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Elegant Incursions: Fashion, Music and Gender Dissidence in 1950s Brazzaville and Kinshasa

In the 1950s, associations created by women who were involved in dance, fashion and entertainment achieved huge visibility and social power in the twin capitals of the French and Belgian Congo, Brazzaville and Leopoldville (today Kinshasa). These groups, known as elegance clubs (*sociétés d’élégance*), contributed to a vibrant urban scene centered on a cosmopolitan taste for Latin sounds, dance-steps of Congolese rumba and the pleasure of “dressing well.” They were especially involved in the economy of the *pagne* (loincloth fabrics)—wax and fancy prints valued by women from both sides of the river and preferred over the “European” dress.¹ Elegance clubs were always associated with the launching of new fashion trends, popular orchestras and other public events. In that respect, it is no surprise that at the first elections of the African burgomasters in Leopoldville in 1957, a club from the commune of Bandalungwa named *L’Agence* (The Agency) decided to participate in the mayoral inauguration:

[These women] went out in public, dressed up in their pagnes of special occasions, wearing new Bata series of shoes and a hairdo rolled in a Sputnik style. The song they performed in the honor of the burgomaster was an old pre-war song. You could have believed yourself in a bar for a *matanga* (funeral wake) party.²

The Congolese journalist, in order to discredit the unannounced performance, suggested that a political ceremony was not the place for this elegance club that rather belonged to the realm of bars.³ Yet, supporting the newly elected burgomaster probably seemed sound to the members of L'Agence. Their sudden incursion and well-prepared show aimed to remind him of their social importance. On a broader level, it also claimed their desire to contribute to the political changes that were emerging.

Although the 1950s are often obscured by the narratives of postcolonial disillusionment, they were conducive to social and political experimentations, especially for women who seized the spirit of optimism of the time to contribute to female emancipation. In the Congolese cities, recreational and reputedly apolitical associations greatly contributed to changing gender norms and relations. As historian of gender and popular culture Charles-Didier Gondola, has observed, although Congolese rumba “began as a male preserve,” female associations managed to influence the whole urban scene.⁴ As we will see, their activities also paved the way for the first feminist discourses on *women's emancipation*—a polysemic notion increasingly used in the 1960s nation-building. In fashion, elegance clubs prefigured what would later become *La Sape*, a well-known, predominantly male movement based around designer clothing and a voyage to Paris.⁵ More than other organizations, recreational associations were also key in women's participation to public life.⁶ Indeed, even if political organizations and unions had been authorized since 1946 in the French Congo (whereas they remained banned in the Belgian colony until 1957), women's involvement in political parties was limited to singing songs and planning parties—activities for which they occasionally called on elegance clubs.⁷

The extraordinary agency of elegance clubs should be understood as part of a broader African history of women who sought to gain independence by migrating to colonial towns. After World War II, cities were attractive places for women who could gain status and acquire

property.⁸ Many took advantage of the inefficiency of colonial policies to escape rural areas where they represented the majority of the labor force. For these women, female associations became crucial to navigate the new moral and material economy of gender relations in the Congolese capitals where men outnumbered women (by almost 2 to 1 in 1955-57).⁹ In Belgian Congo, their mutual-aid system was particularly important for single women, the *femmes libres* (free women), who were required to pay a high annual tax to the authorities who assumed they were engaged in prostitution.¹⁰

The literature on Congolese urban culture has largely described these single women, also known as *ndumba*—a term carrying the connotation of prostitute—, as key figures of female independence, urban hedonism, and an inexhaustible source of inspiration for popular singers.¹¹ On the contrary, little is known about their everyday lives and imagination. Similarly, the other categories of women who also joined elegance clubs, like married women, have never been considered. This article seeks to recover the voices of these women that historiography has too often seen as prostitutes, although the recent literature has demonstrated that transactional sex was a reversible activity.¹² The aim is to capture the various choices of sociability, performances and fashion through which women consolidated practices of freedom.¹³ Here “elegant incursion” refers both to their visibility in the city—performances on the streets, catwalks and in the bars—and the way they imposed themselves in male-dominated environments while creating new gender norms of respectability. The literature has explored similar ideas to incursion. Studies about the ability of gender dissidents to turn urban places, imagined as heteronormative, into spaces for queer affirmation have shown the importance of “invasion” and the hijacking of social events and spaces.¹⁴ It also relates to the social history of women and mobilization that has documented “alternative” modes of women’s participation in politics in the 1950s such as violent street actions.¹⁵ Although not violent and provoking more fascination than disapproval, elegant incursions

were similarly highly spectacular and are thus easily traceable. Dress, clothing and dance often put women at center stage as bodily praxis renders women's political praxis visible.¹⁶

Female associations sparked off many comments in the 1950s Congolese press, igniting debates about women's mobility, public space, and respectability norms. They appeared in journals like *Actualités africaines* (African news) that emphasized the sensational and the extravagant to provide a colorful picture of urban life. With the exception of a few pieces by Suzanne Freitas, the first female journalist of the Belgian Congo, most of these articles were written by male "évolués," a small group of educated Congolese who had enjoyed access to missionary schools and held subaltern posts in the Belgian colonial working world.¹⁷ The study also draws on unpublished interviews with club members and the first woman radio presenter, Pauline Lisanga, that provide unique insights into early gender norms of respectability and celebrity in Francophone Africa.¹⁸ I complement these sources with old ethnographies, French and Belgian colonial archives, two rare press photographs of a catwalk show and a transgender woman in a bar, and several conversations that I held in 2014 with Congolese musicians who were part of the 1950s music world. This diversity of sources allows me to cross read embodied practices with claims about respectability.¹⁹

In the first section, this article presents the origins and economy of the elegance clubs within the trans-imperial context of the French and Belgian Congo. It shows how these associations achieved social importance and helped women of diverse categories to navigate the city. In the second section, I examine their creative involvement in the realm of fashion and music. Their activity and dance performances significantly broadened women's access to public space and paved the way for gender dissidence. In the last section, I analyze how the first music and radio female celebrities relate to elegance clubs while shaping their own ideas of female fame, mobility and respectability.

Origins of the elegance clubs: pagnes, jewelry, beer bottle racks and solidarity²⁰

Brazzaville-Leopoldville emulation and West African connections

The elegance clubs appeared in a unique transimperial context, across the Malebo Pool that separates the cities of Brazzaville and Leopoldville. Intense Trans-Pool economic and cultural activity that existed since the pre-colonial era facilitated the spread of cultural patterns, dance and music on both sides of the river.²¹ In the late colonial era, it was common to cross the river by ferry several times a day, and to live in a city and work in the other. The interchange between the cultural world of the two capitals was crucial to the spread of new social and homosocial practices. It was the case of men's associations that existed in Brazzaville since the beginning of the 20th century and of the first women's groups like the *associations d'homonymes* encouraged by Christian missionaries in the early 1930s.²² These groups expanded and became more diverse with the creation of the French Union and the freedom of association granted in the constitution of 1946. However, the importance of the African female associational network in the 1940s should not be overestimated: by 1949, there was still only one officially declared female group, the *Association des femmes de l'Union française*, in which most members were French.²³

Equally important was the early influence of the West African cosmopolitanism of the “Coastmen,” or “Popo,” recruited by the French administration and companies, who often found work on the other side of the river.²⁴ Associations of Senegalese, Cameroonians and Daho-Togolese (Dahomey, today Benin) inspired the creation of male and female Congolese recreational clubs.²⁵ In Leopoldville, the wives of West African civil servants who had gathered in a section of their husbands' association, the Club Excelsior inspired the creation of the first Congolese women's association in 1937.²⁶ In 1940, women related to the male members of *L'Odéon kinois* (The Kinois Odeon) and *L'harmonie kinoise* (The Kinois Harmony)—known for its modern orchestra of brass, woodwind and string instruments—

created two other female associations.²⁷ This illustrates a dynamic of emulation that would remain central to the development of elegance clubs.

The Congolese Honorine Bekombe founded the first independent club in Leopoldville, *Diamant* (Diamond).²⁸ The group was suspected by the authorities of being a front for prostitution and was subject to thorough investigation in 1948.²⁹ However, *Diamant*'s success quickly led to the creation of a rival club, *La Beauté* (The Beauty), led by Antoinette Mongwango. A system of sponsoring developed across the twin capitals as evidenced by the many elegance clubs bearing the same name on both sides of the river.³⁰ Balandier and Sylvain-Comhaire respectively identified 8 major associations in 1950 Brazzaville and throughout the 1950s in Leopoldville,³¹ but this number does not reflect the blossoming of often short-lived associations, like the ones mentioned below. Many more probably existed in the twin cities where elegance clubs were often described as “countless” and “ubiquitous” since the late 1940s.³²

Elegance clubs, networks and arrangements: navigating the city

As Michèle Odeyé-Finzi has observed in Dakar and Brazzaville, female associations allowed women to enjoy a status less defined in relation to men, and more defined in relation to the city.³³ Essential to this status was the economic autonomy that clubs' members achieved with the “*muziki*” (Lingala, Kilarí and Kikongo, “friendship”), a system of mutual aid similar to the rotating credit associations called *likelemba* and better known as *tontine* in Francophone Africa.³⁴ Elegance clubs escaped the control of the colonial state by recruiting a *tata mokonzi* (male president) who officially represented them and could open a saving account.³⁵ Regarding the group's activities, however, this figurehead remained less important than the female president (*mama mokonzi*).³⁶ What distinguished elegance clubs from other female associations was their ability to work with male entrepreneurs “on equal footing.” Their members appeared bolder and were more likely to succeed when they went into business.³⁷

Such enterprising women had a great power of attraction over male journalists and musicians, and married women.³⁸ Influential members could value alternative norms of female respectability without being criticized for moving away from models of womanhood deemed respectable by the Congolese bourgeoisie and colonial authorities.³⁹ For instance, Victorine N’joli, the *mama mokonzi* of La Mode and one of the most prominent women of the 1950s Congo, valued the accumulation of wealth with multiple partners more than other activities, and despite her success as a tailor.⁴⁰ In a 1957 interview, she explained that she had learned to sew with her mother who was a seamstress, and that she only worked occasionally; she sewed “for fun” while most of her income came from her “lovers.”

The bars of the twin cities were conducive to the porosity of women’s categories and key to most African women’s emancipation in the cities. As many husbands lamented, women sought refuge to free themselves from their guardianship.⁴¹ Essential forms of solidarity appeared in these spaces, such as associations of pregnant women and young mothers who met every evening in Leopoldville.⁴² The division of space between the home and the bar was indeed more blurred than the great deal of male comments about urban female sexuality may suggest.⁴³ For instance, the club *La Reconnaissance* (The Recognition, or Gratitude), created in 1958, included in its status a clause on the crockery that would be offered to a member who gets married and the support they would provide to a member and her husband in case of hospitalization.⁴⁴ Such arrangements suggest that no clear distinctions existed between elegance clubs’ members and the majority of Congolese “ordinary wives.”⁴⁵

An interview with a former elegance club member, Delphine Swalehe, also illustrates that the realm of the bar was not opposed to marriage.⁴⁶ Swalehe rather mentioned the benefits of being married to her second husband, a Nigerian (like Swalehe’s grandfather from Ibadan) who was a member of one of the several West African associations of Leopoldville. Their networks complemented each other when she was introduced to La Mode by her little sister

Joséphine, a “famous” woman who worked at the radio station. At the time, she was unaware of the urban everyday life and music scene: “I came from the convent, I was still the kind of person who lowered their eyes.” After moving from Stanleyville (Kisangani) to the capital in 1957, Swalehe quickly found her way in this elegance club as she started selling pagnes and frequenting renowned places such as the Congo-bar and Vis-à-Vis. Elegance clubs thus allowed a great diversity of women to navigate the cities. The following section explains and further analyzes how the social importance and capacity of these groups to change gender norms and relations resulted from their mobility and creative involvement in the realm of fashion.

“For the sake of ambiance:”⁴⁷ Fashion shows and spaces for gender dissidence

From back yards to catwalks

In her 1945 and 1960 surveys on Leopoldville’s women, Sylvain-Comhaire observed that collaborations between women’s associations and pagne sellers started with an idea of Antoinette Kinda’s, a member of La Beauté. Based on a system Kinda observed during a trip to Duala in 1951, La Beauté models offered to wear and advertise the pagnes of certain trading houses. In exchange, the trading houses would give them the pagnes for free, thereby allowing La Beauté to get the same new clothes quickly and on a regular basis. Elegance clubs received wax fabrics to sew new clothes and advertise them.⁴⁸ Consumers then named the pieces, sometimes with playful allusions to politics such as the popular “*maboko ya Roi Baudouin*” (The hand of King Baudouin) in 1957.⁴⁹ Models paraded in bars of the twin cities and occasionally fought with those wearing a competing brand.⁵⁰ Some groups were so closely associated with fabric sellers that they took them as presidents, like La Mode with the merchant Nkita in 1956.⁵¹

This economy allowed elegance clubs to take part in the 1950s male-dominated debate about whether modern Congolese women should wear pagnes or “European” dresses. *Evolués* men

only wore European suits, but the female body tended to be viewed as a visible enactment of decolonization. In that sense, pagnes became valued as an authentically African garment. In one of the few surveys to include the opinion of club members, mama mokonzi and beauty queens, some observed that the pagne, just like Indian saris, Chinese and Ghanaian female outfits, meant that “native women do not seek to dress like European women.”⁵² However, if they clearly expressed their preference for the pagne over dresses, most of them claimed they were not “conservative” and wore both. While refusing constraints, they emphasized the fluidity of tradition and modernity that, as elsewhere in Africa, were constructed simultaneously through fashion.⁵³ Elegance clubs’ fashion shows regularly entertained city-dwellers by staging playful competitions between, on the one hand, models wearing pagnes and, on the other hand, models wearing western dresses. By doing so, models expressed their right to navigate between tradition and modernity.⁵⁴

As recent literature has shown, fashion rituals are essential in the construction and public performance of ideas about African womanhood.⁵⁵ Elegance clubs caused genuine social changes, especially regarding dancing in public. Indeed, the stigmatization of couple dances had started in the interwar period with repressive strategies from the colonial administration and missionaries.⁵⁶ In the 1920s, the Leopoldville police suspected all the women who took part in couple dances to be prostitutes and systematically closed dance halls with adjoining bedrooms so that they would not “degenerate into brothels.”⁵⁷ A decade later, in Brazzaville, Christian churches still found “regional dancing that involved women and men and the new craze for ‘modern’ partnered dancing immoral and ‘obscene.’”⁵⁸ At least until 1945, most women used to practice “modern” and “regional” dances among themselves in courtyards, out of the sight of passers-by. Conversely, men were seen dancing and playing in orchestras “in all the places where the streets widened.”⁵⁹

FIG. 1 Models dancing and Franco and the OK Jazz at the UAC fashion show in Leopoldville. *Quinze*, 9 August 1957.

Women's incursion onto stages and catwalks profoundly transformed the moral and social norms associated with women dancing in public spaces. This press photograph of a *défilé musical* ("musical fashion show") illustrates this evolution as well as the inventiveness of elegance clubs. *Défilés musicaux* were among the many kinds of fashion shows created in the 1950s. They involved models dancing in couple, just as most women usually did in courtyards a decade before. These various shows developed strong ties with dance and music as models were seen dancing to the sound of the greatest stars of Congolese music such as young Franco and the OK Jazz (in the background). Here the social importance of women participating in these shows is suggested by the position of the model, smiling at the camera with a complicit gaze, while the musicians are in the background, looking at the audience. She took center stage while looking at the photographer of *Quinze* and thereby invested the visual world of the press. This picture reveals how elegance clubs staged and shared a new atmosphere that associated women's performances with modernity.⁶⁰ African women of the time did not only avoid "direct confrontation with men, stepping aside in public in order to better dominate them in private."⁶¹ Some also made elegant incursions into the *cité*⁶² and therefore publicly challenged patriarchy.

Big "coming-out" and showers of banknotes

Alongside collaborations in the realm of fashion, elegance clubs developed significant partnerships with musicians and orchestras. Structured clubs like Bana La mode (The children of La Mode) and Bana OK emerged around Franco and the OK Jazz, nicknamed the "young girls' orchestra."⁶³ As Maria Valanta, a former member of La Mode, remembered: "When they had problems [...] We would stick together."⁶⁴ This solidarity allowed associations to invent new performances within the bar, and, eventually, to carve out spaces for gender

dissidence. For instance, the club *La Mode préférée* (The Favorite fashion) organized a big “coming-out” for its three years of existence:

The six “misses” entered the bar around 10pm to a languid march of the African jazz orchestra. Dressed in European style, they reaped huge success: the dancefloor of the Kongo bar on which they moved like a well-staged ballet was invaded by a crowd of admirers who, by way of congratulation, showered them with banknotes of various sizes.

The “*ambiance*” lit up when the excellent Kabasele’s formation burst into one of his cha-cha-chá that provokes a shiver of pleasure down your feet and make you looking for a partner [...].⁶⁵

In the late 1950s, such refined fashion shows were an integral part to the “*ambiance*” in the Congo, a musical idiom and a whole “way of life” created in counterpoint to colonial and Christian morality.⁶⁶ Women were not, as one often suggests, just a key ingredient, in the same way as beer and music.⁶⁷ Elegance clubs had unsettled the place of male musicians’ performances as the only dominant artistic medium and infused *ambiance* with a vitality that directly engaged the audience.

Here, the description of a shower of banknotes is also significant. It represented a mode of self-financing that would become an important feature of Congolese rumba staged performances after the independence.⁶⁸ Another press article describes a similar scene in which the audience throw banknotes to the members of *Le Soleil du Congo* (The Congo’s sun), as they perform *kebo* dance, in the streets, dressed up in blouse and trousers.⁶⁹ *Kebo* was an early form of entertainment favored, like the multi-ethnic dance called *agbaya*, by members of different groups who had migrated in Leopoldville. It was particularly popular among women and girls who “danced single-file, each holding the shoulders of the woman in front of her and singing in unison to percussion accompaniment.”⁷⁰ *Le Soleil du Congo* thus

took to the foreground a dance usually performed away from prying eyes, simultaneously rehabilitating cultural sensibilities that had been erased by the popularity of modern Congolese music. On the one hand, this performance demonstrates how elegance clubs played with the traditional representation of women as a link of transmission between the past and the present in a creative way. On the other, the involvement of the audience in a mode of self-financing that favored female economic independence marked an important turn in their acknowledgement as professional performers.

Trouble and extravagance: queering the ambiance

Fig. 2.

While becoming central to urban sociality, politics and aesthetics, women's orchestration of space paved the way for gender dissidence. In a 1956 article, the journalist F. Diatako provided a rare description of a transgender member of an elegance club who asked to be called Marie-José, instead of her given name Joseph:⁷¹

To recognize him, Sir, it is to get into trouble, because Joseph never likes people to know that he is a man.

If the rumors in his neighborhood are to be believed, he has been more than once arrested by the Administration for wearing female outfits. But alas, endowed with a good commercial policy, he did not hesitate to tell the Administration that he preferred this outfit because he wanted to wear his *mabaya* himself, given that he is the sole designer of these models.

He is even a member of one of these women's associations that we see meeting every evening in almost every bar of the cité, not as president, but simply as an ordinary member, just like any other woman.

This article illustrates Hendriks's definition of the *ambiance* as an "ideology of transgression" that can be amplified to create openings for queer affirmation.⁷² Being a reputed tailor and a member of an elegance club allowed Marie-José to affirm her transgender identity. Likely very rare in the 1950s Congo, this practice is common in 2000s Soweto where mutual-aid groups called *stokvels* frequently include transgender members and especially value "flamboyantly dressed and outrageously performing queer men."⁷³

The futile arrests by the colonial police and the journalist's disapproval about the abandonment of the family home suggest that, like in today's Congo, homoerotic and gay relationships were probably tolerated when they were kept secret and did not disturb obligations related to marriage and procreation.⁷⁴ In fact, the article refers less to a sexual identity than to a non-normative gender that openly disrupts dominant discourses and norms. It is interesting to observe in this respect that, although Marie-José posed with her hand on the shoulder of the man next to her, the caption "The man-woman has a drink with two friends" rules out the possibility of homoerotic or homosexual relations. The absence of comment suggests that one tolerated men opened to homoerotic relations when they were dressed in suit and performing "ideal masculinity."⁷⁵

In an interview by Gondola, a former member of the 1950s youth movement, the Bills, evoked ordinary homosexual practices without dismissing them, suggesting that homophobic culture had barely emerged at the time.⁷⁶ In that vein, the choice of vocabulary used by Diakato to describe Marie-José reveals a mixed feeling of novelty and trouble provoked by queer incursion: "This gentleman disguised as a woman no longer bears any resemblance to the persons of his sex. [...] Just like young single women, he likes to frequent bars every night, to dance, smile, please and charm. He has neither a man's voice, nor a woman's voice." Here, the unclassifiable character of the voice aims at evoking the trouble that the expression "man-woman" is unable to capture. As the quote marks around "man-woman" in the title also

suggest, the journalist chose an uncommon expression. It was probably a literal translation of the Wolof expression *góor-jigéen* used in Senegal to refer pejoratively to homosexuals.⁷⁷ It might have circulated in Brazzaville's fashion circles that Senegalese and Dahomean men dominated since the 1920s. This would illustrate how, like elegance clubs, Congolese gender norms and designations were shaped by cultural circulations across the French Empire.

Both trans-imperial circulations and the links between fashion and music within the Congolese rumba scene were central to gender dissidence and women incursions in the bars, the streets and the city at large. To highlight how these dynamics influenced the first national female public figures and how the latter related to elegance clubs and mobility within the city, let us now turn to the women who made incursions in the world of media and recording music.

Between streets and waves: motion, respectability and the audible

Lucie Eyenga: voicing the ambiance from the studios

Popular singers such as Lucie Eyenga embodied new norms of fame and respectability that both amplified and exceeded the elegance clubs' practices defending the women's right to the city. A major figure in Congolese collective memory, Eyenga paradoxically remains an elusive figure. Born in 1934 in Coquilathville (today Mbandaka), she moved to the capital and attended a homemaking middle school.⁷⁸ Her later career is exceptional within the colonial context in which women could not be trained, like male musicians, in military parades, Catholic choirs, boy scouts and missionaries' formations.⁷⁹ In 1954, the recording company Opika hired her to replace the singer Véronique Mansanga who got married and dropped out of music. The owner's idea to recruit a female singer was inspired by the company Loningisa, which was making a success of songs by Marie Kitoto and the guitarist Henri Bowane.⁸⁰ It allowed Eyenga to become the first female star of the 1950s—the first instrumentalists

appeared a decade later—recording with guitarists such as Tino Baroza and orchestras like the African Jazz and the Rock’A Mambo.

Eyenga’s career seems different from that of other women involved in the music economy. Most of them were indeed married to musicians, like the Cameroonian Marcelle Ebibi who recorded songs with her successive husbands, the Brazzavillian guitarists Léon Fylla and Franc Lassan. Before returning to Cameroon in the 1960s, Ebibi also found contracts in Belgian upper-class milieux through the intermediary of André Scohy, a speaker at the RCBA and a key European actor in the cité’s cultural scene.⁸¹ What Eyenga and Ebibi had in common, however, was their will to become famous as professional musicians while distancing themselves from the environment of bars.⁸² The most striking aspect of female singers’ early careers is indeed the way they favored studio recordings over the stage. In newspapers that regularly covered the capitals’ nightlife like *Actualités africaines*, I could not find a reference to Eyenga’s shows. In the 1950s, she only appeared in a photograph taken in Opika studios, along with Joseph Kabasele and the African Jazz, allegedly in 1953.⁸³ Not surprisingly, this advertisement associated her image with “respectable” musicians who locally appeared as real gentlemen, professional artists and married men.⁸⁴

The discreet presence of Congolese female singers within the rumba scene is remarkable in the context of the advent of cover girls and a tendency to over-sexualize women artists in 1950s Africa.⁸⁵ In South Africa, in particular, “the primary route for an aspirant female singer or dancer was to be adopted by a male group for her sexy, decorative quality.”⁸⁶ Although remaining away from the stage, Eyenga’s songs beautifully echoed the cities’ ambiances. Her music spoke of love, money and rivalries between men. In her most famous song, “*Bolingo ya La joie*” (The love of The joy), she praised elegance clubs, playing on words to celebrate urban pleasures, amusements and her association called La Joie (The Joy).⁸⁷ Interestingly, other songs responded indirectly to the strong tradition of male musicians singing “as a

woman”⁸⁸, using the first person. Indeed, she adopted a male perspective, for example singing as a man in love who strove to make his wife come back.

Pauline Lisanga: radio and audible respectability

Another star of the 1950s, Pauline Lisanga, articulated more clearly the links between early women’s fame and the “audible respectability” enjoyed by the first female public figures working with sound technology. Born in Leopoldville from a family of fishers, Lisanga was trained by the Belgian missionary sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary where she learned French.⁸⁹ She successively worked as a teacher and a clerk in a Belgian company in town. The new Head of the African broadcast service, Gustave Van Herreweghe, noticed her on stage as she was performing as a volunteer actress in a play of the French playwright Eugène Labiche. He asked a Congolese collaborator, Maurice Kasongo, to visit her family and get their permission to hire her as a radio presenter. Lisanga recalled that her father first declined the proposition, saying “No! If she goes there, she will come back with a *métis* (mixed-race child)!”⁹⁰

Lisanga became the first woman radio presenter of “Belgian Congo Radio for Africans” (RCBA), a station specially designed for the Congolese in 1949.⁹¹ At the station, she discovered the term “speakerine” and its function, which consisted of being fluent in French and “perfect” in order to make a good impression in front of foreign visitors. Lisanga was an exception in the 1950s as, both in Africa and Europe, women’s voices and personalities were still deemed unfit to embody national radio stations.⁹² Her description was closer to girls in beauty pageants, flourishing in the 1950s twin capitals, who had to “consolidate and challenge boundaries of respectability through morality and admiration.”⁹³ Lisanga acquired more responsibilities over the decade, working as a record librarian and training new speakerines, hosting music programs and co-hosting the news.⁹⁴ Yet, she was not allowed to express her

takes on womanhood. Significantly, it was not Lisanga but a Belgian woman called Madame Sabine who hosted the first program designed for Congolese middle-class housewives in 1957, in line with the domestic monitoring roles European women assumed in the colony.⁹⁵ However, Lisanga managed to shape and embody her own conception of respectability by exploiting the links between radio and the recording industry.⁹⁶ As RCBA mainly broadcasted local music to please its Congolese listeners, Lisanga could indeed extend her talents and fame to the world of music. She recorded a few songs of which the topics sharply contrasted with most popular music, suggesting that her main objective was less to become a popular singer, than to express herself within the autonomous sphere of Congolese rumba. Sung in Lingala—the lingua franca of the twin cities—and bearing French titles, her songs reflected her ambivalent relationship to urban culture: “*Toilette kinoise*” (Kinoise outfit) evokes fashion and waist beads (*ziguida*) on shimmering women bodies, while another one spoke of the “*Ménagère*” (housekeeper), a term that refers both to middle-class housewives and Congolese partners of colonial men.⁹⁷ A third one with a French title, “*Souvenir de Léopoldville*,” solemnly referred to the colonial city without using its popular name, “Léo.”

More ambiguities appear in her 2006 interview in which she claimed that her pride mainly resulted from her capacity to build a career in a male-dominated environment. As the first and only black girl to meet white men on an equal footing, she explained, “I was not afraid. I did my career like a man.” Like many women city-dwellers, she got married several times and was subject to teasing when she was single, concluding “my husband was radio, my work.” Yet, the most striking aspect of her claims was her rejection of urban female mobility. In order to become a “valuable woman,” Lisanga preferred to work at the radio rather than “wandering everywhere in Kinshasa”—a criticism frequently made of elegance club members. By doing so, she drew on the relative immobility of the speakerine to have her voice heard across a trans-imperial space while remaining in the studio. It allowed her to

become a public figure while aligning herself with prevailing ideas about respectable behavior and mobility. However, she joined the notorious association La Rose in 1950. This apparent contradiction suggests that, although elegance clubs were irreconcilable with her perception of female respectability, she had to join one to navigate the city as an independent and female public figure.

Suzanne Freitas on the women's right to the city

Similar concerns about female mobility appeared in the women's advice column of Suzanne Freitas, an auxiliary teacher and the first female journalist of the Belgian Congo. As Mougoué observed in 1960s Cameroon, such advice columns provided opportunities for the female elite to speak for themselves.⁹⁸ Yet, within the context of a colonial and highly paternalist culture, Freitas's articles also reflected her delicate position as the voice of Congolese middle-class women. For instance, in an early interview, she addressed the tension between her "vocation to marriage" and the requirement for African women to ask their husband's permission to work. "Once married, she observed, the only liberty I will ask of my husband will be to continue writing in newspapers. Journalism is a profession I love."⁹⁹ The same year, however, she acclaimed Madame Sabine's radio program that was characteristic of how African women audiences were considered in one-dimensional ways, as housewives.¹⁰⁰

In other articles of her "Black Eve's advices," Freitas departed from the objective of her column to address the women's struggles in the cité. In a 1957 article entitled "*Elles' méritent quand même du respect*" ("They" deserve some respect anyway), she complained:

Whenever we go out, strangers called us names [...] which are used to name women of ill-repute and girls who haunt the streets and bars of our city at night. Married women, schoolgirls, and honest young girls—no matter what anybody

says—circulate in the city [...] The girl, whether she is honest or not, deserves respect anyway [...]

Among the fiercest men, let us mention taxi drivers, masons and the workers who help the masons. The latter think they can do whatever they like just because they are 30 or 40 meters above the ground.

Finally, turning to you, my sisters [...] let us prove, with our words, that we are very polite and respectful girls.¹⁰¹

Like most of the female elite, Freitas refused to be associated with girls who haunted bars. In 1958, a short article mentioned similar claims from a Brazzavillian journalist who lamented about the way she was called while crossing the Pool between the twin cities: “If one thinks that any young girl who is well dressed, a little educated, and above all, speaks French, is a *muasi ya ndumba* [woman related to ndumba], so why would one wish the emancipation of the Congolese woman?”¹⁰² Unlike Lisanga, these journalist claimed a form of female respectability associated with the right of urban mobility.

A more significant part of Freitas’s articles links the notion of authenticity and narratives on decolonization to women’s beauty rituals. For instance, she advised readers to avoid make-up (made for white skin) and Zazou hairdos that suggested Congolese women were ashamed of their frizzy hair.¹⁰³ Her column mingled beauty tips, conceived in racialized and gendered terms, and praise for moderation, seeking to tame the urban styling of exuberant women who, for instance, overused perfume and wore dresses too tight at the waist, that made them “look like a dragonfly.”¹⁰⁴

In 1958, Freitas linked beauty rituals to women’s liberation more radically as she advocated for the rejection of the “ordeal” of braiding hair as a metaphor of female decolonization: “We should finally get rid of all useless stuff that might prevent us from being free and make us

suffering.”¹⁰⁵ While opposing braiding to modern short haircuts, Freitas introduced the question of African women’s struggle for emancipation. Her use of the pronoun “we” was certainly aimed at both her female and male (dominant) readership and her male journalist colleagues. Such a change of tone probably echoed the campaign of the fierce nationalist leader Patrice Lumumba, which was at its height in the cité. It shows how the journalist drew on the close relationship between fashion and politics to make an incursion into the struggle for the Congo’s independence.

Conclusion

This article has shown how female creativity and innovations in the realms of fashion and popular music created new paths for women’s affirmation and gender dissidence in 1950s Brazzaville and Leopoldville. The cultural influence of West African immigrants, who inspired the creation of the first Congolese recreational clubs, proved as crucial to elegance clubs as the trans-imperial mobility of women between the two Congo and Cameroon. Women from the emerging bourgeoisie were occasionally able to travel from the city to the countryside but also to other colonies across the Belgian and French empires, which contributed to the cosmopolitanism of the urban scene.

Drawing on new partnerships with male musicians, bar owners, pagnes sellers, as well as interpersonal relationships, elegant incursions transformed the bars’ *ambiance* and turn these spaces into sites opened to interventions and resignifications of gender norms. Beyond the *ambiance*, elegance clubs dancing on stage and in the streets transformed the whole city’s atmosphere and spread the idea of female independence. Their repeated elegant incursions and visible achievements against patriarchy, even when perceived as entertaining and anecdotal, contributed to social and political changes. Musical fashion shows, songs and pagnes nicknames that generated disapproval and fascination simultaneously, eventually allowing gender dissidence to play out in the open, in bars, streets and media.

Alongside bars, radio and recording music were central to the 1950s African female stars' careers. Pauline Lisanga, in particular, became the first voice to embody all aspects of Congolese modernity, from theater stages, to colonial radio waves, to recording studios and fashion shows that shaped the public debates on tradition and modernity—she would continue to exercise her influence as a member of both the independent government and the *Union des femmes africaines du Congo* together with the former tailor and mama mokonzi, Victorine N'joli.

This article has thus emphasized the importance of reading “popular” and “elite” women's practices and claims about mobility, fame, respectability and pleasure, in dialogue. By nuancing distinctions between “ordinary wives” and “extraordinary” women and transgender members of elegance clubs, it is possible to reveal how the clubs produced dynamics through their transgressive atmosphere and ambiance that contributed to the emancipation of all women by broadening their access to public life and politics.

¹ Phyllis Martin, *Leisure and Society in Colonial Brazzaville* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 154–172.

² *Actualités africaines*, 27 March 1958.

³ Usually held at bars, *matanga* were funeral ceremonies that became an increasingly lavish means of honoring the dead and the family in the late colonial era. See Martin, *Leisure*, 141.

⁴ Charles-Didier Gondola, “Popular Music, Urban Society, and Changing Gender Relations in Kinshasa, Zaire (1950-1990),” in *Gendered Encounters: Challenging Cultural Boundaries and Social Hierarchies in Africa*, ed. Maria Grosz-Ngate and Omari Kokole (New York: Routledge, 2014), 65-84; and “Unies pour le meilleur et pour le pire. Femmes africaines et villes coloniales : une histoire du métissage,” *CLIO. Femmes, Genre, Histoire*, 6 (1997): 1-11. On elegance clubs in the East of the Congo, see Malira Kubuya, “Les associations féminines de Lubumbashi (1920-1950),” (Master diss., Université de Lubumbashi, 1972).

⁵ See Charles-Didier Gondola, “Dream and Drama: The Search for Elegance among Congolese Youth,” *African Studies Review* 42, no. 1 (1999): 23-48; Jonathan Friedman, “The Political Economy of Elegance: An African Cult of Beauty,” in *Consumption and Identity*, ed. J. Friedman (London: Routledge, 2004): 167-89.

⁶ Scholastique Dianzinga, “Les femmes et les associations féminines en milieu urbain au Congo de 1946 à 1965,” *Annales de l'Université Marien Ngouabi* 8 (2007): 40.

⁷ Dianzinga, “Les femmes,” 34; Jeanne-Françoise Vincent, *Femmes africaines en milieu urbain* (Paris: Office de la recherche scientifique et technique outre-mer, 1966), 79.

⁸ Nancy R. Hunt, “Noise over Camouflaged Polygamy, Colonial Morality Taxation, and a Woman-Naming Crisis in Belgian Africa,” *The Journal of African History* 32, no. 3 (1991): 471-94; Marie Rodet, “Administration et villes coloniales: refuges pour les femmes? Kayes, Soudan français, (1900-1920),” *Sextant* 25 (2009): 13-27.

⁹ Amandine Lauro, *Sexe, race et politiques coloniales. Encadrer le mariage et la sexualité au Congo Belge 1908-1945* (Brussels: Editions de l'Université libre de Bruxelles, 2020); Suzanne Comhaire-Sylvain, *Femmes de Kinshasa : hier et aujourd'hui* (Paris: Mouton & CO, 1968), 69.

¹⁰ As an indicator, in 1958 Leopoldville, single women represented 6 per cent of a female population of 75,406. Bouwer, *Gender*, 51.

¹¹ “Ndumba” initially meant “unmarried young woman” in Lingala. See Joseph Trapido, “Love and Money in Kinois Popular Music,” *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 22, no. 2 (2010): 121-144.

¹² Comhaire-Sylvain, *Femmes*, 30; Lauro, *Sexe*; on Brazzaville, see Balandier, *Sociologie*, 192.

¹³ On these debates in Anglophone West Africa, see Oluwakemi M. Balogun, “Beauty and the Bikini: Embodied Respectability in Nigerian Beauty Pageants,” *African Studies Review* 62, no. 2 (2019): 80-102; Jacqueline-Bethel Mougoué, “African Women Do Not Look Good in Wigs: Gender, Beauty Rituals and Cultural Identity in Anglophone Cameroon, 1961–1972,” *Feminist Africa* 21 (2016): 7–22.

¹⁴ Thomas Hendriks, “‘Making men fall’: queer power beyond anti-normativity,” *Africa* 91, no. 3 (2021): 398-417; Xavier Livermon, “Soweto Nights: Making Black Queer Space in Post-Apartheid South Africa,” *Gender, Place & Culture* 21, no. 4 (2014): 508-525.

¹⁵ Ophélie Rillon “When Local Women Activists ‘Act Tough.’ Gender and Political Violence at the Turn of Independence in French Sudan,” *Le Mouvement Social* 255, no. 2 (2016): 87-101.

¹⁶ Jean Allman, ed., *Fashioning Africa: Power and the Politics of Dress* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 5.

¹⁷ On the évolués, see Odile Goerg, “Domination coloniale, construction de ‘la ville’ en Afrique et dénomination,” *Afrique & histoire* 5, no. 1 (2006): 15-45; Daniel Tödt, *The Lumumba generation: African bourgeoisie and colonial distinction in the Belgian Congo*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2021.

¹⁸ These interviews were conducted within the unfinished project Ndule Ya Kala (Césarine Boyla, Vincent Kenis, Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium, 2006).

¹⁹ On this approach, see Emily Callaci, “Dancehall politics: Mobility, sexuality, and spectacles of racial respectability in late colonial Tanganyika, 1930s-1961,” *The Journal of African History* 52, no. 3 (2011): 365-384.

²⁰ A translation of the title “Les adeptes de La mode, de La taille, de La lune et du Diamant : pagnes, casiers de bières, bijoux et solidarité,” *Quinze*, 11 July 1957.

²¹ Martin, *Leisure*, 132-133.

²² Comhaire-Sylvain, *Femmes*, 42; Balandier, *Sociologie*, 163.

²³ The last list of declared associations I could find dates from November 5, 1949. General Government of French Equatorial Africa (GGAEF), 5D 159, Associations déclarées 1935-50, Archives nationales d’outre-mer (ANOM).

²⁴ Martin, *Leisure*, 25-27.

²⁵ “Associations diverses,” GGAEF, 5D 159. ANOM.

²⁶ Comhaire-Sylvain, *Femmes*, 48.

²⁷ “Kinois” (female “Kinoise”) refers to people or originating from Kinshasa.

²⁸ Comhaire-Sylvain, *Femmes*, 265.

²⁹ Lauro, *Sexe*, chapter 8.

³⁰ Martin, *Leisure*, 139.

³¹ Balandier, *Sociologie*, 146 ; Comhaire-Sylvain, *Femmes*, 265-267.

³² See for instance *La voix du Congolais*, February 1948 ; and *Quinze*, 11 July 1957.

³³ Michèle Odeyé-Finzi, *Les associations en villes africaines: Dakar-Brazzaville* (Paris: Harmattan, 1985), 6-13.

³⁴ See Martin, *Leisure*, 141; and Ntambue Katshay Tshilunga, “Le ‘likelemba’ et le ‘muziki’ à Kinshasa: nature et problèmes socio-juridiques en droit privé zaïrois,” *Zaire-Afrique* 23, no. 177 (1983): 431-440. On rotational credit association in Francophone Africa, see also Robin Law, “Finance and credit in pre-colonial Dahomey,” in *Credit, Currencies, and Culture: African financial institutions in historical perspective*, eds. Endre Stiansen and Jane I. Guye (Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute, 1999), 39-40; and Odeyé-Finzi, *Les associations*, 72.

³⁵ Charles-Didier Gondola, “Oh, rio-Ma ! Musique et guerre des sexes à Kinshasa, 1930-1990,” *Revue française d’histoire d’Outre-Mer* 84, no. 314 (1997): 67.

³⁶ On the unsuccessful attempt of the authorities to regulate those clubs in the Belgian Congo, see Gondola “Popular,” 74-75.

³⁷ Comhaire-Sylvain, *Femmes*, 267.

³⁸ Balandier, *Sociologie*, 148. For women’s envious comments on wealthy prostitutes, see Guy Bernard, “Le mariage et la vie conjugale des instituteurs de Léopoldville,” (PhD diss., University of Paris, 1965), 237.

³⁹ From 1930, while the authorities guided men towards general education, they encouraged women to integrate homemaking middle schools and *foyers sociaux* (social homes) which consisted of domestic training institutions. See Amandine Lauro, “Women in the Democratic Republic of Congo,” in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*, 2020; and Hunt, “Noise,” 493.

⁴⁰ *Quinze*, 19 juillet 1957. On N’joli’s role in the post-colonial period, see Trapido, *Breaking Rocks*, 29.

- ⁴¹ For an analysis of husbands' complaints on wives seeking refuge in bars to free themselves from their guardianship, see Amandine Lauro, "'J'ai l'honneur de porter plainte contre ma femme.' Litiges conjugaux et administration coloniale au Congo belge (1930-1960)," *CLIO. Femmes, Genre, Histoire* 33 (2011): 65-84.
- ⁴² *Actualités africaines*, 12 October 1958.
- ⁴³ Joe Trapido, *Breaking Rocks: Music, Ideology and Economic Collapse, from Paris to Kinshasa* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2016), 31.
- ⁴⁴ On La Reconnaissance, see Gondola, "Oh, rio-Ma!"
- ⁴⁵ Bouwer, *Gender*, 54.
- ⁴⁶ Delphine Swalehe, Ndule Ya Kala. However, unlike marriage, maternity seemed to be perceived as an obstacle to the success of elegance clubs and many young women. See for examples *Actualités africaines*, 23 January 1958; and 4 October 1956.
- ⁴⁷ Petit Pierre's observation on women who never refused to dance with men in the audience. Kinshasa, 2014.
- ⁴⁸ The commercialization of English, Dutch and Swiss wax started in the 1890s in Africa. Gondola, "Oh, rio-Ma!," 65-66.
- ⁴⁹ *Actualités africaines*, 7 March 1957.
- ⁵⁰ *Actualités africaines*, 27 September 1956.
- ⁵¹ *Actualités africaines*, 25 October 1956.
- ⁵² *Quinze*, 19 July 1957.
- ⁵³ Allam, *Fashioning*, 5.
- ⁵⁴ *Actualités africaines*, 10 and 24 October 1957.
- ⁵⁵ Allman, *Fashioning*; Jacqueline-Bethel Mougoué, "Introduction to Bodily Practices and Aesthetic Rituals in Twentieth- and Twenty-First-Century Africa Forum," *African Studies Review* 62, no. 2, (2019): 72-79; Hildi Hendrickson, ed., *Clothing and Difference: Embodied Identities in Colonial and Post-Colonial Africa* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 1-16.
- ⁵⁶ Amandine Lauro, "'Notre peuple a perdu le sens de la danse honnête.' Danses africaines, catégories légales et (re)définitions européennes de l'obscénité dans le Congo colonial," *C@hiers du CRHIDI* 38 (2016), accessed June 27, 2021, <https://popups.uliege.be/1370-2262/index.php?id=246&lang=en>.
- ⁵⁷ Governor Alphonse-Louis-Raymond Engels, Note to the urban district commissioner of Léopoldville-Est, 23 February 1926. African Archives, General government 19.642, Minister of Foreign Affairs (MAE), Brussels.
- ⁵⁸ For an example of women using public dance to defy their priest and challenge his definition of Catholic motherhood in the 1930s, see Phyllis Martin, *Catholic Women of Congo-Brazzaville: Mothers and Sisters in Troubled Times*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2009, 89.
- ⁵⁹ Comhaire-Sylvain, *Femmes*, 34.
- ⁶⁰ Mikkel Bille, Peter Bjerregaard and Tim Flohr Sørensen, "Staging atmospheres: Materiality, culture, and the texture of the in-between," *Emotion, Space and Society* 15 (2015): 31-38.
- ⁶¹ Gondola, "Unies," 3.
- ⁶² The "cité indigène" (native quarters) was the part of Leopoldville where black people were authorized to live.
- ⁶³ Brazzos, the author, Kinshasa, 2014; see also Maurice Monsengo, "La musique congolaise moderne: mode de communication et création d'une identité socioculturelle 1953-2003" (PhD diss., University Paul Verlaine-Metz, 2007), 56.
- ⁶⁴ Maria Valanta (Marie-José Gomiya), Ndule Ya Kala.
- ⁶⁵ *Actualités africaines*, 4 July 1958.
- ⁶⁶ Biaya, "La culture urbaine," 349.
- ⁶⁷ For instance, see William Moya's definition of the ambiance in *L'envol de la musique africaine moderne: Kin-Brazza-Douala* (Paris: Harmattan, 2006), 24. For a critic analysis, see White, *Rumba*, 254.
- ⁶⁸ See White, *Rumba*, 127.
- ⁶⁹ *Actualités africaines*, 3 October 1957
- ⁷⁰ On kebo, see Gary Stewart, *Rumba on the River: A History of the Popular Music of the two Congos* (London: Verso, 2001), 15.
- ⁷¹ *Actualités africaines*, 6 December 1956. For another example of incursion by a couple of young male dancers disrupting the anniversary of the newspaper, see *Actualités africaines*, 17 January 1957.
- ⁷² Hendriks, "Making men fall."
- ⁷³ Livermon, "Soweto Nights," 514.
- ⁷⁴ Thomas Hendriks, "Queer(ing) Popular Culture: Homo-erotic Provocations from Kinshasa," *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 31, (2017): 3.
- ⁷⁵ See also Hendriks' call to rethink the very idea of "queerness" and its assumed relation to "normativity," in "Making men fall," 412. On this topic in the context of islamic countries, see Gianfranco Rebutini, "Masculinités hégémoniques et 'sexualités' entre hommes au Maroc. Entre configurations locales et globalisation des catégories de genre et de sexualité," *Cahiers d'études africaines* 53, no. 209-210 (2013): 389.

- ⁷⁶ Gondola, *Tropical Cowboys: Westerns, Violence, and Masculinity in Kinshasa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), 155-157.
- ⁷⁷ See Tshikala Kayembe Biaya, “Les plaisirs de la ville: masculinité, sexualité et féminité à Dakar (1997-2000),” *African Studies Review* 44, n° 2 (2001): 82.
- ⁷⁸ On these schools, see C-D. Gondola, “Oh, rio-Ma !,” 56.
- ⁷⁹ Gondola, “Popular,” 71.
- ⁸⁰ Jean-Pierre Nimy, *Dictionnaire des immortels de la musique congolaise* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Academia-Bruylant, 2010), 167.
- ⁸¹ Nimy, *Dictionnaire*, 92.
- ⁸² On this topic, see Marissa Moorman, *Intonations: A Social History of Music and Nation in Luanda, Angola, from 1945 to Recent Times* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2008), 101-103.
- ⁸³ See Lucie Eyenga’s photograph online, accessed Aug. 13, 2022, <https://www.mbokamosika.com/article-lucie-eyenga-de-toujours-56465070.html>
- ⁸⁴ Michel Lonoh, ed., *Hommage à Grand Kallé* (Kinshasa, Lokole, 1985). See also Lisanga, Ndule ya Kala.
- ⁸⁵ Tsitsi Jaji, *Africa in Stereo: Modernism, Music, and Pan-African Solidarity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), chapter 4.
- ⁸⁶ Christopher Ballantine, “Gender, Migrancy, and South African Popular Music in the Late 1940s and the 1950s,” *Ethnomusicology* 44, no 3 (2000): 376-407.
- ⁸⁷ Lucie Eyenga, « *Bolingo ya la joie* », *Anthologie De La Musique Zaïroise Moderne*, Le Bureau Du Président De La République Du Zaïre, 1974.
- ⁸⁸ See Ndule Ya Kala; and Trapido, *Breaking*, 178.
- ⁸⁹ Lisanga, Ndule Ya Kala.
- ⁹⁰ The so-called *métis*, the offspring of African and European parents, were doubly excluded in the colony, and often abandoned to the missionaries. See Lissia Jeurissen, *Quand le métis s’appelait “mulâtre”: société, droit et pouvoir coloniaux face à la descendance des couples eurafricains dans l’ancien Congo belge* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Academia Bruylant, 2003). On the French empire, see Emmanuelle Saada, *Les enfants de la colonie: les métis de l’Empire français, entre sujétion et citoyenneté*, (Paris: La Découverte, 2007).
- ⁹¹ G. Van Herreweghe, Léopoldville, 14 November 1951. Pauwells-Boon private papers (4622), MAE.
- ⁹² Kate Lacey, *Feminine Frequencies: Gender, German Radio, and the Public Sphere, 1923-1945* (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan press, 1996), 198.
- ⁹³ Balogun, “Beauty”.
- ⁹⁴ *Actualités africaines*, 31 January 1957.
- ⁹⁵ *Le courrier d’Afrique*, 22 février 1960. On European women in the Belgian Congo, see Valérie Piette and Catherine Jacques, “L’Union des femmes coloniales (1923-1940)” in *Histoire des femmes en situation coloniale: Afrique et Asie, XXe siècle*, ed. Anne Hugon (Paris, Karthala, 2004), 110.
- ⁹⁶ See Charlotte Grabli, “La ville des auditeurs: radio, rumba congolaise et droit à la ville dans la cité indigène de Léopoldville (1949-1960),” *Cahiers d’études africaines* 233, no. 1 (2019): 9-45.
- ⁹⁷ Amandine Lauro, *Coloniaux, ménagères et prostituées au Congo belge, 1885-1930*, Loverval, Labor, 2005.
- ⁹⁸ Mougoué, “Wigs.”
- ⁹⁹ Michel Colin, “Vingt minutes avec Suzanne Freitas,” *La voix du Congolais* 134, May 1957.
- ¹⁰⁰ *Actualités africaines*, 5 December 1957; On Freitas’ article, see Grabli, “La ville des auditeurs,” 28-29. See also Tanja Bosch, “Women as Radio Audiences in Africa,” in *Routledge Companion to Media and Gender*, ed. Lisa McLaughlin, Cynthia Carter and Linda Steiner (New York, Routledge, 2014), 520.
- ¹⁰¹ *Actualités africaines*, 28 February 1957.
- ¹⁰² *Présence congolaise*, 13 September 1958.
- ¹⁰³ *Présence congolaise*, 28 March; and 25 April 1959.
- ¹⁰⁴ *Présence congolaise*, 28 March; and 25 April 1959.
- ¹⁰⁵ *Actualités africaines*, 13 February 1958.