marriage and aspirations (Dankwa 2009; Boulton 2019; Kendall 1998; Spronk 2018). At the same time, however, many explicitly LGBT-identified subjects on the continent profoundly *desire to be normal*. Rather than being seen as deviant, pathological or transgressive, they long for the calm of an ordinary life that is liveable despite erotic differences – hence the dominant activist slogan that 'queer is normal too' and that there is nothing *ab*normal about non-heterosexual desires and relationships. In the face of the many popular, state and religious homophobias on the African continent, such claims are vital and politically necessary.

This article nonetheless illustrates a third way to trouble the always already oppositional relationship between queerness and normativity – not by arguing that queer is normal too or by showing that queer lives produce their own norms alongside heteronormativity, but by suggesting that *norms themselves might already be queer*. This tactical provocation is the ethnographic result of particularly assertive erotics that sexually dissident men in urban DRC deployed to call forth or 'provoke' queerness *within* normative masculinity. Drawing from long-term fieldwork with two groups of friends in Kisangani – the *Lemalema* and *Force de Merelia* boys – this article shows how and why these young men skilfully seduced and played into sexual and gender norms, rather than simply opposing them.[4] As such, it foregrounds intimate entanglements, overlaps and even possible identifications between what is seen as 'normal' and what can be thought of as 'queer'.

Multiple levels and dimensions of heteronormativity, which define 'the homosexual' as anti-family, anti-social and anti-nation, exist in contemporary urban

[4]This article draws from twelve months of fieldwork between 2013 and 2016 in Kisangani and Kinshasa, DRC. This work has been funded by a postdoctoral research grant from the KU Leuven University Bijzonder Onderzoeksfonds (2013–14) and the FWO (Research Foundation Flanders) (2014–17).

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Congo (Hendriks 2016).[5] This article by no means denies the hostile opposition between dominant social norms and the queer lives and bodies they exclude. But norms are dynamic and depend on context. And, as we will see, some of them even contain their own queer potential. To approach the abstract question of what 'norms' are, this article starts from what sexually dissident men themselves defined as 'normal'. For my interlocutors, 'normal' men were men who conformed to dominant normative expectations of masculinity (L. *kimobali*) by taking up the 'active' (F. *actif*) or inserter position in sexual relationships (usually with men and women alike). At the same time, my interlocutors foregrounded a surprisingly *queer* dynamics within this normative masculinity, by playing into the widely accepted centrality of 'transgression' – sexual or otherwise – in the actual construction and performance of manhood. Their deliberately aggressive tactics of seduction and provocation uncovered the inherent dynamism, multiplicity and ambiguity of extant gender norms, alongside their violent repercussions.

Hence, instead of reducing queerness to an apparent opposition – which an all too quick and decontextualized reading of the following paragraphs might suggest – this article explores the surprisingly queer potential *of* normativity and maps an often overlooked zone of queerness *beyond* the academic straitjacket of anti-normativity. In the suggestive terminology of this special issue, it illustrates how erotic practices of sexual dissidents undid the assumed 'frontier' between the queer and the norm. And it theorizes their sexual 'pioneering' as a tactical provocation in the emerging field of queer African studies, not as a pushing against norms but as a pushing further – an extension, acceleration and intensification of what was already there.

Matanga

Kisangani, September 2013. A funeral wake (L. *matanga*) for Elie's aunt who passed away in Kinshasa.[6] It is after 6 p.m. and the sun has set. About thirty people have gathered in the family plot. Religious songs blast through a set of speakers. The pastor from a nearby Pentecostalist church has just finished a prayer session. Elie tells me his aunt was a courageous woman. When growing up in Kinshasa, he spent a lot of time with her. She had a small bar in a residential neighbourhood and regularly crossed the river to Brazzaville for 'business'. She had always known he was different, Elie says. But she protected him. She gave him small gifts – nail polish, sunglasses, a doll. She didn't have daughters of her own and somehow took Elie for the girl she had always wanted.

'My father didn't like it, of course,' Elie says.

> Until today, he still pretends he doesn't know. Three years ago, he was transferred from Kinshasa to Kisangani – he works for the customs services. He called us to follow him. High school would be cheaper here, he said. But my mother didn't want to go. Most of her family is in Kinshasa. But we had no choice … It wasn't easy. I thought life would be

[5]Note, however, that, despite some unsuccessful attempts to outlaw same-sex sexual acts, homosexuality has never been criminalized in the DRC.

[6]All names in this article are pseudonyms.

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> difficult. That I would be the only one. But it didn't take me long to realize we are everywhere. I really love my mother. And my brother. They know. We don't talk about it all that much, but they *know*. My father … Well, he is often away.

More and more guests arrive to pay their respects. Elie's mother asks us to get some extra plastic chairs from the neighbours. Elie rises and calls Ange and Benjamin to follow him. The three friends are inseparable. People regularly label them as *pédé* (French slur for 'homosexual'), but they prefer to call themselves *fioto*, a name which has become widespread among self-consciously 'effeminate' men in urban Congo.[7] They often go out together, looking (L. *koluka*) or 'hunting' (F. *chasser*) for men. As young and visibly gender-dissident students, they are well known in Kisangani's bars, clubs and terraces.

Elie and Benjamin already knew each other from Kinshasa, but they used to be rivals. They became friends in Kisangani only after meeting Ange. In his mid-twenties, Ange is a couple of years their senior. He claims to have 'educated' (F. *éduqué*) Elie and Benjamin when they seemed lost. 'I am their "mother of the night",' he says. Elie laughs. 'You are our mother superior [F. *mère supérieure*],' he says. 'Our queen of prostitution [F./L. *reine ya kindumba*].' Ange tries to slap him, but Elie hides behind my back.

The unpaved street is lined with modest concrete workers' houses that date from the colonial period. Most people in this western part of Kisangani have arrived from the Bas-Uélé and Mongala provinces and speak Lingala, the old colonial vernacular of soldiers and traders along the Congo River that is now widely associated with Kinshasa's music and popular culture. Elie and Benjamin often tease Ange, who grew up in a Swahili-speaking family. If it weren't for us *kinois* (inhabitants of Kinshasa), they say, this town would still be stuck in its 'village-like mentality' (F./L. *mentalité ya bayuma*). Ange, in turn, often mocks Elie and Benjamin for their *shegue* (street childlike) behaviour and slang. 'In the east, we are more refined [F. *raffiné*],' he says.[8]

We collect a dozen chairs from the neighbours and return to the funeral wake. A small crowd has assembled in front of Elie's house. When they see us, they begin ululating in high-pitched voices that are audible throughout the entire neighbourhood. 'It's *Lemalema*,' Ange says, visibly annoyed. 'I knew they would come.' The six young men and two women before us are screaming loudly, as if they were professional weepers. The men have tied colourful loincloths around their waists and the women are dressed in tight-fitting leggings. As they enter the family plot, they approach Elie's mother. One of the men falls in her lap and laments: 'Our auntie from Kinshasa has died. Mama, where did she go?' The others go to a corner with cooking pots and pretend they are about to prepare a meal of saltless boiled cassava leaves (L. *pondu*) that women traditionally cook at funerals.

Ange, Elie and Benjamin initially try to pay no attention to the Lemalema gang, but their loud wailing, laughing and gossiping is difficult to ignore. One of the cross-dressing men approaches Héritier, Elie's twin brother, who is sharing a

[7]'*Fioto*' is a relatively recent and predominantly urban Lingala term that seems to appropriate and resignify the French slur *fiotte* for an 'effeminate' homosexual.

[8]See Wilson (2012) for a detailed sociolinguistic study of the popular association between Swahili and 'villagers' (L. *bayuma*), in contrast to the association between Lingala and 'streetwise urban youth' (L. *bayankee*).

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beer with friends from his judo club. 'Sportsmen [L. *basportif*] are really my taste,' the boy shouts. 'But are you strong enough to enter my vagina [L. *libolo*]?' He provocatively grabs Héritier's crotch. Héritier pushes him away. 'Watch out,' he says, 'one day I will fuck you all.' His friends laugh. 'Just try us out,' another Lemalema boy answers.

Several neighbours, aunts and uncles nervously shift in their chairs. An older woman says it is an abomination. A man proposes to call the police. Some people leave, but others take their place, curious to see what will happen.

'Lemalema always performs this little show,' Ange tells me.

> Invading and hijacking [L. *kokamata*] funeral wakes. It is their way to impose themselves [F. *s'imposer*]. Especially when one of us dies or is bereaved. Then, they really stir trouble. They want everyone to know. Once I saw them trying to rip the costume from a corpse and dress it with a veil. To properly bury 'their sister'. Imagine the shame. Really, they are unmannered village women [F. *villageoises*].

One of the Lemalema revellers overhears Ange. 'Angette,' he says, 'shut your mouth. Your body is completely destroyed! Too many men have passed between your legs. If only you were a machine, things would still work. But your penis doesn't work any more.'

Ange shouts back: 'You stupid [L. *zoba*] old woman. Your vagina has rotted away. Men don't look at you. You even have to pay them so as to get some pleasure.' He abruptly turns around and rotates his head, as if to swing his imaginary long hair backwards. Elie and Benjamin loudly applaud his performance.

Two hours later, the religious music has made way for 'worldly' songs. Alcohol and cannabis seem to have reduced the tension. Insults have given way to the usual banter. Elie even joins Lemalema for a hypersexualized *ndombolo* dance.[9] Benjamin has rolled up his tight jeans and sits on the lap of an older man from across the street. 'Grandfather,' he says, 'buy me some whisky.'[10] Ange is openly seducing a tall basketball player, who visibly enjoys the attention.

Elie's family and neighbours largely seem to accept what is happening. Some of them have dozed off on their chairs. Others gladly participate in transgressing the sexualized and gendered norms of respectability. A big-bellied diamond trader calls Elie towards him for an intimate rumba.

A teenager suddenly appears out of nowhere. He is clearly drunk. He says he is in love. He starts to cry. Ange, Elie, Benjamin and the entire Lemalema crowd quickly surround him. They know the boy as Glody. 'She is like us,' they say. 'Let's open her eyes [L. *tofungolisa miso na ye*].' They push him onto the street. They laugh at him. 'Stop being a hypocrite,' they shout. Glody defends himself. 'I am not afraid of anyone,' he yells. 'I am strong.' They push him until he

[9] *Ndombolo* is a dance that emerged in the 1990s and became paradigmatic for Congolese popular music in general. It is characterized by circular motions of the pelvis and occasional hip thrusts (Braun 2014: 51). While its 'sexual' nature is sometimes contested, it allows for ample erotic opportunities and is therefore often rejected as satanic by Pentecostalist churches (Pype 2006).

[10] Benjamin thereby plays into the queer potential of the classic joking relationship between grandparents and grandchildren in the DRC. Grandfathers can, for instance, act as if their grandsons were girls whose breasts they want to touch.

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falls. Elie then sits on him and rotates his hips. We laugh. I tell Elie to let him go. Glody gets back on his feet. One of the Lemalema men wipes the boy's tears away. Someone else brushes off the sand from his clothes. 'Don't worry. We have the same heart,' he whispers. But Ange pushes him again. 'Say it,' he orders. 'Say what you are.' Glody seems to break. 'God, what have I done,' he sobs. He turns towards us. 'Yes,' he shouts, 'yes, I am *fioto*. I am *fioto*!' 'Finally,' Ange says. 'You are one of us now, a true slut [F. *saloppe*]. We will protect you, but you have to harden up.'

We arrive at the main road. Benjamin stops a motorbike taxi. 'Please take this boy home,' he asks. Glody sits on the motorbike like women do, with both legs to one side. Already a true *mama*, Benjamin remarks. He pays the driver. Don't touch his penis, he warns. On his way home, Glody's phone is stolen. We never see the taximan again.

Queer Kisangani

When I first left for Kisangani, friends from Kinshasa told me it would be difficult to find *fioto* men in the capital of what was then still the Orientale province. From the megacity of Kinshasa, Kisangani – a city with over 800,000 inhabitants – indeed looks like a provincial backwater. And, conversely, many *boyomais* (as the inhabitants of Kisangani call themselves) are firmly oriented towards the capital. Yet, Kisangani also has its own mode of cosmopolitanism (Wilson 2012). Built at the end of the 1,750 kilometre navigable stretch of the Congo River, the city has long been a regional hub between what the Congolese call the (Swahili-speaking) 'East' and the (Lingala-speaking) 'West'. While, at the time of fieldwork, Kisangani was still known as the 'martyr city' (F. *Ville Martyre*) because of the violence it endured during the Second Congo War (1998–2003), its administrators were doing their best to rebrand the town as a 'city of hope' (F. *Ville d'Espoir*). Roads to the east had been rebuilt and new commodities from Kampala, Nairobi and Guangzhou had started to arrive. As a result, Kisangani was no longer that 'sad town' symbolizing 'the collapse of the whole Congo', as the political scientist Jean Omasombo had put it, but a recovering and surprisingly vibrant frontier city that was socio-economically oriented to the east but culturally linked to the west (Omasombo Tshonda 2005: 97).

Rethinking the relation between queerness and normativity from Kisangani decentres the predominant focus on big cities when it comes to the performance of new (and older) identities based on sexual and gender dissidence (Reid 2013). While many *fioto* men in Kisangani complained about the city's intrinsic gossip and looked with envy to Kinshasa, where it was supposedly easier to avoid the family gaze, Kisangani was not a uniformly 'homophobic' space where queer identities and desires had to be silenced (Awondo *et al*. 2012; Thoreson 2014). As the anecdote above shows, sexual and gender dissidence could indeed be played out in the open – even before neighbours and kin. And although public performances of transgression certainly provoked disapproval and rejection, they also generated fascination and could trigger participation.

It is no coincidence that Elie's family plot turned into a queer space at the time of a *matanga* wake. As moments of passage between life and death, Congolese funerals are liminal spaces of transformation and can be Bakhtinian events for

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transgressing boundaries, when 'trouble' (L. *mobulu*), contestation and generational conflict are expected and almost required (De Boeck 2008). Lemalema's invasions thus only had to amplify an already transgressive *matanga* atmosphere in order to create openings for queer affirmation and initiation.[11] As such, they further transformed paradigmatic family places and sites of prayer into spaces of worldly music, dance and beer, teeming with what Congolese call 'ambiance' (Biaya 1996).

Congolese 'ambiance' can best be understood as a self-proclaimed national *ideology of transgression*, which, depending on one's moral discourse and audience, is either the country's pride or its shame (Hendriks 2019: 74). As a specific social and symbolic 'field' – in the sense of Bourdieu (1979) – ambiance very much affects the rhythm of everyday city life and is co-constituted with other fields, such as family, church or state. While these fields are palpably different – each with their own norms, rules, possibilities and exclusions – the anecdote above illustrates how their publics can quickly turn into one another (De Boeck and Baloji 2016: 113). Many *boyomais* effectively maintained that funeral wakes had begun to look more and more like 'parties' (F. *fêtes*) since the end of the Second Congo War. The more recent phenomenon of *fioto* revellers 'invading' wakes only further amplified already existing *matanga* dynamics that transformed family plots into spaces of ambiance by imposing and extending the latter's *norm* of transgression.

The Lemalema boys thus tapped into a queer reservoir of 'normative anti-normativity' that coexisted with other norms, and to which it related in terms of both competition and mutual dependency. Because norms were multiple, dynamic and ambiguous, the actual relationship between queerness and normativity was therefore more complicated than any simple opposition might suggest. *Fioto* practices of provocation and seduction certainly contained elements of contestation and subversion. But many openly *fioto* men and boys in Kisangani did not position themselves against normativity. Neither did they claim normality for their dissidence. Rather, they presented themselves as experts in games of playful complicity, through which they seduced and provoked *what they called* 'normal' men. Rather than wanting to be normal, they primarily *desired* gender-conforming men as their erotic objects. As such, they defined themselves as 'passive' (F. *passif*) partners in sexual relationships with men whose own engagements in same-sex erotics did not requalify their masculinity or sexuality (Hendriks 2016).

As we will see, capturing 'normal' men required constant 'work' (L. *mosala*). The Lemalema boys often boasted about their carefully cultivated skills to 'convince' and 'lure' men into their arms. And Elie, Ange and Benjamin too joked about their 'secret powers' to trigger queer affordances and possibilities in the city. These deliberately provocative tactics and strategies were not, however, without danger. Many *boyomais* indeed considered the (apparent) rise of 'homosexuality' as a satanic sign of the End Times (van Klinken 2013). And the recent spectre of (a supposedly Western) 'homosexuality' called forth popular and

[11]Basile Ndjio recently theorized the shocking exclusion of queer dead bodies from funerary rituals and mourning practices in contemporary Cameroon (Ndjio 2020). The vignette above, however, shows that queer bodies *can* participate in funerals and even transform them into stages for queer expression.

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religious homophobias, which *fioto* men needed to withhold, circumvent, displace and transform.[12] Yet, even in these potentially hostile environments, many *fioto* men and boys nonetheless managed to realize their own conditions of becoming and visibly proliferated in the city. To understand how they did so, we need to carefully reconsider the relationship between queerness and normativity.

Lemalema

Lemalema was a gang of a dozen or so uneducated poor *fioto* men in their late twenties who tried to craft livelihoods within or outside their families.[13] Some of them sold phone credit or doughnuts (F. *beignets*) on the streets. Most of them just made do with whatever opportunity presented itself. But they were mainly known as intermediaries between female sex workers and their clients – and also as possible 'prostitutes' themselves (see also Gaudio 2009).[14]

To emphasize their sexual dissidence, they had named their *écurie* (literally, 'stable') of friends 'Lemalema'.[15] The Lingala verb *kolemalema* means 'rambling', 'wandering', 'roaming' or 'drifting' and also has connotations of madness – as in the symptomatic 'erring' of people who have 'lost their minds'. The Lemalema boys maintained that this self-chosen sobriquet highlighted their constant 'moving from one partner to the next'. In Kisangani's bars, the young men were notorious for their craziness, aggressiveness and sexual innuendo, as they performed a 'troublesome' femininity that was immediately associated with prostitution (L. *kindumba*). Yet, in contrast to most women, the Lemalema men could count on their male privilege of mobility and relatively uncontrolled sexuality. While, for women, sexual wandering had far-reaching consequences – as public exposure immediately undermined their decency (Braun 2019) – the Lemalema men could use their maleness to cheat in everyday gender games and somehow outplay 'real' women.

By publicly performing sexual and gender transgressions, they managed to flourish in the field of 'ambiance' and accumulate what one might call 'transgressive capital', which allowed them to build a reputation in the city (Hendriks 2019: 84). Because historical changes in urban gender ideologies have come to define 'transgression' as the kernel of strong *masculinity*, the transgressive production of capital was effectively less difficult for *fioto* men than it was for most women.[16]

[12]It was often precisely the relatively low status and precarious position of visibly *fioto* men that gave them a power to act in the first place, because 'they had nothing to lose'. In this respect, the queer strategies this article illustrates can be conceptualized as a form of 'naked agency' – a risky and failure-prone performance where vulnerability is power (Diabate 2020).

[13]Lemalema also included a couple of young women who were loosely associated with the group. They explicitly described themselves as prostitutes (L. *bandumba*) who specialized in responding to the needs and desires of masculine-identifying women (L. *balele*). Yet, as female same-sex sexual practices and relationships were generally much less visible than the overt display of male homoeroticism, they will have to remain outside the scope of this article.

[14]The practice of bringing people together for transactional sex in order to earn a percentage is called *kobonza*, which literally means to 'offer', to 'sacrifice' and to 'kill'.

[15]The French term '*écurie*' is also used by street children and alleged child witches to refer to their ad hoc living groups, as well as by street criminals (L. *kuluna*) for their tight-knit gangs in Kinshasa (De Boeck and Plissart 2004: 124, 171; Gondola 2016: 194).

[16]For a detailed history of the centrality of transgression to the production and performance of masculinities in urban DRC, see Gondola (2016).

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And although transgressive capital was not easily convertible into other forms of capital, which might help Lemalema in the fields of family, church or state, they nonetheless managed to draw on their reputations, contacts and networks to realize (modest) social and financial profits.

At first sight, this performative accumulation of transgressive capital seems to confirm the often assumed equivalence between queerness and 'anti-normativity'. Indeed, Lemalema produced capital by *transgressing* sexual and gender norms. Yet, their deliberate embodiment of indecent femininity stretched only slightly the rules of a field of ambiance where transgression *was already* the norm. Hence, rather than expressions of a queer anti-normativity, Lemalema's performances played into an extant norm, as one among others – norms that can only be simplified as 'heteronormativity' by downplaying their multiplicity and ambiguity.

Lemalema thus aptly illustrates – in a perhaps extreme and hypervisual form – how *fioto* bodies preyed on the queer affordances and opportunities of ordinary city life: its nightlife, ambiance, alcohol, music, hedonism, dance and prostitution. Rather than opposing 'a' hetero-norm, *fioto* men and boys learned to stimulate, extend and accelerate what was already there, and to draw out a queerness that lurked within ostentatiously heterosexual practices and ideologies. They were therefore not so much sexual outsiders as *insiders* in an urban world that was already complicit in the many transgressions it otherwise so loudly condemned (Hendriks 2019: 85).

From this insider position, Lemalema effectively allowed the queer potential of seemingly ordinary, gender-conforming 'normal' men to unfold. Like many *fioto* men and boys, they claimed that 'all men are gay' (L. *mibali nyoso bazalaka gay*) (see also Hendriks 2018).[17] All it took was a little push. From a *fioto* perspective, 'normal' men are indeed possible sexual partners *because* of their normality. One only needs to know how to convince them. Lemalema often talked about 'setting traps', 'pulling men closer' and making them 'dependent'. In practice, they frequently used baits of free sex, drinks and small gifts. Despite widespread poverty, it would be all too easy – and comforting – to assume that 'normal' men accepted Lemalema's propositions only out of material interest. Sexual encounters with *fioto* men and boys were also experiments and pathways for accumulating transgressive capital of their own. They were sexual adventures that enabled 'normal' men to prove their strength, which existed alongside – and were part of – their sometimes violent attitudes towards homosexuality in general.[18]

In their orientation to the city, Lemalema thus self-consciously drew from what historian Didier Gondola calls the 'visceral and enduring fascination' for

[17]Note how, when making this statement, *fioto* men and boys regularly used the English term *gay* – not, however, as a sexual identity but as a name for an erotic *doing* rather than being. Alternatively, they would claim that 'all men march' (*mibali nyoso bamarchaka*), as the verb *komarcher* was *fioto* slang for men who were 'into it'.

[18]In his analysis of ambiance in Kinshasa, T. K. Biaya (1996: 351) mentions that *ambiançeurs* were supposed to sleep with a disabled person, an albino and a white woman as a 'rite of initiation'. See also Joe Trapido's discussion of the *moto ya Ngenge* – the person with *Ngenge* (force) – whose bodily ability to attract sex, love and money builds reputation in the world of Congolese music (2017: 180–4).

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transgression in urban Congolese culture (Gondola 2016: 201). Yet, in Kisangani, this fascination also took a more specific local form. In the Congolese imagination, Kisangani indeed has a long-standing reputation for the seductive capacities of its 'free women', which is sometimes linked to the city's demographic gender imbalance due to its war experiences (Verhaegen 1990). To this day, its inhabitants proudly refer to their city as 'Boyoma Singa Mwambe'. Boyoma, they say, is the name of a beautiful girl and Singa Mwambe literally means 'eight strings' (Omasombo Tshonda 2005: 102). This popular sobriquet refers to the notorious tactics and strategies – occult and otherwise – of Kisangani's market women to ensnare male visitors and make them fall for their charms. Claiming to be these women's true heirs, Lemalema explicitly positioned themselves as depositories and holders of the Singa Mwambe – which was regularly talked about as if it were a traditional medicine (L. *nkisi*).

Others, however, contested Lemalema's self-conscious positioning as experts in 'trapping' men in their city. Female prostitutes, for instance, many of whom the Lemalema boys counted as their friends, often pointed out that the latter frequently paid 'normal' men for sex, rather than the other way around. This reverse transactionality was a structural characteristic of the homoerotic economy, where money and gifts predominantly flowed from 'effeminate' *fioto* partners to gender-conforming 'normal' partners – thus reversing dominant gendered directionalities of money, sex and desire (Hendriks 2016). Yet, in the case of Lemalema, the frequent use of hard-earned money was sometimes read as a desperate attempt to compensate for what they otherwise lacked in direct attraction.

Elie, Ange and Benjamin, for instance, often ridiculed Lemalema for what, in their eyes, was a lack of style, refinement and cosmopolitanism. They claimed that, in contrast to the vulgar 'village ways' of the mainly Swahili-speaking Lemalema, they themselves did not need money to attract men. Their fashionableness was enough. 'We don't have to pay,' they said. 'We *get* paid.' As such, they could pose as 'real' objects of 'normal' desire and outdo Lemalema in sexual skills. In the city, the three friends generally avoided the Lemalema gang, and both groups regularly exchanged insults (L. *kofinga*). Yet, as the anecdote above suggests, they could also occasionally come together as a momentary community – for instance when 'initiating' a new *fioto* boy.

Merelia

As university students in their early twenties, Elie, Ange and Benjamin carefully maintained their differences of class, language, origin and education compared with members of groups such as Lemalema. Supported by their families, they were relatively better-off and did not need to engage in Kisangani's street economy. Often, they had time (if not always the money) to hang out at the popular beach spots along the Tshopo River, where the city's more prosperous youth, families and lovers spent much of their free time. They also had their own dance troupe and regularly performed at the weekend in Kisangani's fancier nightclubs. During fieldwork, they even won a major dancing contest in town and many male and female youth wanted them to become their choreographers.

To differentiate themselves from Lemalema, Elie, Ange and Benjamin formed an exclusive group, which they called 'Force de Merelia'. Merelia, they said,

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was the secret name of a *fioto* 'goddess' (L. *déesse na bafioto*) they had half-jokingly invented. Gendered as female – sometimes in the form of a water spirit or mermaid (L. *Mami Wata*) – they claimed she was the source of their erotic power and knowledge. Merelia was also said to provide access to a mystical force (F. *force mystique*) that was physically situated in, and directly emanated from, their anus (L. *lisoko*, *mosomba*) and which allowed them to use their sphincter for luring, baiting and trapping 'normal' men.[19] The Merelia boys were indeed widely recognized as experts in twerking and giving men a 'taste' of anal sex (F. *donner goût*). Conversely, many 'normal' men avowed that a tight, well-trained anus was simply better in procuring erotic pleasure than what could be obtained from vaginal intercourse.[20]

Although the three students took great pride in their supposed capacity to transform (L. *kobongola*) other boys into *fioto*, they did not allow others to become initiated members (F. *membres initiés*) of their secret cult: they wanted to remain the only 'queens' (F. *reines*) of the city. This arrogant behaviour regularly ignited conflicts with other *fioto* men in Kisangani. Lemalema, for instance, persistently spread rumours that Merelia's prided anal powers came at the cost of fertility and had literally made Elie's, Ange's and Benjamin's penises shrink. The latter contested this claim and countered that they were able to ejaculate purely through anal stimulation.

It is worth noting that the idea of the anus as a locus of hidden but dangerous forces seems to resonate with many Central African topographies of the body. Achille Mbembe, for instance, writes that 'in the symbolic universe of many pre-colonial African societies, the anus – unlike the buttocks … – was considered an object of aversion' and thus operated as 'the sign par excellence of abjection' whose 'potency derives from its supposed dangerosity and esoteric nature' (2006: 167). Stefan Bekaert also describes how the Sakata considered the anus a dangerous opening in a male body that, according to dominant gender ideologies, should remain 'closed' – in contrast to the periodical opening of menstruating women (2000: 226–8). And Filip De Boeck notes how the Lunda king needed to have his rectum 'blocked off by means of protective herbal substances' whenever he left his courtyard (1994: 464). Moreover, in popular therapeutics, anal treatments such as suppositories, enemas and douchings are frequent for men and women alike (Bekaert 2000: 294–5; Hunt 2016: 248–9).

As a bodily point of entry that can be opened and closed, the anus seems to be a prime site for regulating the balance between influx and outflux, and for securing a continuous flow of vital energy that should neither be blocked nor leak excessively. In this respect, anal sex breaches the idea of male autonomy because it endangers control. Many *fioto* men and boys were indeed concerned about the possible negative health effects of anal intercourse. Some believed that the intake of sperm would 'block' one's body, as semen 'rotted' inside and made one's belly swell.

[19]Trapido (2017: 212) mentions rumours about female dancers in popular Kinshasa bands placing a '*magie* [*sic*] stock cube in their anus as part of some kind of magical ritual to grant a big bum'.

[20]This explicit focus on the anus as a source of erotic power nuances Stella Nyanzi's statement that 'many same-sex loving Africans never eroticize their anuses or rectums throughout their lives' (2014: 68).

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Others claimed that anal sex would lead to incontinence or acathexia – the inability to retain bodily fluids – so that men were forced to wear improvised sanitary pads (Meiu 2020). Either way, blocked or leaking bodies were feared as punishments for breaking the cultural or religious taboo against sodomy.

Moreover, many people in Kisangani believed that men had sex with other men in order to 'steal their star' (L. *koyiba minzoto*) or tap their 'luck' (L. *lupemba*, F. *chance*) (Hendriks 2018). While similar rumours also circulated about cross-sex relationships – in which it was usually older women who supposedly stole the life force of younger boyfriends (Pype 2012: 266) – people frequently framed same-sex sexual practices as inherently extractive. *Fioto* men were thereby said to look for virile partners because of the latter's vitality. And older 'bosses' (F. *patrons*, L. *bakonzi*) were suspected of forcing their dependants or employees to 'drop their pants' so as to meet the requirements of specific wealth medicines that demanded anal intercourse for their functioning (see also Geschiere 2017; Geschiere and Orock 2020).[21]

The imputed relationship between anality, occult power and wealth that emerges in these and other rumours, accusations and imaginaries in several (mainly francophone) Central African contexts still needs to be better understood.[22] Yet one might suspect that anal sex, as a purely non-reproductive 'expenditure' (F. *dépense*) of semen, energy and life force that is 'uselessly' spent outside predominant forms of kinship and sociality, is supposed to have other – strongly anti-social and anti-kinship – motivations and objectives. As such, 'homosexuality' finds itself in the same structural position as 'witchcraft' (L. *kindoki*): both are taken as a symptom and cause of a generalized 'moral corruption [that was] intimately linked to a perceived crisis of social reproduction' (Pierce 2016: 5). In situations of urban poverty where, for many youths, the ordinary avenues to marriage, adulthood and reproduction seem blocked, the anus – as a site for non-reproductive sex and pure *jouissance* – could become an object of both moral panic *and* contagious fascination.

Whereas many *fioto* men in Kisangani strongly contested the 'occult' nature of same-sex sexual practices, the Merelia boys made strategic and striking use of these popular connotations. Occasionally, they actively *provoked* rumours about the nocturnal powers they were said to acquire by breaking the 'taboo' on anal sex, without thereby explicitly confirming suspicions. As such, they turned their 'penetrability' into a source of strength to be feared. While witchcraft remained a painful accusation that could always lead to verbal and, less commonly, physical violence against supposed witches (L. *bandoki*), the Merelia boys thus managed to convert implicit or explicit accusations into extra transgressive capital to command respect in the city.

In many ways, these practices and discourses appear to confirm the equivalence between queerness and anti-normativity this article has set out to question. Posing

[21]The directionality of such alleged power transfers – whether from 'passive' partner to 'active' partner or vice versa – was highly ambiguous, context-dependent and often contested.

[22]See Geschiere and Orock (2020) for an insightful discussion of Achille Mbembe's (2010: 213, 219; 2020) and Joseph Tonda's (2016: 132) recent interpretations of the relationship between the anus, wealth and power. While these authors largely focus on rumours about politicians and businessmen in the higher echelons of power, this article thinks with sexual dissidents of much lower status.

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as self-consciously eccentric individuals in direct opposition to the majority of urban dwellers, the Merelia boys indeed talked about individual freedom from the constraints of 'Congolese society' and its heterosexist values. Their exclusive cult and celebration of anal powers were also explicitly centred on breaking the taboo on anal intercourse. And by deliberately cultivating an occult reputation as witches, they seemed to set themselves apart from ordinary socialities and kinship relations.[23]

Yet, although one should not underestimate this antagonistic dimension, Force de Merelia's queerness cannot be reduced to a simple opposition to the (hetero-) norm. Neither is it a mere plea for normality. Elie, Ange and Benjamin's strategies to distance themselves from mainstream society – both as *fioto* men and as 'initiated' Merelia boys – were geared towards creating a position from where they could build capital and agency to queer that mainstream. Or better, to extract its potential queerness. Just like Lemalema, they trained themselves in developing *fioto* power to provoke and seduce – rather than oppose – 'normal' masculinities.

In this respect, Merelia's anal 'force' might be read as a queering version of the 'female sexual knowledge and agency' and 'epitome of sensuality and sexual pleasure' that Nkiru Nzegwu describes as 'osunality' (2011: 258).[24] Indeed, just as osunality 'assigns agency to the vagina that is absent in Western notions of the erotic', Force de Merelia attributes a vital energy to the anus to seduce and provoke the penis (*ibid.*: 264). But although *fioto* reappropriations of female power – and its translocation from the vagina to the anus – extend the queer possibilities of an allegedly 'African' erotic, they also trouble the 'pronatalist' energy of osunality as a force that 'ensures social harmony and stability' and is 'highly valued by families and communities because it produces well-adjusted individuals' (*ibid.*: 258, 259). In the nightly economy of ambiance, the *non*-procreative dimension of anal sex becomes its own advantage and attraction, in opposition, perhaps, to the apparent stability and harmony of families, but very much in accordance with the field-specific norms of *dépense* and transgression.

Making men fall

Notwithstanding their many differences, both Lemalema and Force de Merelia produced and accumulated transgressive capital, converting their self-described effeminate 'passivity' into *fioto* agency and homoerotic power. As such, they managed to transform potentially hostile atmospheres into opportunities and possibilities. Lemalema explicitly drew from the long-standing 'tradition' of Singa

[23]Merelia's deliberate counter-valuation of the anus was directed towards rebuilding a strong self in an environment where individuality was under siege from a homogenizing scarcity of means. As such, their claimed anal powers bring to mind Audre Lorde's understanding of the erotic as a 'replenishing and provocative force' and a 'self-affirming' assertion (Lorde 1984). Yet, while Lorde emphasizes the 'sharing' and 'bridging' power of the erotic, Merelia's force was a more vindictive, aggressive and extractive energy that explicitly built selves *at the cost of* others (Hendriks 2018).

[24]Nzegwu specifically derives this concept from the female Yoruba deity Òsun to foreground an erotic sensuality that would characterize the 'matri-centric substructure of African societies', as opposed to the patriarchal logics of Christianity (Nzegwu 2011: 263).

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Mwambe to ensnare potential partners. Force de Merelia used occult imaginaries to invent a cosmopolitan *fioto* goddess who embodied their anal powers. And, in practice, both used similar tactics and strategies of aggressive seduction.

From a *fioto* perspective, the erotic seduction of 'normal' men largely happened through sexual *provocation*. Many openly *fioto* men and boys were masters in using provocative techniques that deliberately blurred the differences between banter, insult, flattery, joke and flirtation. They would, for instance, openly challenge men by questioning their penile force or endurance (see also Nzegwu 2011: 265), or they would publicly present an unsuspecting man as 'the father of their children' (L. *papa na bana na ngai*). With these games of provocative seduction (or seductive provocation), *fioto* men and boys teased and shocked so-called 'normal' men out of their complacency. Often, such techniques proved strikingly successful, as they opened up communication and interaction that could always lead to sexual encounters and relationships.

For both Lemalema and Force de Merelia, these common tactics of seduction and provocation had largely the same objective: 'making men fall' (L. *kokweyisa mibali*). Again, this desire to 'make men fall' seems to confirm the anti-normative idea of contestation behind queerness. Many *fioto* men indeed talked about 'taking revenge' (L. *kobekola*) on supposedly 'normal' men by 'breaking' (L. *kobuka*) their reputations of decency and by 'outing' (F. *exposer*) their hypocrisy. Among Kisangani's inhabitants, they were notorious for 'ruining' (F. *ruiner*) people's lives. Lemalema and Force de Merelia effectively drew considerable pleasure and satisfaction from first 'attaching' (L. *kokanga*) and then simply 'abandoning' (L. *kobwakisa*) men, after showing their families and friends 'what they really were'.

Capturing 'normal' men through elaborate practices of seduction only to let them fall was certainly a way to take revenge on a world that, despite its momentary possibilities, pleasures and affordances, seemed to foreclose liveable queer futures. *Fioto* men and boys might very well be experts in ensnaring men, but they had great difficulties in concretely imagining – let alone realizing – longer-term relationships. Social pressures in favour of heterosexual marriage, as well as the intimate entanglement of same-sex relationships with the largely ephemeral hedonism of 'ambiance', made the idea of enduring love from and towards 'normal' men almost unthinkable for many. As a result, many considered migration to an imagined gay-friendly 'West' (L. *mpoto*) as the only pathway towards durable same-sex relationships and marriage. For most, however, migration remained a faraway dream.

In the face of such impossible futures, revenge was clearly a form of contestation. But 'making men fall' was not only about resistance. Neither was it about opposing normal masculinity. In practice, it was about *outperforming* that masculinity according to its own rules. In the urban field of 'ambiance', where masculinities were made and unmade through performances of transgression, *fioto* men and boys knew exactly how to touch on male sensitivities and play into male reputations. Although they challenged 'normal' masculinity by openly transgressing sexual and gender norms, they also reproduced and extended, rather than subverted, the very norm of transgression that operated as a yardstick for measuring manhood.

As trickster figures who literally provoked 'normal' men, *fioto* men and boys thereby played into the latent queerness of the field of ambiance where

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transgression *was already the norm*. 'Making men fall' was therefore not merely an act of opposition. It was about cultivating complicity by pulling men into a homoerotic economy and luring them into a common world of desires, encounters and possibilities – not by transforming 'normal' masculinities but by drawing out their queer potential. Hence the bold claim of many *fioto* inhabitants in Kisangani that 'all men are gay' and that it was up to them – and their art of provocation and seduction – to trigger, actualize and stimulate this possibility.

Norms are already queer

'Queer' is a notoriously slippery and contested term. It has its own genealogies, histories, geographies and trajectories, its own relations of production, its own centres and margins. From an African(ist) perspective, it is not always clear what to do with it (Currier and Migraine-George 2016). Many of my activist friends in Kinshasa think queer is too odd or 'Western' to be of use in everyday struggles and projects. And yet, queer is manifestly taken up by other activists across the continent. The field of queer African studies is also quickly developing as a home-grown space of encounter and reflection, drawing from postcolonial, transnational and decolonial perspectives (see, for example, Ekine and Abbas 2013; Hendriks and Spronk 2020; Matebeni 2014).

This article hopes to contribute to this field and archive. Through a careful reading of the actual practices, discourses, narratives and imaginaries of two groups of *fioto* friends in Kisangani, it shows how and why the very idea of 'queerness' and its assumed relation to 'normativity' need rethinking. In making this ethnographic argument, it does not simply translate *fioto* with 'queer' or equate what *fioto* men called 'normal' with 'the' hetero-norm. It proposes a reflection on *relations* rather than terms. It asks what would happen if we took the ethnographically substantiated relation between *fioto* and 'normal' men as a way to think about the theoretically assumed relation between queerness and normativity. What would change if the perspectives of *fioto* men were taken seriously *as theory* rather than mere 'data' (Comaroff and Comaroff 2015)? If queerness would be to normativity as *fioto* is to 'normal', it argues, queerness would become a potential *of* normativity, rather than an opposition to it.

The desired relationship between *fioto* and 'normal' men was indeed not one of queer resistance 'against' the norm, but an attempt to create and maintain a complicity that did not separate a queer self from a supposedly 'normal' other but revealed the queerness of the norm itself. In other words, *fioto* strategies of seduction and provocation aimed to collapse any essential difference between 'queerness' and 'normativity' by proving that 'all men are gay'. Rather than simply rejecting this common statement as faulty or naïve wishful thinking, we should take it as a powerful claim that points at possibilities for a queer politics that keeps pushing at the fact that 'the norm is *already* generating the conditions of differentiation that antinormativity so urgently seeks' (Wiegman and Wilson 2015: 16, emphasis added).

In a critical text on 'queering queer Africa', Stella Nyanzi states that queer is an 'open invitation to all of us *opposed to* essentialist patriarchal heterosexist heteronormative binary configurations of sexual orientations and gender identities' (2014: 65–6, emphasis added). Such an oppositional stance is absolutely vital in

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an epoch of anti-homosexuality bills. Yet, as her own text suggests, we should also refrain from anxiously policing the taxonomic boundaries between what is and is not queer (enough) (*ibid.*: 66). Such theoretical debates are not only self-referential but also politically unhelpful in understanding the limits and possibilities of actual lives within and beyond multiple norms, queer or otherwise. As Tushabe wa Tushabe argues, we should try to 'transform linguistic demands of naming others and attend more carefully to how others' narratives shape self-knowledge' (2017: 183). A more capacious understanding of both queerness *and* normativity therefore imposes itself.

This article shows how *fioto* erotic strategies do not position themselves outside the norm but very much *within* the norm as a necessary condition for its further extension, relaxation and deviation. Operating as pioneers who significantly stretch heteronormativity, my interlocutors deliberately traversed the frontier between their 'abnormal' sexual dissidence and the 'normal' men who fell for their powers – not, again, to impose queerness against normativity, but to prey on the queer affordances of the norm that performatively defines 'normal' masculinity by way of the essentializing criterion of men's 'transgressive' nature (Gondola 2016). Thinking with *fioto* men and boys leads us to acknowledge that norms can be much queerer beasts than they are often supposed to be. If, as S. N. Nyeck (2011: 195) suggests, '[t]he idea of queerness must remain paradoxical in Africa in order to safeguard its critical nature and ability to puzzle', the same could be said for the idea of 'normativity', which turns out to be at least as paradoxical and contradictory.

While similar conclusions might, of course, be reached by any open-minded empirical attention to the complex realities of non- or more-than-heterosexual relationships and desires, wherever and whenever they manifest themselves, rethinking the relationship between queerness and normativity from contemporary Africa holds particular promise because of the continent's striking multiplicity of norms. In a recent text on 'frontier Africa' – from which this part issue draws inspiration – Francis Nyamnjoh points to the multiple possibilities for transformation that are valued and nurtured in many past and present African realities (Nyamnjoh 2017). He describes a 'world of flux' (*ibid.*: 258) where both power and weakness are 'nimble-footed, fluid and situational' (*ibid.*: 260), where agency is 'something to be discovered, cultivated, nurtured, activated and reactivated' (*ibid.*: 256) and 'bodies are melting pots of possibilities' (*ibid.*: 257) that are 'constantly in need of activation, potency and enhancement' (*ibid.*: 258). In this world, where 'anything can be anything' (*ibid.*: 258), one can see why norms are dynamic and full of surprising possibilities, and how queerness lurks in the very multiplicity and malleability of the world.

Queer provocations from Africa can help loosen the dominant concept of anti-normativity to which canonical queer theory so often ties itself. Lemalema and Force de Merelia insist that we are *all* already taken up (and taken in) by games of normativity and transgression, where opposition and resistance merge into complicity and point towards a conviviality that Nyamnjoh defines as an invitation to 'reach out, encounter and explore ways of enhancing or complementing ourselves with the added possibilities of potency brought our way by the incompleteness of others' (2017: 262). It might very well be from this conviviality, where 'far from being a threat, other beings and ways of being are always a fascination to be embraced with open arms', that decolonial queer futures could be imagined (*ibid.*: 262).

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Abstract

In modern social thinking, norms are generally thought of in opposition to a space of freedom that is more or less curtailed by and through processes of normalization. 'Transgression' thereby becomes an implicit or explicit act of resistance *against* the norm. This is particularly clear in Western Queer Theory, where a political and analytical investment in anti-normativity has – paradoxically – become a field-defining norm. Yet such strong anti-normativity can become a liability when trying to do justice to actually existing queer dynamics in past and present African realities. Drawing from ethnographic fieldwork among sexually dissident young men who call themselves '*fioto*' in urban Democratic Republic of Congo, this article shifts the always already oppositional relationship between queerness and normativity – not by arguing that queer is normal too or by showing that queer lives produce their own norms alongside heteronormativity, but by suggesting that queerness is a potential *of* normativity, rather than an opposition to it. It specifically thinks with two groups of *fioto* friends in Kisangani to show how and why norms generated their own queerness – as something that was already there as an inherent dimension of their own dynamism and multiplicity.

Résumé

Dans les sciences sociales, les normes sont souvent pensées comme étant en opposition avec une espace de liberté qui serait plus ou moins réduite par des processus de normalisation. La transgression deviendrait alors un acte implicite ou explicite de *résistance* à la norme. Cette perspective est particulièrement présente dans la théorie « queer » occidentale, où un investissement politique et analytique dans « l'anti-normativité » est devenu – paradoxalement – une norme qui définit ce champ critique. Cette anti-normativité intense peut néanmoins devenir un inconvénient quand on essaie de rendre plus concrètement les dynamiques « queer » qui existent dans des réalités africaines actuelles ou passées. En s'appuyant sur une recherche ethnographique avec de jeunes dissidents sexuels masculins qui s'identifient comme « *fioto* » dans les villes de la République Démocratique du Congo, cet article change la relation toujours déjà oppositionnelle entre le queer et le normatif. Non pas en soutenant que le queer est aussi normal, ni en montrant que les vies queer produisent leurs propres normes à côté de l'hétéronormativité, mais en suggérant que le queer est un *potentiel* de la normativité, plutôt qu'une opposition. Plus spécifiquement, cet article pense avec deux groupes d'amis *fioto* à Kisangani afin de montrer comment et pourquoi des normes engendraient leur propres aspects queer – comme une potentialité qui était déjà là en tant que dimension inhérente à leur dynamisme et multiplicité.

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