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Chapter 9

German Rap — A Changing Cultural Field From a Gender Studies Perspective

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Abstract

This article is about the construction of masculinity in the German rap scene. After giving a short overview over the history, structure, main narratives and economic relevance of German rap, the construction of rap masculinity will be mainly discussed in the context of a transformation of the (global) gender order. For example, what impact does the rise and success of female rappers have on the gendered power relations within the German rap scene? Does the inclusion of feminine-coded moves and sounds, aesthetics or topics indicate a shift towards more alternative forms of masculinity? And what does it mean, when male rap artists currently rap about the meaning of masculinity, as if it was something that has to be (re-) defined all at once?

The field study works with different data material from the rap scene, lyrics, interviews, but also multimodal signs as album covers, photos, video material, etc. Through discourse analysis, major discursive lines and threads are pointed out to draw a picture of gender order in this distinctive social and artistic setting.

Keywords: Masculinity; rap; gender; equity; documental approach; power

Rap as a Transcultural Product, a Cultural Artefact and Question of Belonging

The sociology of culture defines culture as a perspective of analysis. Everything we produce, every system within which we interact, can be seen from a cultural point of view – as something that is culturally biased, culturally specific and unique. This extends from apparent subjects such as history, literature and literary studies to economics, natural science and medicine, which are also deeply influenced by

culturally pre-structured perception, thinking, categorization and systematization (cf. Reckwitz, 2007). This point of view is readily adopted by the scholarly discipline of intercultural communication – in itself a multidisciplinary and rather young field – as it widens its sphere of activity enormously. Almost every product of human creativity and interpersonal interaction can now be analyzed from a cultural point of view.

On the other hand, the notion of culture itself, as identified with intercultural communication, a mainly ethnic understanding, has been criticized from different areas during the past 20 years. It is the focus on ethnicity and nationality, and the tendency to lump together whole societies as a culturally coherent unity that is seen as an objectionable simplification. Especially for postcolonial theory and critical theory not only the unification and historical stability of the notion is highly debatable but also the normative character is something that narrows perspectives and knowledge. It is a question of choice and variety: Whose culture is explored and evaluated (male and white), what kind of limitations and borders are drawn by unquestioned notions (Western, oriental etc.) and at the end – who is talking about culture at all (cf. e.g. Anderson, 2016; Said, 1994, 2003)?

Alternative conceptions – hybridity, cultural difference, third space, transculturality – are established (cf. Bhabha, 2004; Welsch, 2001). It is noteworthy though, that these authors do not neglect the concept of culture in its entirety. Welsch (2001) writes:

Cultures today are extremely interconnected and entangled with each other. Lifestyles no longer end at the borders of national cultures, but go beyond these, are found in the same way in other cultures. (p. 68)

And further on, on the topic of hybridization: 'For every culture, all other cultures have tendentially come to be inner-content or satellites. This applies on the level of population, merchandise and information' (Welsch, 2001). Both quotes are united by the acceptance that cultures exist, that they can be distinguished, although they are interrelated, connected, hybridized or whatsoever. They even seem to have something in common with national borders – where they do or do not end. However, to be able to talk about cultures exceeding national borders, we have to assume that national borders and cultures exist and that they used to have something in common.

The problem might be situated in a conflict, which Rathje (2009) describes in her work on an applicable concept of culture: On the one hand, the destructionists of culture or, to be more precise, of the coherence of culture, point out very sharply the inadequacies and shortcomings of the traditional concept of culture in the light of postmodern diversity. On the other hand, however, from this theoretical point of view 'no alternative models, from which social desiderata might then be derived' (Rathje, 2009, p. 38), are offered. The 'social desiderata' are important here, as one very important (psychosocial) function of culture (if we accept its existence and do not discuss alternative concepts such as (collective) identity here) is to arrange the questions of collective belonging and exclusion. There might be the possibility to mix cultures, to transfer cultural concepts, to

adopt them – but in doing so, one might find oneself promptly in a discussion about affiliation and solidarity. This is, of course, also a highly political question, but 'border coherence' (Rathje, 2009, p. 50) means also, that we allow cultural hybridity, individuality and multi-collectivity, 'In order to be the member of a collective, palpable criteria must be fulfilled' (Rathje, 2009).

Taking into account this situation or rather position(s), hip-hop and rap as a part of it might be considered as one of the best examples to illustrate the existence of culture and its functions. At first sight, it seems to be almost invented to prove the proposition of transculturality. 'Born in the USA' with African and Afro-american roots it made its way through the world, preserving certain features, but also being adapted, developed further, hybridized. Although the original idols are worshipped, local recontextualizations are made – and even have to be made, as the affected socio-cultural situation in Germany, France, etc., is different from the US (cf. Androutsopoulos, 2003; Klein & Friedrich, 2003). However, these translation and transition processes are always accompanied by struggles for respect, the right interpretation and the right to interpret at all. Is rap a matter of white, male, well-educated adolescents with bright prospects – or does it belong to the marginalized exclusively because of its origin and its content characteristics?

However, rap is about belonging in – at least – two respects, as the marginalized use it to think and talk of their affiliation, their sense of belonging, their home, their origins, but also their exclusion and discrimination. Again, it is the coherence border of culture that is at stake here: where do I belong? which collective do I want to belong to? do I want to belong at all? why can't I belong? These struggles are also reflected in the linguistic surface of rap texts (cf. below), where slang and multi-lingual set pieces specify their own key.

Last but not least rap songs are cultural products, artefacts, congealed culture. They are an expression of viewpoints, interpretations and acquisitions of the world. As those who *belong* to this culture, subculture, scene or collective, rapper words through their texts provide the rap-specific interpretation of – everything. As marginalized or sub-altern, they might even explain the world they live in and the language they speak to the majority culture. And they share their adoptions of major discourses – political issues, gender debates, definitions of masculinity, etc (cf. below). So, we might also use their products as a content to learn more about the features of this culture – and about the fact, who belongs and who does not belong. However, is rap a Third Space? At first glance, it looks like it, but the debates and struggles in this Space are not entirely free, equal and without power and hierarchy.

A Short History of German Rap

Rap music was not the first element of the hip-hop culture, which found its way to Germany in the 1980s. With films like *Wild Style!* (1983) and *Beat Street* (1984), it were primarily the elements of breaking (or 'breakdancing') and graffiti writing that left an enormous impact on German Youth. The first German based rap groups were founded in the late 1980s, for example, *Fresh Familee*, *Advanced*

Chemistry, female hip-hop pioneer Cora E., *Rock da Most*, *TCA Microphone Mafia* or *Too Strong*. As you can already derive from the group's naming practices, they used the English language or migrant languages like Turkish to spread their messages first. For some, rapping in German seemed to be inauthentic (or just 'fake'), others just preferred English because it was supposed to 'flow' better and sound much cooler than the German language (cf. Güngör & Loh, 2002, p. 52). In the late 1980s and 1990s, the German rap scene was a loose network, spread between (often smaller) cities like Heidelberg, Ratingen or Dortmund. The rappers and activists were largely influenced by the US American 'mother culture' and shared a holistic understanding of hip-hop as a 'global identity' and political culture, that consists of different cultural practices like graffiti writing, DJing, breaking (breakdancing) or rapping (cf. Verlan & Loh, 2015, p. 90f.). In this pre-commercial era, it was very common to celebrate the different elements under the umbrella term 'hip-hop' and to organize so-called jams, which were rooted in the tradition of the notorious block parties, that gave birth to hip-hop in the early 1970s in the Bronx. The jams served to connect hip-hop activists from all over Germany and people made a lot of effort to reach them by car or mostly train.¹ The semantic spectrum of rap lyrics in this back in the days-era contained social critique and political messages, as well as humorous rhymes good for partying and just having a good time. Some German hip-hop activists stood in the tradition of the US American *Universal Zulu Nation*, a non-violent, freedom-seeking hip-hop network, founded by one of hip-hop's founding fathers *Afrika Bambaataa*. That's why lyrics from groups like *Advanced Chemistry* centred pretty much around topics such as solidarity, love, creativity and respect. In the early 1990s, rap groups began code switching and used more and more German words until German finally became rap's matrix language. Sociolinguist and hip-hop researcher Androutsopoulos (2009, p. 44) calls this shift a 'process of linguistic "emancipation"'. The track 'Ahmet Gündüz' from the multicultural rap group *Fresh Familee* might be an example from this era. The song subversively plays with stereotypes concerning migrants and tells the story of labour migration from a Turkish guest worker's perspective (cf. Güngör & Loh, 2017, pp. 197–200). Another very famous song from this era of German rap is 'Fremd im eigenen Land' ('stranger in my own land') from the Heidelberg based rap group *Advanced Chemistry*. Released in 1992, it deals with questions of belonging and the group's experiences of racism and social exclusion.

The first commercially successful German rap group was the Stuttgart based crew *Die Fantastischen Vier*, releasing the humorous flirt song 'Die da?!' ('that one?!') in 1992. Even if the song had no political or critical message, the linguistic performance and visual aesthetics of 'Fanta 4' stood pretty much in the tradition of US rap (rhythmic chanting, (almost over-excessively) head nodding in the video). Somewhat like the antagonist crew in these days was the so-called *Rödelheim Hartreim Projekt* ('RHP') from Frankfurt, spitting more explicit rhymes like: 'du laberst gerne Scheiß, ich reiße dich auf, Alter und kack dich wieder zu' ('you're talking shit, I rip you apart, man and shit on you'). From 1995 to 2000, German rap became more and more successful because of crews such as *Die Absoluten Beginner*, *Fettes Brot*, *Freundeskreis*, *Main Concept*, *EinsZwo* or *Samy*

Deluxe, with lyrics covering a semantic range from social critique, sophisticated poetry to fun and party songs. 'Hip-Hop cities' Hamburg and Stuttgart enjoyed high reputations in this era of German hip-hop history. This is discussed critically within German hip-hop studies as commercial success of rap music first started with the appearance of 'bio-Germans', whereas the achievements and efforts of lots of migrant pioneers were made invisible (cf. Güngör & Loh, 2002). At the turn of the millennium, German rap lyrics started to become rougher as the popular US gangsta rap genre gradually gained ground in Germany's bigger cities. Rappers like *Azad* from Frankfurt or *Westberlin Maskulin* from Berlin introduced the art of battle rapping to Germany and eventually paved the way for Germany's first commercially relevant gangsta rappers named *Sido* or *Bushido*, who are both still known today.

The Evolution and (Social) Relevance of German Gangsta Rap

The first music label making German gangsta rap a serious economic force was *Aggro Berlin* (Szillus, 2012). Founded in 2001, *Aggro Berlin* marked a break in the history of German rap music, as the level of aggressiveness within lyrical contents, aesthetics and gender performances reached an unprecedented climax. After decades of inoffensive, derogatorily named 'student rap' from cities like Stuttgart or Hamburg, the German public (and parents especially) was shocked listening to *Sidos* 'Mein Block', Germany's first ghetto anthem, released in 2004: 'Der Kerl aus'm Ersten war früher mal Rausschmeißer, seitdem er aus dem Knast ist, ist er unser Hausmeister, er ist oft bei der Nutte aus dem Zweiten, jetzt verkauft sie Fotos von ihm beim Arschausweiten' ('the guy living on the first floor used to be a bouncer, since he left jail he works as a janitor, he's a client of the prostitute above, now she's selling photos of him getting his ass stuffed'). One of the key selling points of *Aggro Berlins* marketing strategy was to build up specific artist images that were provocative and highly marketable at once: Rapper *Bushido* mimed the criminal hustler with migrant background, *B-Tight* would subversively confirm the cliché of the black aggressive negro and rappers like *Sido* or *Fler* were supposed to represent the white trash dudes with lower class background (cf. Szillus, 2012, pp. 52–54). Even if *Aggro Berlin* closed its doors in 2009, the narration of the super-masculine and socially deprived gangsta has lost none of its attraction.² *Massiv*, *Xatar*, or frequently named 'street rappers' like *Nate57* or *Haftbefehl* adapted the narration and added their own styles, aesthetics and linguistic features (cf. Böder & Karabulut, 2017). The Frankfurt based rap duo *Celo&Abdi*, for example, is well-known for their multilingual mix, including terms from Serbian, Turkish, Albanian, French, Italian or German, mixed with coded slang items from drug language, spoken in a nonchalant Hessian street dialect. In the 2012 released track 'Hinterhofjargon', they explain: 'Ich erkläre Jargon auf Deutsch für Franz und Hans, für's ganze Land, ich kann wie ein Duden spitten, 'Haye'd em kurda' heißt 'Leben ist'n Rudelficken', das Leben ist 'n Swingerclub, 'fick deine Mutter' heißt 'nique mouk', guck, ich bin Hood-Translator...' ('I'm explaining slang in German so

that Franz and Hans can understand, to the whole country, cause I can spit like Duden [= well-known German encyclopedia], 'Haye'd em kurda' means life is a bitch, life's like a swinger club, 'fuck your mother' means 'nique mouk', see I'm the hood translator...). Since 2016, German gangsta rap has become more melodious as German rappers like *Raf Camora* or *Bonez MC* began to mix the formerly rough gangsta sound with rhythms from Jamaican dancehall music and French so-called 'Afro Trap', a hybrid from Southern US Trap rap as well as West African music and dance traditions. That's why contemporary gangsta style, for example, from *Veysel*, *KMN Gang* or *Ufo361*, differs in sounding structures, video aesthetics and even gender performances, as you could recently witness the former 'bad guys' dancing, singing and even smiling – feminine-coded practices of course. Semantically though, this change does not affect the genre's characteristic speech acts and linguistic patterns, as the subject position of the (mostly male) gangsta rapper discursively still manifests its hegemonic position within rap through degrading others while claiming supremacy on the grounds of hypermasculine (imagined) traits like authority, (physical) strength or toughness.

When it comes to socio-demographic features, one can say that German gangsta rap is widely dominated by (more or less young) men with migrant background or male refugees, who fled with their families from countries like Lebanon, Syria or Iraq (for example, *Zuna* or *Kurdo*) (cf. Güngör & Loh, 2017). However, there have always been important female rappers within all decades of German rap music. *Cora E.* belongs to the pioneers of German hip-hop culture and *Sabrina Sethur*, releasing albums like 'Die neue S-Klasse'³ in 1997, still counts as one of the most relevant rap artists, when it comes to commercial success. Even within the highly male dominated gangsta rap spectrum women made their way in Germany. As a part of the notorious *Aggro Berlin* squad, female rapper *Kitty Kat* has been spitting rhymes since 2006. Together with feminist porn rapper *Lady Bitch Ray*, both eventually paved the way for *Schwesta Ewa*, a Frankfurt-based sex worker, showing up on the radar in 2012. In one of her first singles, 'Realität', she raps: 'Ich komm mit Rap-Sprüchen, die so heiß sind wie Crack-Küchen, du checkst die Hälfte, weil du nicht echt bist. Ich versuch mich zu legalisieren, indem ich rappe, wie illegal wir sind. Kurwa, mein BH ist aus Kevlar, so prallt euer Hass ab an der Schwesta, erzähl mir nichts von Hardknock Life, mein soziales Umfeld findet Nadeln geil, ah!' ('I spit rhymes hot as crack kitchen, you just don't get it, 'cause you are a poser. I try to legalize myself by telling stories 'bout our illegal lives. Kurwa [polish = hoe/prostitute], my bra is made from Kevlar, that's why your hate doesn't affect the sista, you can't tell me nothing 'bout hard knock life, people around me: drug needle style, ah!'). Though still rapping today, the career of highly respected MC *Schwesta Ewa* got stuck, as Ewa Malanda (which is her real name) was accused of forced prostitution, procuration, tax evasion and other various crimes in 2016. By the end of January 2020, the young mother Ewa Malanda began her prison sentence. Two weeks before, her third album 'Aaliyah' came out, which is named after her one-year-old daughter, whom she was not allowed to take with her to jail.

Digitalization, Differentiation and Commercialization – Significant Factors of Cultural Change in German Rap

All around the world rap music has changed a lot over the last few years. Until the millennium or so, aesthetics, styles and discourses needed up to 10 years until they made their way from the USA to Germany or other countries. However, today hip-hop's *transnational flows* stream a lot faster because of emerging technologies and digitalization in particular. Especially the Internet and social media play a big role in this transformation process. To produce music, you no longer need to buy expensive equipment or wait for a big deal with some renowned record label. You can just go online, download some cheap beginner's software, upload your stuff on online platforms like *YouTube* or *SoundCloud* and tell the world via *Facebook*, *Twitter* or *Instagram* that you're a rap star in the making. Furthermore, it is not that much about selling physical records, but about gathering views and streams – i.e., on *Spotify* or *iTunes* (cf. Dietrich, 2016). Besides digitalization, differentiation, especially, the diversification of rap genres and audiences might be another significant change in German rap. Similar to other hip-hop scenes as in the USA or France, more and more different genres evolve (even if the gangsta rap genre can still be seen as the most dominant rap style). Inspired from US rappers and rap groups like *Pharrell Williams* (N.E.R.D.) or *Kid Cudi* so-called 'hipster-Rap' (or 'hipster hop') began to spread in Germany since 2010. Rapping about emotions, love or fashion and mixing classic rap elements with styles from alternative, punk or rock music, rappers like *Casper* or *Cro* heralded something of a new era. Of course, this change affects gender roles as well, a transformation which is best seen on an aesthetic level. Both rappers are well-known for wearing skinny jeans, a figure-hugging and therefore feminine-coded fashion style. This tight and delicate outfit, of course, conflicts with hip-hop's hypermasculine dress code, preferring loose trousers ('baggy pants') and other clothes that signal authority, power or criminal activities (heavy black leather jackets and so forth (cf. Süß, 2019a)). No wonder then, that German Gangsta rappers frequently use the German word 'Röhrenjeans' (engl. = skinny jeans) or 'Röhrenjeans-Rapper' when dissing a subordinated male rapper. Compare Bonn based street rapper *Ssio* rapping things like: 'Spielst in Videoclips gern den bösen Mann, doch hast ne Jeanshose mit engen Röhren an...' ('in video clips you act like the bad guy, but wearing jeans that are that tight') ('Unbekannter Titel', 2013).

However, 'hipster rap', of course, is not the only example of the stylistic diversification of German rap music. With more and more young rappers appearing on the radar, other genres like so-called 'cloud rap', 'trap rap' or lately 'afro-trap' enrich rap music a lot and add new elements when it comes to sound structures, aesthetics, semantics or body performances. Gangsta rap, of course, is a dynamic genre as well. Even though the basic messages, centring around ghetto toughness, violence, drug abuse and bitches did not change that much, contemporary Gangsta rap differs from first wave gangsta rap from around the year 2000. As already mentioned above, the most significant change may concern the sounding structures and visual aesthetics. Gangsta-affiliated rappers and rap crews like *KMN Gang* or *Capital Bra* recently started dancing, singing and

smiling in their videos. These practices were once labelled feminine, weak and therefore close to homosexuality, which of course conflicts with almost everything super-masculine gangsta rap stands for. It is very obvious at this point, that German hip-hop identity is still very much constructed in adaption and recontextualization of global role models and identification figures. A cultural process which German hip-hop literature theoretically frames with the concept of 'glocalization' (global flows are adapted and creatively rearranged within a local framework/context) (cf. Androutsopoulos, 2003; Dietrich, 2015; Klein & Friedrich, 2003). That this 'glocal' process doesn't only concern language, speech acts or other stylistic features, but of course has a gendered dimension as well, is a fact often ignored in German hip-hop studies. However, if we look at German rap masculinity construction, it is very obvious, that (mostly black) US-rappers play a significant role when it comes to masculinity performances. Canadian born US-rap superstar *Drake*, which Obst (2016) recently discusses as an example of so-called 'inclusive masculinity', apparently paved the way for German rappers' new soft side. Not only is *Drake* known for singing emotional ballads about love and loss, he's also a passionate dancer. Lots of his often smooth and sensual dance moves can be seen in German rap music videos as well and are shaping German rap masculinities' body performances extensively (cf. Fig. 9.1).⁴

Besides the gendered cultural shifts of digitalization and differentiation/diversification, the biggest trend is definitely the overwhelming commercial success of contemporary German rap music and rap music worldwide. With 1990s hip-hop groups like *Die Absoluten Beginner* or Germanys millennial gangsta rap blueprints *Bushido* or *Sido* (*Aggro Berlin*) rap music of course has been part of the German music mainstream for almost 20 years. However, the rapid commercialization that took place within the last years is unprecedented! With the help of other factors like digitalization (i.e. *Spotify*), German rap artists from all genres became rap millionaires and made rap music a serious job option. German *Forbes* magazine calls rapper and businessman *Raf Camora* a 'mogul in the making' and puts him on the cover in April 2019. *Capital Bra*, a Berlin-based Gangsta rapper recently broke a 50-year-old record, having more number one-hits than *The Beatles*, and so forth. Even if there is much more to say about the rapid commercialization of German rap music (cf. Süß, 2019b), we want to highlight another important transformation that took place within the last years as well: the rise of women in rap music and its impact on gender relations on the field.



Fig. 9.1. The 'Glocal' Construction of Rap Masculinity: Role Model Drake (Left) vs German Rap Masculinities 'Zuna' From KMN Gang (Middle) and Boney MC and Raf Camora (Right): Spreading Arms to Both Sides While Whipping/Swinging Up and Down.

Gendered Transformations in German Rap: Between Female Takeover and Masculinist Backlash

One thing too often neglected in German hip-hop studies (and global hip-hop studies as well) is the importance of women and their impact on the culture as a whole and rap music specifically. While there are self-identified 'hip-hop feminists' in the USA who try to rewrite hip-hop history from a feminist (or at least feminine) point of view, there is not much said about this in Germany (cf. Süß, 2016 about 'HipHop-Feminismus'; Sahin, 2019). Even if we can speak of rap as a patriarchally structured field with a deeply masculine-coded 'set of symbols, artefacts and social practices' (Seeliger, 2013, p. 113) and even if most power positions are still dominated by men (i.e., within major labels or rap journalism), there have always been strong and very relevant women in the history of German rap. Besides already mentioned *Cora E.*, *Kitty Kat*, *Lady Bitch Ray* or *Schwessta Ewa*, the rise of women might count as one of the most significant cultural changes within contemporary rap. Berlin-based rap duo *SXTN*, for example, entered the male-dominated gangsta genre in 2016 and released a commercially successful album called 'Leben am Limit' ('life at the margins') in 2017. The group with Moroccan and Eritrean migrant background consisted of *Nura* and *Juju* and is well-known for reclaiming the term 'Fotze' ('cunt') which they frequently use in their lyrics (together with other vulgar slang terms of course). Even if the group split in 2019, both rappers are still successful solo artists today and won several renowned awards. Another milestone in the 'herstory of German rap' is certainly Hamburg-based female rapper *Haiyti*, who enjoyed some underground reputation, before she finally entered the game with her mixtape 'City Tarif' in 2016. The self-appointed 'girl boss gangster' is said to be highly influenced by US Southern raps groups like *Three 6 Mafia* and is well-known for her innovative rap style and ad libbing skills. *Haiyti* covers a semantic spectrum from precarious white trash narratives to drug abuse and love songs and is to be located somewhere between gangsta rap, 'emo rap' ('emo' for emotions) and 'cloud rap'. In the latter case, this is because of her extensive use of autotune technique and synthesizers and her raspy and ailing voice. Although polarizing, rap Germany somewhat fell in love with the extraordinary female rap character, who signed a major deal with *Universal* in 2017. It is worth mentioning, that the famous German hip-hop magazine *Juice* put her on the cover in January 2018. *Haiyti* was the first female rapper to receive this special honour, a fact which once more mirrors the patriarchal power structures within German rap (journalism and elsewhere, remember the significance of *Schwessta Ewa* who already appeared in 2012 or 2016's successful rap group *SXTN* to name a few). 2018 and 2019 were important years for Germany's 'herstory of rap' as well, as two former influencers suddenly started rapping and meanwhile became more influential than the boys: Swiss rapper *Loredana* and Hamburg based *Shirin David*. Embodying very traditional forms of femininity both rappers get up to 60 million views for hits like 'Sonnenbrille' ('sun glasses'/ *Loredana*) or 'Gib ihm' ('give it to him'/ *Shirin David*) and won several prizes. It is interesting to see though, that German rap femininity construction seems to also function in a 'glocal' kind of way, which can be best seen in the case of *Shirin David*. The rapper with Lithuanian and Iranian background is a self-declared fan

of US rap star *Nicki Minaj* (in the song 'Gib ihm' *Shirin* even raps: 'attitude is Nicki'). If you compare the rap style, body performance and video aesthetics of *Nicki* and *Shirin*, parallels between both can hardly be overlooked.

When it comes to transformation processes in rap, it is not only the rise and pure number of women, which marks a break in the history of rap, but also the very different kinds of femininities which they embody. Besides hard to grasp 'girl boss gangster' and official 'trap queen' *Haiyti*, representing some kind of arty female street hustler, Germany's female rap models range from traditional (*Loredana*) to superfeminine, sex-positive femininity (*Shirin David*) to queer role models like Berlin based rapper *Sooke*. Moreover, there are different representations of black afro-diasporic femininities in Germany, like *Eunique* or *Ace Tee* from Hamburg or rap and r&b singer *Rola* from Frankfurt. Austrian conscious rapper *Ebow* however raps from a queer Alevian and Kurdish perspective, while feminist porn rapper *Lady Bitch Ray* critiques rap and the society as a whole for its patriarchal suppression of female voices and sexuality (cf. Sahin, 2012). Of course, there are numerous female underground rappers as well like street rapper *Adden*, battle rapper *Pilz* or left-wing political rapper *Lena Stoehrfaktor*, to name only a few.

Unfortunately, the rise of strong and powerful women in German rap is accompanied by a heightened level of sexism and massive discrimination against women. This indicates that not every male rapper is able to cope with this new distribution of power and visibility in the field. Especially protagonists from the hypermasculine gangsta rap genre seem to be irritated about certain serious female opponents (cf. Goßmann/Seeliger, 2013). On the 2017 released track, 'Maserati' *Kurdo and Majoe* rap: 'Wir kennen keine Emanzipation, fick deinen Frauenrap, ich bin ein Ausländer. Du willst ein Mikrofon? Hier nimm mein Dauerständer! Rede nicht wie eine von der Rockergang, ihr Nutten, wie kann man sich selber Fotze nennen?' ('we don't know no emancipation, fuck your female rap, I am a foreigner. You want a microphone? Take my boner instead! Don't talk like one of those biker gang members, youse bitches, how can you call yourself cunts?'). The lines of course, are meant to diss the female street rap crew *SXTN*, who reclaimed the term 'cunt' and released their debut album 'Leben am Limit' only a few months before the song 'Maserati' came out. However, misogynist content is reproduced on a visual level as well. A very wide spread form of objectifying women in German rap music videos for example is the 'ass shot'. A camera angle, showing only the (often half-naked, sexy lingerie wearing) bum of a woman (cf. Fig. 9.2).



Fig. 9.2. Visual Objectification of Women via Camera Technique 'Ass Shot'. Screenshots From Rap Music Videos From Bonez MC and Raf Camora (Left) and Kurdo and Majoe (Right).

There are dozens of other ways women are degraded in contemporary German rap. Other forms comprise the often seen connection of visualizing criminality with the help of women of colour (i.e., half-naked black women cooking crack) or the discrimination of Eastern European women by associating them with cheap sex work.

The rap scene is therefore one in which broad social discourses cross with existing cultural hybridity. In-scene/in-culture changes run parallel to social discourses, sometimes across them, and here too mechanisms of power function. Backlashes and counterstrikes are at work, and, as in a fishbowl or under a magnifying glass, they seem to be even more apparent, striking and extreme.

Notes

1. It is this era of hip-hop where the term 'backpack rapper' derives from. Today it is often used in a derogatory way and meant to blame people for their old-fashioned understanding of hip-hop.
2. Actually the German adaption of the US gangsta rap genre was so very successful, that it slowly began to supersede all other forms of rap and finally led to the public misconception, that hip-hop equals rap and rap equals gangsta rap (as it is the case in most countries).
3. 'The new S-Class', which indicates the luxury class of Mercedes Benz.
4. The pictures are screenshots from *Drake's* music video 'Nice for what' (see here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U9BwWKXjVaI>), *Miami Yacine's* 'Kokaina' (see here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2CGv2Ud-KoE>) and the song 'Palmen aus Plastik' from Bonez MC and Raf Camora (see here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7_tWN9Iei7Y) (last update: 03.05.2020) and Kurdo & Majoes 'Maserati' (see here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QY1HNhcXnDY>).

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Part 3

Art, Community and Dialogue