Shiny shabomen. Young instrumental musicians in Accra, and performances of masculinities in popular music

Katharina Gartner

Department of African Studies, University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria

ABSTRACT

‘Shaboman’ is an ironic self-designated nickname, used by young male band musicians who rush from one gig to another in Accra, Ghana. Being active in diverse musical genres (gospel, highlife, brass, neo-traditional, [afro-]pop), they pursue professional aspirations with dedication, favor wistful romantic love songs, and train girls how to play musical instruments. As these young men present a contrast to dominant narratives on young African men, this paper aims to disrupt and complexify such masternarratives by documenting various facets of masculinities the instrumentalists (aged between 20 and 32) perform in their music practice. In the process, microprocesses of gender production in popular music are traced. Based on extensive ethnographic work in Accra between 2013 and 2018, the analysis draws on two distinct bodies of theoretical work: on cultural performance and performativity of gender in music (Butler; Madison and Hamera 2005; Livermon 2014a, 2014b); and on insights from studies on gender and masculinities in Ghanaian popular music (Asante-Darko and Van der Geest 1983; Adomako Ampofo and Asiedu 2012; Shipley 2013a). Contextualizing the shabomen’s staged masculinities among a variety of other manly ideals in Ghanaian popular culture, I highlight how acts of maintaining and subverting gender conventions are intertwined in popular music practice. Furthermore, I depict how gender performances are linked to age group, and to place and belonging at the same time.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 17 August 2019
Accepted 17 June 2020

KEYWORDS
Africa; Ghana; masculinities; music; performance; popular culture; youth

Introduction

E no be easy
To be a man
But e be very easy
If you be man

It is not easy
To be(come) a man
But it is very easy
If you are a man

(Stevo Atambire and Wanlov the Kubolor 2018: Man pass Man)
In public and academic discourse, young African men are scarcely presented in a flattering light. African youths are generally diagnosed to be ‘marginalized’, ‘in crisis’, ‘in trouble’, or ‘at risk’, regarding their demographically growing number and their shrinking chances of obtaining sustainable livelihoods in formal economy (Comaroff and Comaroff 2005, 20; Langevange 2007, 268–269; Honwana 2012). Young men, more specifically, have frequently been associated with violence. The ‘demographic war index’, for instance, treats the demographic youth bulge – precisely the overhang of adolescent males – as the main factor for outbreaks of armed conflicts (Heinsohn 2017); and among the 30 highest risk countries, 25 are African. In African studies’ youth research, case studies on violence and gangs engendered by youthful males are widespread (Comaroff and Comaroff 2005, 24; Honwana 2012, 15; Chipatiso 2019). And in recent studies on popular culture, African variations of male dominated hip-hop have been criticized for promoting misogyny and other qualities associated with ‘toxic masculinity’ (Collins 2006, 182–183, 2012, 219; Adomako Ampofo and Asiedu 2012, 261; Shipley 2013a).

However, during my ethnographic fieldwork with instrumental musicians in Accra, Ghana, between 2013 and 2018, I encountered numerous young men (aged between 20 and 32) who do not fit into those narratives. These young men ambitiously pursue professional aspirations, favor wistful romantic love songs, and train girls and women how to play musical instruments. Wryly, they name themselves shabomen, mostly followed by laughter. ‘Shabo’ is a Pidgin expression for ‘gig’, and ‘Shabo, shabo!’ means ‘Fast, fast!’ A ‘shaboman’ is a bandsman who plays in different groups and rushes from one gig to another. The young instrumentalists are creatively involved within diverse social spaces and cultural contexts. When they dress up to go onstage, they occasionally compliment each other with ‘Shiny Papa!’, joking among peers. ‘Papa’ is a salutation for a respected older man, so the joke contains a future imagery of successful manhood. Yet, unlike many of their colleagues in Ghanaian hip-hop, the shabomen do not promote a ‘hypermasculinity, bravado’ aesthetic (Shipley 2013a, 194). They rather present themselves as softly-spoken, humble, and group-orientated. One of their favorite phrases was: ‘I’m learning’. Thus, the young shabomen neither seem marginalized, nor do they consider themselves ‘in crisis’ or pose a violent threat; which presents a contrast to dominant narratives on young African men.

These differences and the fact that the instrumentalists teach females how to play male-associated musical instruments, aroused my particular interest. Professional female instrumentalists are an exception in Ghana, so is the young men’s support towards their female students a sign that they engage in the production of shifting gender roles and masculinities? This question
stems from the key assumption that gender norms and images are intensified and co-created in cultural performances, and thus also in performances of music (Madison and Hamera 2005, xix; Leonard 2007). This paper therefore asks which patterns of masculinities the instrumentalists maintain and create in their music activities. As the young shabomen present certain contrasts to mainstream narratives on African masculinities, my case study aims to disrupt and comp lexify such narratives by documenting other and more nuanced facets of manliness the young musicians display in their popular music practice. In the process, I give insights on how performances of masculinities are not only linked to the age group of young men, but also to place and belonging at the same time. And last but not least, I depict how acts of ‘undoing’ and maintaining gender are intertwined in these popular culture practices – sometimes both within the same persons and the same acts, in seemingly contradictory ways. My argument hence aims to contribute to a better understanding of microprocesses of gender production in music and popular culture.

The paper is organized in four sections: first, I briefly introduce the contextual background of being young and making music in Accra and the methods I employed. Secondly, I display the theoretical considerations the analysis is built upon, combining two distinct bodies of work on performance and performativity of gender, and works on gender and masculinities in Ghanaian music. Thirdly, I present findings on young masculinities performed onstage and contextualize these among other popular masculinities in Ghanaian music. And finally, I discuss to what extent the shabomen participate in the production of shifting gender conventions. At this juncture, I also offer some glimpses ‘backstage’ at the shabomen’s work with female colleagues and students.

1. Being young and making music in Accra – context and methods

In Ghana’s rapidly growing and globally intertwined coastal metropolis, Accra, some new music styles and scenes have been flourishing since the 1990s, which are particularly associated with ‘youth’. The most prominent are hiplife, a localized variation of hip-hop (Shipley 2013a; Osumare 2014) and azonto, a transcontinentally circulating ‘dance craze’ (Shipley 2013b). Furthermore, multidisciplinary art scenes are booming since the start of the millennium which are also ascribed to the young generation, e.g. around the popular Chale Wote Street Art Festival. Taking more of a background role, numerous instrumental musicians are involved in these scenes. These instrumentalists are also highly active in the countless new Christian churches, which have been booming in Ghana since the 1980s and became the center of music-related social life after years of economic and political crisis, including curfews (Collins 2018: 417ff). The churches developed into powerful
actors in the music and entertainment industry, running their own recording studios and media channels (Carl 2014). They are at the forefront of practical music education, especially since the latter was demoted from Ghanaian school curricula in the 1980s (Collins 2012, 212). And they also employ live musicians on a regular basis. Most of these instrumental musicians are male and at a young adult age between 20 and 35 years. The fact that instrumentalists in Ghana are almost exclusively male in this age group, suggests taking an analytical look at (young) masculinities in these cultural practices.

This paper is an offshoot of my Ph.D. dissertation, an ethnographic case study with young instrumental musicians in Ghana focusing on young adulthood and creativity. Its empirical basis consists of numerous encounters and shared activities with more than 70 musicians and 20 bands in and around Accra between 2013 and 2018, totalling nine months of fieldwork. Inspired by Thilde Langevang (2007), I combined extensive participant observation with multiple instruments of documentation, such as audio and video recordings, ethnographic and biographic interviews, photographs, and extracts from social media. I continuously accompanied seven bands, occasionally playing along with them at rehearsals and gigs. Furthermore, I documented manifold unforeseen encounters, as Faria and Good (2012) or Gerhard Kubik (2007) pointed out as essential.

The young shabomen are active in various musical genres from contemporary highlife, gospel, brass band, neo-traditional to various kinds of (afro-)pop. They play instruments like drums, percussion, electric guitars, horns, and the kologo lute. Most of them prevalently perform at churches, but they likewise play at bars, clubs and street festivals; in cultural organizations, at private celebrations, funerals and rituals. Being instrumentalists, song texts are not their main domain, yet I included 22 lyrics in the analysis. 16 of these songs were originally written by eight of the young musicians and six are from other writers whose songs they covered. (To appreciate creatorship, I do not anonymize the musicians whose work I am referring to. To respect the artists’ privacy, my interpretations focus exclusively on their professional life.) All lyrics are multilingual, including the languages Akan, Pidgin, English, Ga, Farefare, Dagbani, Hausa, Ewe, and Swahili. The instrumentalists come from differing social backgrounds. Most of them perform in cultural niches more than in the mainstream, and much of their work is still unpublished. Focusing on young adults who could be categorized as ‘in waithood’, I chose protagonists aged between 20 and 32.

The concept of ‘waithood’, under which African youths have been vividly discussed in the last years, captures the prolongation and uncertainty of young peoples’ transition to fully respected adulthood (Honwana 2012; Rüther 2017, 71–88). The prolongation is understood to be a result of both the young generation’s demographic growth, and their growing exclusion of
formal economy due to neoliberal capitalism. Such factors have been observed around the globe, especially in Africa, and also in Accra (Langevang 2008a, 2039), where young men find themselves in a contradictory situation of changes. On the one hand, Ghana’s economy is West Africa’s role model and has promisingly been booming since the 2000s. There is rapid urban growth, and goods and advertisements from all over the world are omnipresent. On the other hand, the boom has not been translated into decent jobs and improved livelihoods, and youth unemployment is estimated to be twice as high as the overall unemployment rate (Aryeetey and Bah-Boateng 2016). As respected forms of manhood are traditionally linked to the ideal of a family provider in Ghana, achievable through continuous economic support for spouse(s) and offspring (Miescher 2005), the waithood factors also complicate masculinities (Langevang 2008a, 2044). The average marriage age has augmented in the last years, and gender relations are in flux (Bochow 2010). Popular culture can function as a platform for negotiating changes (Barber 2018) and for the ‘imaginative future mapping’ of gender concepts (Spencer, Ligaga, and Musila 2018, 3–4). Therefore, it is particularly interesting how the young men portray masculinities in their music practice, against this background of uncertainties, ambivalence, and changes in Ghana.

2. Theoretical considerations: Co-Creating masculinities in Ghanaian music?

In line with Africanist gender studies (Cornwall 2005; Miescher, Manuh, and Cole 2007; Broqua and Doquet 2013) and contemporary feminist theories, I understand ‘masculinities’ as continuously socially created conceptions and conventions of manliness – sets of characteristics and behaviors, images, ideals, and roles associated with men and boys. (I follow the practice to use ‘masculinities’ occasionally synonymously with ‘manliness’ or ‘manhood’. All three terms are often distinguished from ‘maleness’, which puts more emphasis on biological dimensions.) The popular concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005) has been contested in African and Ghanaian contexts, because it does not reflect the variety, fluidity and relationality of gender-understandings (which depend on specific contexts) and the complexity of power-relations in Ghana (Miescher 2005, 2; Broqua and Doquet 2013, VI-IX). I therefore link concepts of the performance of gender with insights from more contextualized studies on gender and masculinities in Ghanaian popular music.

2.1. Performance and performativity of gender in music

My analysis is based on the key assumption that gender conventions and roles are socially co-created, and that these creative processes are intensified and embossed in cultural performances, such as performances of music
showed how in ‘cultural performances’, social order and identities (and hence gender and masculinities), are repeatedly enacted and embossed, often accompanied by music. Judith Butler (1988, 1999) highlighted how gender is also produced in day-to-day acts, often unconsciously, within a stylized repetition of acts. These ‘performativities’ (Butler e.g. 1999, 177) unfold within a continuous, dynamic process, in the shape of ‘gestures, posture, clothes, habits and specific embodied acts’ (Madison and Hamera 2005, xviii). Such performative acts have a greatly ambivalent potential: On the one hand, they can function to maintain norms and power relations; on the other hand, they can deconstruct, subvert and reshape them (‘undoing gender’) (Butler 1999, 101–190; Madison and Hamera 2005, xiii-xiv). This ambivalent potential of performativities was, for example, shown in western indie rock music of the 1990s and 2000s (Leonard 2007).

In an African context, the concepts of performance and performativity have instructively been employed by Xavier Livermon (2014a, 2014b) to analyze the creation and negotiation of black masculinities in post-apartheid South Africa. Livermon highlights how such performances in settings of kwaito culture contribute to rehumanize black masculinities that had been dehumanized during apartheid (kwaito is an indigenized variation of house music, popular since the 1990s). Furthermore, he illustrates how through performative practices of ‘self-fashioning’, new reputable images of black manliness are created which express ‘a refusal to reduce one’s life experience to the real challenges faced by unequal access to capital’ (2014a, 294). In a Ghanaian context, a look at the performance of gender in music seems particularly interesting for historic reasons: in the time of transformation to an independent nation in the 1950s and 60s, Ghana’s first president Kwame Nkrumah strategically used popular music to promote gendered role models in order to create ideal citizens (Plageman 2014).

2.2. Gender and manliness in Ghanaian music

In music practices in Ghana, division of labor is highly gendered (Collins 2007, 2018, 425–440): playing musical instruments is associated with men, and women are mainly found in singing and dancing, which is open to both genders. Yet it seems that there have always been individual exceptions (Collins 2007, 48–49). Certainly, women have not traditionally been excluded from music in Ghana (52–53). As in many African contexts, they customarily played major roles in art production, and had sacred and ceremonial power (Collins 2005, 95–104). Gendered rules and taboos concerning music were shaped by authorities from chieftaincies, arriving Muslims and Christians, colonialists, postcolonial actors, and other asserters of ‘morals’. In the process,
many musical instruments were prohibited for females, and they were forbidden to perform in drama, so female roles were acted by men until the 1960s (Collins 2007, 48, 2018, 428).

In contemporary Ghana, all musical genres and their professional domains are dominated by men, whereas female frontwomen dominate the gospel scene. Gospel is the most popular genre with the highest volume of music production (Collins 2012, 225–226; KPMG 2014, 13, 58), and the presence of females onstage has been increasing since the 1980s in Ghana’s mushrooming churches, where women could no longer be kept away from the stages by pointing to morals (Collins 2007, 53–54). A male domain in Ghanaian music is especially hiplife, which also attracts predominantly male audiences. Among professional instrumentalists, females are also the exception. And, according to the first broad quantitative study on the music industry in Ghana, women are significantly rare in the category music ‘business’ (producers, presenters and managers) (KPMG 2014, 133–140).

Although making music is a predominantly male field, research on gender in Ghanaian music has mainly discussed women. The few studies that broach manhood in popular music in Ghana mostly highlight ‘toxic’ qualities of masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, 839–840). In a nutshell, they consistently conclude that male performers of music tend to depict masculine pride via degradation of females: In the 1980s, Asante-Darko and Van der Geest (1983) identified an attitude of ‘male chauvinism’ in highlife song lyrics which uphold ‘the ideology of male supremacy’ over women. Similarly, Adomako Ampofo and Asiedu (2012) diagnosed a negative stereotypization of women generally in Ghanaian pop music from the 1930s to 2009. Associated with the youthful hiplife generation of the early 2000s, a special ‘macho flavor’ was identified (261). Hiplife often plays with controversies on sexuality (Shipley 2013a, 163–197) and has frequently been criticized for not only being ‘sexually explicit’, but also ‘misogynist’ (Collins 2006, 182, 2012, 219), not unlike has often been pointed out in western hip-hop (Rose 2008, 113–132; Reitsamer and Prokop 2017). Regarding these dominant tendencies, I ask how the young instrumentalists perform masculinities in relation to women. Do they also depict manliness through degrading females? This question will be tackled, among other things, in the next Section (3.3), where the shabomen’s music practices will be analyzed, starting with a close look at their performances onstage.

3. Findings onstage: performed patterns of young masculinities

Regarding the division of labor in their music practice, the majority of the young bands I accompanied in Accra stayed in line with Ghanaian conventions: young men were instrumentalists or singers, and some, additionally,
dancers. Their female colleagues at the same or an older age, much fewer in numbers, were almost exclusively singers and dancers. The audiences mostly consisted of mixed genders and generations. Onstage, a binary difference between men and women was repeatedly performed, especially in clothing styles and dance moves, with some variations for each gender. Of these ‘stylized repetitions’ or ‘performativities’ (Butler), I will now illustrate three predominantly performed patterns of young masculinities, by which the young instrumentalists marked a distinction from women or older musicians.

Before going into detail, I would like to state that the shabomen’s individual influence on what was performed on stage was often limited: when they performed as backup bands for older artists, they mostly could not choose the repertoire and had to attach their playing style to the ideas of a band director or front(wo)man. Most of them could not afford to focus on their own projects and compositions, because they found it hard to get gigs and enough pay when doing so. Nonetheless, they found some spaces for individual creative expression, e.g. at least in dancing and embellishing their outfits (that is why Butler’s performativity lens and an approach to self-fashioning like Livermon’s (2014a) is insightful here). Additionally, they had their own band-projects where they chose or wrote the repertoire and sometimes acquired possibilities for creative and stylistic freedom.

3.1. Energetic, aspiring, and disciplined

The young instrumentalists present themselves repeatedly as energetic, and at the same time aspirational, determined and disciplined. They do so in their performative actions, where they mark being young and male with a particular emphasis on energy, with mostly bigger and faster moves than their female co-performers and by showing more persistence than their older colleagues. Verbally, they associate their disciplined energy with aspiration: Frequently using the word ‘great’, many of the shabomen express their dream of carving out successful careers. Some also point to masculinized forms of greatness in artist names like ‘Nii Mantse’ or ‘Star Nii’. ‘Nii’ is a noble title for ‘prince’ among the Ga, and ‘Mantse’ for ‘chief’ or ‘king’. Both names thus refer to male Ghanaian chiefly titles; in the second case in combination with ‘star’, the anglophone metaphor for fame and wealth.

A focus on prosperity, even in the face of hardship, is also expressed in some original song lyrics: When the shabomen sing about daily struggles, they mostly include advice on how to overcome these struggles.

You are the one possessing that power
You prefer to chant
I’m glad I have my mixer, I will mix until I hit
Indeed we shall mix, and we will hit
(Roy X 2013a: Sakawa)
In this example, Roy X (aged 26) raps about resisting the seduction of making fast money by the help of occult rituals called ‘Sakawa’. Instead of trying his luck with these rituals, he counts on working in the studio to become a hitmaker.

So, rather than on crisis, the young instrumentalists focus on aspiration. Therefore, I chose the attribute ‘shiny’ for this paper’s title, which the shabomen occasionally used for compliments. Accordingly, they all dress up for their gigs, and many also for rehearsals. Obviously, this emphasis on energetic aspiration presents an alternative to dominant narratives on young African men as ‘in waithood’ or a threat (Honwana 2012), and contrasts described social realities in Ghana (Langevang 2008a; Amantana 2012). The young instrumentalists witness times of contradictions and uncertainties: On the one hand, they experience Ghana’s promising economic boom in a ‘modernized’ streetlife and they benefit from affordable technology and internet in their daily work. On the other hand, frequent power cuts and high inflation reveal that the boom does not fulfill its promises, and they perceive that formal jobs are rare and no longer provide, and that good education is no more a guarantee for employment. Against this backdrop of contradiction, the instrumentalists focus on the bright side and repeatedly perform imagined ‘happy endings’ of success. To a certain extent, this performance unfolds a mimetic entanglement between wishful imagination and reality, similar to what Newell (2012) has analyzed among the ‘bluffeurs’ in Abidjan some 10 years earlier. The repeated performance of aspiration seems to have ritual-like qualities, which can function as a defense against uncertainties and fears (Turner [1965] 2005). In the shabomen’s case, even if they doubt that they will ever succeed, this performance can also be a fruitful strategy in the sense of ‘Fake it till you make it.’ Their staging of determination and success is at the same time ‘serious’ (Newell 2012), and in many cases turns out to be real. Most of the instrumentalists put in strategic and daily effort to pursue their professional aspirations, unrestingly practicing for technical virtuosity, regularly rehearsing and ‘gigging’, taking and giving lessons etc. Some have reached upward mobility and earn more with music than their entourage in formal jobs, and many are able to pay their bills.

Evidently, the shabomen’s aspirational attitude is notably co-shaped by the new Christian churches. For young musicians in Ghana, opportunities to realize their aspirations are often linked to churches. All instrumentalists I met started playing music there (they practiced Christianity, some converting from other religions), and the great many performs there prevalently and is regularly paid. These fees are not high, but often cover the rent; and coming from a part time occupation, they can be supplemented by other activities. Most of the new Christian churches in Ghana passionately preach prosperity, which has been described as a potent ritual strategy to persevere through
the hardship of modernity in a way that resonates with precolonial concepts of prosperity (Anim 2003). The shabomen adopt churchly attitudes in their secular music activities, like praying together before gigs. Unlike the Ivoirian ‘bluffeurs’, they do not perform wastefulness to stage reputed wealth (Newell 2012, 99–128), nor do they celebrate a ‘bravado’ attitude like many hiplifers (Shipley 2013a, 194). They rather present themselves as modest and humble with ‘I’m learning’ being one of their favorite phrases.

This points to another notable influence on the instrumentalists’ performance of energetic aspiration, namely ideals of masculinity coined by the Ghanaian postcolonial state. ‘Energy’ has often been associated with youth by politicians like Jerry John Rawlings (Tarwo 2018). And the humility and discipline some of the young bands show, is interestingly reminiscent of Kwame Nkrumah’s postcolonial concept of ideal Ghanaian manhood. Thus, the shabomen’s performed masculinities are apparently also linked to ideals of Ghanaian nationalism. In their performances, the musicians intertwine some nationalist ideals with several forms of belonging, which I explicate in the next section.

3.2. Proudly Ghanaian with a cosmopolitan twist

In the 1950s and 60s, Nkrumah, who lead Ghana to independence, pursued policies of nation building which included gendered concepts of a new ideal ‘African personality’. These policies particularly focused on bands among other things (Plageman 2014). In six month courses, bandsmen were systematically trained to be role models of ideal Ghanaian men. For Nkrumah, Ghana’s ‘new man … despised laziness’ and was ‘infused with “the spirit to work hard and learn fast”’ (110), both attitudes that many of the shabomen shared. In Nkrumah’s trainings, male musicians had to ‘demonstrate that they were disciplined, punctual, and willing to refrain from smoking or drinking while onstage’ (110–113). Likewise, the shabomen never drank or smoked onstage, and most of them were punctual (quite an exception in Ghana). Many bands had some kind of ritual punishments for tardiness at rehearsals, e.g. paying drinks for bandmates, or reduction of fees. It thus seems very likely that the shabomen’s staged masculinities contain ideals of manliness favored by powerful shapers of Ghanaian nationality. Caroline Faria (2013) showed how popular culture practices can be a field of linking nationalism and masculinities with regards to South Sudan. In Ghana, following Nkrumah’s early post-independence attempts to Africanize Ghanaian music in a gendered way, manifold efforts to foster folkloric music were kept up by all Ghanaian postcolonial regimes (Collins 2012, 127ff). The shabomen seem to follow these stately traditions to promote nationalized or Africanized ideals of young masculinities in their music performances.
Accordingly, they present themselves and their music repeatedly as ‘Ghanaian’ or ‘African’. When talking about their music flavor, they employ these labels, favoring ‘traditionally Ghanaian’ forms like highlife, agbadza or adowa. Appropriately, when they dress up, they display Ghanaian elements like kente, or the smock, or other ‘African’ fabrics like dashiki. These aesthetics match well with Ghanaian postcolonial-nationalist ideals of male beauty, which were at the same time linked to ideas of Pan-Africanism. The shabomen’s interchangeable use of the attributes ‘Ghanaian’ and ‘African’ points to this pan-Africanist attitude.

However, while Nkrumah urged bandmen to eliminate ‘foreign’ (western) aesthetics from music, bandnames, and clothing style, and to adopt ‘local’ forms instead (Plageman 2014), the shabomen depict a notably differing tendency: They also display an aesthetic affinity to globalized youth culture, which marks their generation’s masculinities (Figures 1 and 2). Especially with elements they can individually choose, they mix aesthetics of cosmopolitan urban youth culture trends of the moment into their performances. In their clothing style, they embellish ‘African’ outfits e.g. with sneakers, denim
elements, nerd glasses, or fanny packs – mostly accessories they also use in their day-to-day life. They paid high attention to such stylistic details onstage, particularly to their footwear, which again marked a difference from both female and older colleagues and was always shined before going onstage. Likewise, they mix multitudinous aesthetics in their musical repertoire: they play highlife classics alongside international pop evergreens, combine the Ghanaian kologo lute with rap or rock elements; transpose beats of the Caribbean-derived gomé drum to the electric bass; and even while labelling themselves as traditional ‘Ghanaian’ drummers, they study Brazilian rhythms online and adopt them into their ‘Ghanaian’ performances. The instrumentalists hence stage a masculinized version of dual belonging which significantly departs from a mere promotion of nationalist and pan-Africanist ideals.

Resembling patterns of self-fashioning were observed by Livermon (2014a, 291) at kwaito music fans in South Africa, and a similar mix of dual belonging has been described in Ghanaian music regarding hiplife and azonto (Shipley 2013a, 2013b). Yet, compared to the hiplife and azonto performers, the young shabomen put more emphasis on Ghanaian or African aesthetics. Nevertheless, they also blend in a global urban 2010s zeitgeist, through trendy elements which change synchronically with other metropolises like
London, New York, Paris or Johannesburg. While mixing ‘local’ with ‘global’ elements is nothing new in popular culture, the shabomen’s particular mix reflects being young and male in cosmopolitan Accra in the 2010s, in times of high global media interconnectedness, with an emphasis on Ghanaian pride.

3.3. Romantic and emotional

The analysis of the 22 song lyrics provides some insights into the young men’s performative positioning towards women. Being addressed in 50% of the songs, romantic (heterosexual) love is the predominant theme. In these lyrics, the instrumentalists mostly present men as wistful and romantic, trying to enchant their lady of desire. They often address women as subjects whose wishes they want to understand and fulfill:

Thinking of you, gives me sleepless nights
Test my love and see, my love
What should I do for you
Just tell me ooo
What should I do for you
For you to know I love you
(Nii Mantse, aged 22, 2016: Show your Love)

In the vast majority of the songs, the shabomen praise and idealize females. This offers an answer to the question on performed gender relations which significantly contrasts the misogynist trends dominantly found in Ghanaian music (see Section 2.2). In the analyzed sample, male pride is rather displayed via pleasing a woman than through degrading females. Other than being common in hiplife, sexual objectification only occurred in one line of the songs (in which the author also degrades himself). If the content of the analyzed songs contains sexual innuendo, which occasionally occurs, men are equally sexualized, and gender-equality concerning sexual desire is often represented.

If love is what you want, girl, I got them in boxes.
I’m ever ready, girl, I’m in my Joe Boxers.
(Roy X, aged 26, 2013b: Odoyewu. ‘Joe Boxers’ is a boxer shorts brand.)

However, the young instrumentalists’ staged romanticism is less centered around sexual fantasies; it rather presents men as emotional – as sensitive, wistful, and longing. This again significantly contrasts the global mainstream of young hip-hop, where showing emotions and weakness is a taboo. It is more reminiscent of attitudes common in soul or R&B music.

The shabomen’s performed imageries of idyllic romance do not only present a significant difference to trends in hiplife and hip-hop, they also contrast researched social realities. It has been described as difficult for young
people in contemporary Ghana to realize a love life (a topic which is also touched upon in one of the analyzed songs by Stevo Atambire 2013), because public acceptance of love relations requires rituals demanding financial efforts from men (Bochow 2010). Due to precarity, marriage and other partnership-rites have become unattainable for many men, and gender relations are transforming (Langevang 2008a, Bochow 2010). These complications, shifts and possible solutions seem to be intensely negotiated in Ghana’s popular culture, where love and sexuality are a major theme. Since the early 2000s, the theme of romance has gained particular public interest through seemingly dissipated rituals practiced by youths around Valentine’s Day (Bochow 2010). The state interferes in the hype with an emphasis on romantic (heteronormative) monogamy and family bonds, e.g. in national media programs, or by celebrating National Chocolate Day on the same date. Popular culture’s discourse on love is often polarized, with hiplife’s contested sexual explicitness on the one end of the spectrum, and insistent demands of extramarital abstinence by churches on the other. The shabomen’s staged emotional masculinities are positioned in between of these dominant positions: they implicitly oppose hiplife’s masculinities with women-friendly romance; and they promote romantic manliness irrespective of marriage. From a psychoanalytic perspective, the performance of wistful love songs can be understood as a creation of symbolic spaces to negotiate and enjoy impeded and contested desires in the musical sphere.

4. Discussion with a glimpse backstage: Undoing gender conventions in Ghanaian music?

The analysis of staged performances depicts images of young masculinities that differ from other ideals of manliness and male archetypes in Ghanaian popular culture. These differences do not unfold in outspoken or unidimensional opposition, but rather in complex relations: The shabomen seem to uphold postcolonial ideals of dedication, discipline and Ghanaian pride like powerful shapers of Ghanaian nationality, but they undermine the ‘chauvinism’ of highlife. They contrast the bravado and misogynistic attitudes of hiplifers with emotional romance and humility, yet they share their affinity for global youth culture. They focus on prosperity like many churches, but they also sing about sexual fantasies. The instrumentalists’ performed manly patterns lay in between these dominant ideals, and they are fluid. Occasionally, when switching genres and backing artists, the shabomen also participate in performing different and dominant images.

By highlighting such patterns of masculinities positioned inbetween popular and dominantly debated ideals, these findings have the potential to disrupt masternarratives on young African masculinities. But does this,
furthermore, also mean that the instrumentalists participate in a shift of gender conventions? Does e.g. the attitude of male pride via cherishing females depict a subversive tendency of ‘undoing misogyny’?

### 4.1. ‘Undoing misogyny’ onstage?

The question, whether the shabomen contribute to ‘undoing misogyny’ with their performances, is not easy to answer, as their staged masculinities are, regarding performed gender relations, again positioned in between of two much-debated standpoints. Neither do the instrumentalists act as ‘machos’ presenting superiority over women and thus support the misogynous traditions observed in Ghanaian music (see Section 2.2). Nor do they act as outspoken activists for feminism or ‘smashing binaries’. In Ghana, obvious practices of undoing gender conventions, such as parodying or critically reflecting heteronormative binaries, can for instance be found in alternative rap, e.g. by Azizaa (2015) or Wanlov the Kubolor (2017). Some of these artists have been associated with Ghana’s male ‘trickster’ character Ananse (Franzen 2012; Shipley 2017, 255), an important archetype in myths and drama. The instrumentalist’s performed masculinities are significantly more ‘well-behaved’ in the sense of conforming to stately and churchly ideals, and thus also distinct from the trickster’s. But although the shabomen do not explicitly declare a feminist agenda, they show some tendencies of opposing gender stereotypes and undermining gender conventions.

One example is their performed pattern of romantic and emotional masculinity (see 3.3) which can be understood as a form of ‘philogynous masculinity’. This concept was introduced by Christian Groes-Green (2012) ‘as an alternative to existing conceptualizations of forms of manhood that challenge male domination over women’, which has the potential to subvert misogyny (92). Groes-Green classifies the youth slang expression ‘bom pico’ as ‘philogynous’, for instance, literally meaning a ‘good sting’. It is used by male students in Maputo for ‘a good lover’, who is attentive to women and cares about their sexual pleasure (96). The shabomen’s performed romanticism is similar, though with more emphasis on emotions.

A ‘woman-friendly’ and romantic attitude is no generationally new phenomenon in Ghanaian music though. Adomako Ampofo and Asiedu (2012, 268) have shown that manifold positive representations of women also have a tradition, yet these were not perceived as being predominant. Numerous emotionally romantic frontmen can for instance be found in contemporary highlife, such as Kwabena Kwabena or Kojo Antwi, whom many shabomen admire and whose hits are among the analyzed songs the shabomen covered. Both artists attract mixed audiences with a large number of females – unlike in hiplife. This raises the question for future research whether the
discussed differences in the performance of masculinities (and gender relations) are linked to different genres in Ghana, similar to what Leonard (2007) has demonstrated in western indie rock music.

The young instrumentalists do not only show a friendly attitude towards women in the performed lyrics, but also towards their female colleagues. They respectfully call them ‘artists’ (same as their male singer colleagues), and occasionally present them as ‘the great’, or ‘queen’. The distinct roles in music work did not necessarily lead to a hierarchic degradation of women: Often, the female singers had much more influence on the choice of a band’s song repertoire than the instrumentalists. One male band left its male leader to follow a female singer instead, they became her backup band and emphasized how much she had done for them. Onstage, female singers often hold leading roles, and it is common that they sing songs which are originally sung by men. Some more significant tendencies to undermine gender conventions could be witnessed backstage.

4.2. Supporting girls’ unconventional wishes backstage

Certainly, masculinities were navigated off the stage to a large degree, at and around rehearsals and sound checks, and on the way across the city. With their predominantly male peers, the shabomen shaped and maintained rehearsal spaces, which I observed in neighborhoods in the northwest of Accra. These had some similarities with young men’s street meeting places in Accra, called ‘bases’, as documented by Langevang (2008b), although the rehearsal spaces were less focused on occupying public places for young men. Another significant difference to the bases is, however, that the rehearsal spaces did not exclude females. As (female) singers and dancers often rehearsed separately, the shabomen frequently worked among men only, but there were gender-mixed rehearsals before gigs. And even when girls or women were not rehearsing, some were often present to listen, meet the musicians, or – most regularly – to learn an instrument. In that case, the shabomen also supported females in their unconventional wishes.

In the shabomen’s activities of teaching music, some more exceptions to the classic gendered roles could be found. Among their music students, there were numerous girls and some young women, who they taught how to play conventionally male-associated instruments, be it the trumpet, the saxophone, the bass drum, the bass guitar, or the lead guitar. As for the male students, this was free of charge. Occasionally, these teaching activities required a certain creative agency against gender conventions. This is shown, for instance, in the story behind a guitar in pink and glitter played by student Daniela (aged 9) (Figure 3). Daniela wished to play the guitar, after she had seen the Line Out Family Band rehearse in her neighborhood, but her
uncle did not allow her. Therefore, bandleader Nana Sarfo went to buy that special guitar to make her uncle change his mind. His strategy worked out. The glittery pink guitar convinced the uncle that it is okay for girls to play the guitar, and Daniela could follow her dream (notes, February 5, 2015). In this example, the shabomen supported the unconventional aspirations of a girl against the resistance of an older man. They thus creatively participated in the subversion of gender conventions. At the same time, within this process of gender role negotiation, they produced a gendered image of a female guitarist that differs from male guitarists; they partly reproduced a western gender-stereotype (pink and glitter for female). The shabomen were thus ‘undoing’ and ‘doing’ gender at the same time, in a seemingly contradictory way.

Anyhow, such differences were not created for all the female students. There are many examples where the girls and young women played the same instruments, had the same performance outfits and the same access to the rehearsal spaces as their male colleagues. Sometimes, this led to an officially stated shift in gender roles. I observed this e.g. in the Accra West Brigade Band, where some females rehearsed and performed alongside the

Figure 3. Guitarist Stanley Dzane (aged 24) teaches Daniela on the glittery pink guitar. They are among members of the Line Out Family Band. Bandleader Nana, who bought Daniela’s guitar, is on the left.
Photo by the author © Katharina Gartner 2015 in Accra, Ghana. Reuse not permitted.
young men, such as Nana Ama Quansah (aged 19) who was a trumpeter and drum major. Reciprocal teaching between different genders was common in this group, and Ama taught her male colleagues in marching, conducting, and trumpet techniques. Band director Kofi Sam (aged 27) reported that the band lately changed its official name from ‘The Boys’ Brigade Band’ to ‘The Boys’ and Girls’ Brigade Band’. Kofi did not declare himself to be feminist. But he was proud to present the females who played and marched with the group and he praised their technical skills (notes, January 12 and 26, 2017).

The two examples show how the young shabomen support girls to subvert gendered conventions in work division, occasionally against resistance and constraints. The young instrumentalists did not explicitly promote a feminist agenda, and doing (maintaining) and undoing (disrupting, reshaping) gender were often intertwined in their actions. Nevertheless, in both examples they are participating in shifts in gendered work division on an individual level. Whether these tendencies will become part of a wider shift of gender roles and masculinities in Ghanaian music remains to be seen. (Of course, it should be revised in research with more young women, how they perceive what has been identified as ‘philogynous masculinity’ and shifts in gender conventions here.)

**Conclusions**

Against a contradictory and transforming context characterized by economic growth but growing existential uncertainty, where traditional masculinities are in question, the shabomen repeatedly perform optimistic and wishful imageries of manliness. By the analysis of onstage practices through the lens of concepts of performance and performativity, three patterns of young masculinities were revealed, which the instrumentalists predominantly repeated: they portray young men as energetic, and at the same time aspiring and disciplined. In musical and stylistic aesthetics, they display a masculinized version of dual belonging – to Ghanaian-African and global urban youth culture at the same time. And in romantic love songs, they depict manly pride through emotionally pleasing women. These patterns present different facets of young masculinities besides being not-yet-men, threatening men, or threatened men which dominate debates on young African men and masculinities. While such dominant narratives mostly stem from problem-focused sociological perspectives, my look at popular culture practices (besides the mainstream) highlights alternative narratives of navigating changing masculinities (see also Spencer, Ligaga, and Musila 2018, 3).

The analysis contextualized the shabomen’s performed manly patterns among a variety of other popular masculinities in Ghanaian music (e.g. the
‘chauvinist’ in classic highlife, the ‘romantic’ in contemporary highlife, the ‘bravado’ in hiplife, or the ‘trickster’ in alternative rap) and showed that they are fluidly positioned in between these popular ideals. They share some attributes of all these archetypes but contrast others. Highlighting young masculinities which are in between of popular ideals and much-debated or radical positions, the paper reveals facets of non-‘spectacular’ masculinities (Broqua and Doquet 2013, VI). The variety of masculinities in Ghanaian music displayed in the analysis contributes to a more nuanced understanding of (changing) masculinities. The shabomen’s staged young masculinities and their relations to diverse masculine ideals in popular culture illustrate that masculinities in Ghanaian music are diverse, multi-faceted, fluid and at times contradictory.

Furthermore, the case study gives insights into microprocesses of gender production in popular culture. Firstly, my contextualized analytical approach shows how place matters within the performance of gender. It depicts how performances of gender are linked to the age group of young men and to place and belonging at the same time, not least through influences of nationalist politics. The instrumentalists’ staged masculinities are co-shaped by Ghanaian churches, stately ideals of nationalism and Pan-Africanism, multinational corporations fostering consumer-orientated youth culture (Osumare 2014), and also by successful senior musicians. Obviously, the young men promote some ideals of powerful actors, and their possibilities for individual creative expression are often limited. Nevertheless, their inclined position makes evident that they creatively navigate their own position, mixing various influences from inside and outside of Ghana, making their own and individual choices in stylistic, lyrical and musical content.

Secondly, the discussion as to what extent the shabomen participate in the creation of shifting gender conventions reveals how interwoven acts of ‘doing’ (maintaining) and ‘undoing’ gender are. The shabomen again occupy a position in between the much-debated standpoints of misogyny and ‘smashing binaries’. They stay in line with conventions of work division onstage, and they do not outspokenly present a feminist agenda. Nevertheless, they show some tendencies to undermine and subvert gender conventions and to creatively contribute to shifts in gender roles. In these processes, the analysis dismantled how practices of ‘doing’ and ‘undoing’ gender are intertwined and seemingly contradictory within the same persons and acts.

The case study exemplifies how a nuanced and contextualized account of not so spectacular masculinities contributes to better understanding micro-processes of gender production in music and popular culture. What was tackled here in an urban Ghanaian context evokes questions which would be interesting to trace in other contexts in Africa and beyond.
Acknowledgements

The research for this article was thankworthily supported by the University of Vienna. Special thanks to all musicians referred to for sharing their art and knowledge; to Jean Comaroff for her unerring in-depth comments, to Carole Ammann and the anonymous reviewer who preciously contributed to improve this piece; to Carolyne Egesa, Amisah Bakuri and Eileen Moyer for hosting me at ECAS 2019; to Babatunde Omotosho for his critical questions; to Cynthia Eshun, Akosua Adu-Poku and Esther Asenso-Agyemang, Mandiaya Seini and Victor Dey, Lydia Burnautzki and my Ph.D. peer group, Kirsten Rüther, Gerhard Kubik, Inge Grau, Elke Mader, and Marcos John Arrow for their contributions and encouragement.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on contributor

Katharina Gartner is a researcher and lecturer on youth and expressive cultures. She works at the Department of African Studies, University of Vienna, Austria, and at Vienna University of Economics and Business. Her current doctoral dissertation focuses on young instrumental musicians in Accra, Ghana, and traces questions of emergent adulthood and creativity. Gartner has an interdisciplinary background from African studies, anthropology of music, and psychoanalysis of youth. In addition to Ghana and Austria, field research has led her to Togo, Cameroon, Malawi, and New Orleans. Her academic work is inspired by her practical experience as a performing musician and as a counselor for youths and their families.

References

Adomako Ampofo, Akosua, and Awo Mana Asiedu. 2012. “Changing Representations of Women in Ghanaian Popular Music: Marrying Research and Advocacy.” Current Sociology 60 (2): 258–279. doi:10.1177/0011392111429229.

Amantana, Vivian. 2012. A Sociological Study of Street Children in Ghana: Victims of Kinship Breakdown and Rural Urban Migration. New York: Edwin Mellen Press.

Anim, Emmanuel Kwesi. 2003. “Who Wants to Be a Millionaire? an Analysis of Prosperity Teaching in the Charismatic Ministries (Churches) in Ghana and Its Wider Impact.” PhD diss., Open University.

Asante-Darko, Nimrod, and Sjaak Van der Geest. 1983. “Male Chauvinism: Men and Women in Ghanaian Highlife Songs.” In Female and Male in West Africa, edited by Oppong, Christine, 242–255. London: George Allen and Unwin.

Atambire, Stevo. 2013. Want no get. Seba kon done. Music video. Accessed 1 August 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n3LeDvuO7yM.

Atambire, Stevo and Wanlov the Kubolor. 2018. Man Pass Man. Digital audio. Accessed 14 May 2019. https://soundcloud.com/stevo-atambire/manpassman.

Aryeetey, Ernest, and William Bah-Boateng. 2016. “Ghana. A Successful Growth Story with Job Creation Concerns.” In Growth Traps and Opportunities for Six African Economies, edited by Haroon Bhorat, and Finn Tarp, 77–108. Washington: Brookings.
Azizaa. 2015. *Black Magic Woman.* Music video. Accessed 14 May 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bfeGpcmfMBA.

Barber, Karin. 2018. *A History of African Popular Culture.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1086/ahr/105.3.887.

Bochow, Astrid. 2010. *Intimität Und Sexualität Vor Der Ehe: Gespräche Über Ungesagtes in Kumasi Und Endwa.* Ghana. Berlin: LIT.

Broqua, Christophe, and Anne Doquet. 2013. “Examining Masculinities in Africa and Beyond.” *Cahiers D’études Africaines* 53 (209–210): 9–41. doi:10.4000/etudesafricaines.17229.

Butler, Judith. 1988. “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution.” *Theatre Journal* 40 (4): 519–531. doi:10.2307/3207893.

Butler, Judith. 1999. *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity.* London: Routledge.

Carl, Florian. 2014. “The Ritualization of the Self in Ghanaian Gospel Music.” *Ghana Studies* 17: 101–129. https://doi.org/10.1353/ghs.2014.0000.

Chipatiso, Linda Musariri. 2019. “Measuring Violence in South Africa: Gender Based Violence as Project of Governance.” Paper Presented at the European Conference on African Studies, Edinburgh, June 11–14.

Collins, John. 2005. *African Musical Symbolism in Contemporary Perspective. Roots, Rhythms and Relativity.* Berlin: Pro Business.

Collins, John. 2006. “One Hundred Years of Censorship in Ghanaian Popular Music Performance.” In *Popular Music Censorship in Africa*, edited by Michael Drewett, and Martin Cloonan, 171–186. London: Ashgate.

Collins, John. 2007. “The Entrance of Ghanaian Women into Popular Entertainment.” In *The Legacy of Efua Sutherland. Pan-African Cultural Activism*, edited by Anne V. Adams, and Esi Sutherland-Addy, 47–54. Banbury: Ayebia Clarke.

Collins, John. 2012. “Contemporary Ghanaian Popular Music since the 1980s.” In *Hip Hop Africa: New African Music in a Globalizing World*, edited by Eric Charry, 211–233. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Collins, John. 2018. *Highlife Time 3.* Accra: DAkpabli.

Comaroff, Jean, and John Comaroff. 2005. “Reflections on Youth from the Past to the Postcolony.” In *Makers and Breakers: Children and Youth in Postcolonial Africa*, edited by Alcinda Honawana, and Filip De Boeck, 19–30. Oxford: James Currey.

Connell, Raewin W., and James W. Messerschmidt. 2005. “Hegemonic Masculinity.” *Gender & Society* 19 (6): 829–859. doi:10.1177/0891243205278639.

Cornwall, Andrea. 2005. “Introduction: Perspectives on Gender in Africa.” In *Readings in Gender in Africa*, edited by Andrea Cornwall, 1–19. London: International African Institute.

Faria, Caroline. 2013. “Staging a New South Sudan in the USA: Men, Masculinities and Nationalist Performance at a Diasporic Beauty Pageant.” *Gender, Place and Culture* 20 (1): 87–106. doi:10.1080/0966369X.2011.624591.

Faria, Caroline, and Ryan Z. Good. 2012. “The Importance of Everyday Encounters: Young Scholars Reflect on Fieldwork in Africa.” *African Geographical Review* 31 (1): 63–66. doi:10.1080/19376812.2012.679460.

Franzen, Stefan. 2012. “Der Trickster Aus Accra.” *Norient*, February 14. Accessed 6 February 2019. https://norient.com/stories/wanlovthekubolor/.

Groes-Green, Christian. 2012. “Philogynous Masculinities: Contextualizing Alternative Manhood in Mozambique.” *Men and Masculinities* 15 (2): 91–111. doi:10.1177/1097184X11427021.
Heinsohn, Gunnar. 2017. “Demographic War Index 2017: Ranking by Country.” Accessed 15 May 2019. https://de.scribd.com/document/339621828/WAR-Index-2017-Ranking-Map-Heinsohn-06-02-2017.

Honwana, Alcinda. 2012. The Time of Youth: Work, Social Change, and Politics in Africa. Sterling, VA: Kumarian Press.

KPMG, ed. 2014. A Comprehensive Study of the Music Sector in Ghana. Final Report. Musicians Union of Ghana: Accra, Ghana.

Kubik, Gerhard. 2007. “‘Floating’ – Eine Ethnopsychoanalytische Feldforschungstechnik.” In Kulturanalyse – Psychoanalyse – Sozialforschung, edited by Elisabeth Tim, and Elisabeth Katschnig-Fasch, 249–268. Wien: Österreichisches Museum Für Volkskunde.

Langevang, Thilde. 2007. “Movements in Time and Space: Using Multiple Methods in Research with Young People in Accra.” Children’s Geographies 5 (3): 267–282. doi:10.1080/1473320701445853.

Langevang, Thilde. 2008a. “‘We Are Managing!’ Uncertain Paths to Respectable Adulthoods in Accra.” Geoforum 39 (6): 2039–2047. doi:10.1016/j.geoforum.2008.09.003.

Langevang, Thilde. 2008b. “Claiming Place: The Production of Young Men’s Street Meeting Places in Accra, Ghana.” Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography 90 (3): 227–242. doi:10.1111/j.1468-0467.2008.289.x.

Leonard, Marion. 2007. Gender in the Music Industry. Rock, Discourse and Girl Power. Farnham: Ashgate.

Livermon, Xavier. 2014a. “‘Si-Ghetto Fabulous’ (‘We Are Ghetto Fabulous’): Kwaito Musical Performance and Consumption in Post-Apartheid South Africa.” Black Music Research Journal 34 (2): 285–303. doi:10.5406/blacmusiresej.34.2.0285.

Livermon, Xavier. 2014b. “Soweto Nights: Making Black Queer Space in Post-Apartheid South Africa.” Gender, Place and Culture 21 (4): 508–525. doi:10.1080/0966369X.2013.786687.

Madison, D. Soyini, and Judith Hamera. 2005. “Performance Studies at the Intersections. Introduction.” In The Sage Handbook of Performance Studies, edited by D. Soyini Mandison, and Judith Hamera, xi–xxv. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Miescher, Stephan F. 2005. Making Men in Ghana. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Miescher, Stephan F., Takyiwaa Manuh, and Catherine Cole. 2007. “Introduction: When Was Gender?” In Africa After Gender?, edited by Catherine Cole, Stephan F. Miescher, and Takyiwaa Manuh, 1–14. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Newell, Sasha. 2012. The Modernity Bluff: Crime, Consumption, and Citizenship in Côte d’Ivoire. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Nii Mantse. 2016. Show Your Love. Unpublished Song. Audio Recording by the Author, 12 January 2017. Accra, Ghana.

Osumare, Halifu. 2014. “Becoming a ‘Society of the Spectacle’: Ghanaian Hiplife Music and Corporate Recolonization.” Popular Music and Society 37 (2): 187–209. doi:10.1080/03007766.2012.747262.

Plageman, Nate. 2014. “The African Personality Dances Highlife’: Popular Music, Urban Youth, and Cultural Modernization in Nkrumah’s Ghana, 1957–1965.” In Modernization as a Spectacle in Africa, edited by Peter Bloom, Takyiwaa Manuh, and Stephan F. Miescher, 244–267. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Reitsamer, Rosa, and Rainer Prokop. 2017. “Soziologen: ‘Männlichkeit Zeigt Sich im Rap Über Abwertung.’” Interview by Oona Kroisleitner. Der Standard February 17. Accessed 14 June 2020. https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000052609488/musiksoziolomaennlichkeit-zeigt-sich-im-rap-ueber-abwertung.
Rose, Tricia. 2008. *The Hip Hop Wars. What we Talk about When we Talk about Hip Hop – And Why It Matters*. New York: Basic Civitas.

Roy X. (Deroy Jimmy Taylor). 2013a. *Sakawa. Vinyl and Digital Album*. Berlin: Philophon PH-45-003B. https://royxtaylor.bandcamp.com/.

Roy X. (Deroy Jimmy Taylor). 2013b. *Odoyewu. Vinyl and Digital Album*. Berlin: Philophon PH-45–003A. https://royxtaylor.bandcamp.com/.

Rüther, Kirsten. 2017. *Afrika: Genauer Betrachtet. Perspektiven Aus Einem Kontinent im Umbruch*. Wien: Edition Konturen.

Shipley, Jesse Weaver. 2013a. *Living the Hiplife. Celebrity and Entrepreneurship in Ghanaian Popular Music*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Shipley, Jesse Weaver. 2013b. “Transnational Circulation and Digital Fatigue in Ghana’s Azonto Dance Craze.” *American Ethnologist* 40 (2): 362–381. doi:10.1111/amet.12476.

Shipley, Jesse Weaver. 2017. “Parody after Identity: Digital Music and the Politics of Uncertainty in West Africa.” *American Ethnologist* 44 (2): 249–262. doi:10.1111/amet.12476.

Spencer, Lynda Gichanda, Dina Ligaga, and Grace A. Musila. 2018. “Gender and Popular Imaginaries in Africa.” *Agenda* 32 (3): 3–9. doi:10.1080/10130950.2018.1526467.

Tarwo, Grace Princess. 2018. “Do not Compromise your Energy of Youfulness – Rawlings.” *Ghana News Agency*, October 5. Accessed 15 May 2019. https://www.ghananewsagency.org/social/do-not-compromise-your-energy-of-youfulness-rawlings-139717.

Turner, Victor. 1982. *From Ritual to Theatre. The Human Seriousness of Play*. New York: Performing Arts.

Turner, Victor. 1988. *The Anthropology of Performance*. New York, NY: PAJ.

Turner, Victor. (1965) 2005. *Das Ritual: Struktur Und Antistruktur. The Ritual Process*. Translated by Sylvia M. Schomburg-Scherff. Frankfurt a. M.: Campus.

Wanlov The, Kubolor. 2017. *Toto*. Music video. Accessed 14 May 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h4qxovzFKY.