BEWITCHING THE STATE

Gender Contestations and Transgressive Citizenship Amid Economic Crisis in Ghana, 1972–1979

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ABSTRACT: The 1970s was a period of extreme economic stress and scarcity in Ghana. Under these conditions, Ghanaians deployed gendered discourses like *fa wo to bɛgye golf* [bring your bottom in exchange for a (VW) golf] to discipline young, urban women. This popular discourse, which appropriated prevailing nationalist rhetoric, accused young women of transgressing the bounds of good citizenship and imperiling the military government's nation-building project. Perceptions of women's superior economic position vis-a-vis salaried male workers posed a threat to gender ideologies that consigned women to the home. Newspapers provide overwhelming evidence of intense contestations over gender roles, particularly within intimate relationships. Situating 1970s Ghana within frameworks of gendered citizenship, and rumor as discourse, I argue that Ghanaian women were both subjects and actors in the material and discursive realms of the economy and sexuality. This positionality served as a focal point for critiques of the Ghanaian state and public corruption. Placing Ghana's 1970s nationalist project in conversation with others on the continent, this article challenges the historiographical neglect of this period, thereby broadening our understanding of the contested nature of gender, citizenship, and women's bodies/sexuality.

KEYWORDS: Ghana, Africa, gender, nationalism, rumors, discourse, women, masculinity, media

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doi:10.3368/gs.27.1.94
ISSN 1536-5514 / E-ISSN 2333-7168

A 1974 letter to the editor of the *Legon Observer* (*Observer*), the fortnightly periodical published by the faculty of the University of Ghana, shared an anecdote about Ghana's preoccupation with "vital organs." The author thought it amusing that Ghanaians implicitly understood the vital organs alluded to were not the heart, kidney, or liver but male genitalia. He continued:

> One . . . person has remarked that he wants to offer himself willingly to black magicians because the disappearance of his vital organs would signal the end of his . . . financial problems. Another person said . . . *If everybody in the country were to lose their vital organs, ostentation would cease, corruption would cease, and many of the irregularities which plague our official lives would cease . . . and the economy too would be saved*.[1]

What did sexual organs have to do with affairs of state and the economic well-being of an entire nation? For most urban Ghanaians reading this article in 1974, the connection would have been apparent. They lived in an era that would pass into collective memory as exemplary of particular kinds of corruption at the highest levels of government.

Rumor had it that profligate government officials were gifting Volkswagen (VW) Golf cars to their young lovers. The phrase *fa wo to bɛgye golf* encapsulated this alleged practice. It is an invitation, the imagined speaker a highly placed official, and means "bring your buttocks in exchange for a Golf." Its construction does three things. First, it inscribes corrupt practices on women's bodies by invoking their sexuality. Second, it subversively forwards a critique of the corrupt military state that suppressed speech and controlled the press.[2] Third, it centers these two groups as partners in what Ghanaians considered the defining moral problem of the period—public corruption.

While the phrase remains prominent in collective and individual memories, it has not been substantially historicized.[3] This paper argues that from

1. Emphasis added. Kweku Blankson, "Working in Mysterious Ways," *The Legon Observer*, May 3, 1974. *The Observer* is available at the University of Ghana's Balme Library.

2. *The Legon Observer* published extensively about the lack of press freedom under the NRC. One article opined, "[t]he press . . . has often been accused of being . . . docile apologists of all government does, of hero-worshipping and dancing to the tune of its master." "The Press, The Government, and The People," *Legon Observer*, April 4, 1974, 150. It would be forced to cease publication a few months later.

3. Baffour Agyeman-Duah, *General Acheampong: The Life and Times of Ghana's Head of State* (Tema: Digibooks Publishers, 2021), 152. Emmanuel Akyeampong, "Wo Pe Tam Won Pe Ba (You like cloth but you don't want children): Urbanization, Individualism and Gender Relations in Colonial Ghana, c. 1900–1939" in *Africa's Urban Past*, eds. David M. Anderson and Richard Rathbone (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000), 230; *Drink,*

1972 to 1979, Ghanaians, living under conditions of extreme economic stress and scarcity, deployed gendered discourses like *fa wo to bɛgye golf* to accuse young urban women of transgressing the bounds of good citizenship. Likely coined in or after 1974, when the VW Golf was introduced to the market, the phrase indicates intensified gendered disciplinary discourses as a result of worsening economic conditions. While condemning these women for extracting from the state in pursuit of hyper-consumerist lifestyles, the phrase also reprimanded state officials for facilitating, and perhaps even encouraging, such behavior, effectively undermining the nation-building project in which they urged citizens to participate.[4] As a banner in the *Ghanaian Times* (*Times*) admonished, "[y]our existence is meaningless if it's not to enrich the life of the state."[5]

Three newspapers and a periodical provide the bulk of evidence for this paper.[6] They are the *Daily Graphic (Graphic),* the *Times,* the *Mirror,* and the *Observer*. Government-owned and censored, the *Graphic*, *Times*, and *Mirror* had nationwide circulation.[7] When I interviewed Ms. Elizabeth Ohene, a veteran journalist and ardent advocate of press freedom who wrote for the *Graphic* and the *Mirror* in the 1970s, she described the relationship between the government and the two newspapers as "state-owned, not state-controlled."[8] Ms. Ohene explained that the *Graphic* and *Mirror*, which were initially privately owned with a tradition of independent reporting, asserted some degree of press freedom that the *Times*, state-owned from its inception, did not.[9] The *Observer* provides a counterbalance with debates about the state's policies and public discontent elided by the national press.[10]

Power, and Cultural Change: A Social History of Alcohol in Ghana, c. 1800 to Recent Times (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1996), 152. Both authors agree that the allegations were used to discredit women's economic successes.

4. "We Must Unite to Build," *Daily Graphic*, April 2, 1974, 5; "Youth Told To Be Selfless," *Daily Graphic*, April 8, 1974, Front Page; "Self Reliance Must Be A Watchword," *Ghanaian Times*, January 12, 1974, Front Page; "Forward In Unity," *Ghanaian Times*, January 14, 1974, Front Page.

5. *Ghanaian Times*, January 15, 1974, 2.

6. Jennifer Hasty, "Performing Power, Composing Culture: The State Press in Ghana," *Ethnography* 7, no. 1 (2006): 69–98.

7. Yaw Twumasi, "The Newspaper Press and Political Leadership in Developing Nations. the Case of Ghana 1964 To 1978," *Gazette* 26, no. 1 (1980): 1–16.

8. Elizabeth Ohene (journalist), in an interview with the author, Accra, Ghana, August 7, 2023.

9. Elizabeth Ohene (journalist), in an interview with the author, Accra, Ghana, August 7, 2023; Twumasi, "The Newspaper Press," 6–7.

10. Twumasi, "The Newspaper Press," 8.

Although circumscribed by government censorship, the newspapers brimmed with lively discussions, offering vibrant spaces for understanding the mutually constitutive nature of politics, culture, and society.[11] Derek Peterson and Emma Hunter argue that African newspapers "had the revolutionary power to create solidarities and convene communities."[12] The *Mirror*, in particular, featured robust "Letters" and "Advice" sections and a roster of columnists who crafted didactic stories with pseudonyms and tones meant to establish familiarity with the reader.[13] For example, under the pseudonym Koo Pia (Koo is an appellation reserved for close male friends), the writer of "Male Mutterings," narrated his stories as gossip to a friend. Discussing her and other columnists' approaches to their craft, Ms. Ohene shared:

> The [stories] that work are always based on a real event. The details might not be the same, and you would take the liberty of maybe combining two or three stories into one. In my experience, it only really works if it is based on a live, touchable story.[14]

While she couldn't recall who wrote "Male Mutterings," she said it struck her as a man's attempt to make sense of changes in gender relations.[15] I read the newspapers as unique windows into Ghana's social, cultural, and political life in the 1970s and analyze their many stories as valuable social commentary that illuminate how ideologies about gender, accumulation, and the performance of power animated *fa wo to bɛgye Golf*.

This paper is organized around two broad questions: what were the material and ideological conditions under which *fa wo to bɛgye golf* proliferated as a rumor? What work was it deployed to do? To answer these questions, the paper begins by summarizing Ghana's economic crisis of the 1970s and the military regime's attempts to revive the collapsing economy

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11. Andrew Ivaska, *Cultured States: Youth, Gender, and Modern Style in 1960s Dar Es Salaam* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 29.

12. Derek Peterson, Emma Hunter, and Stephanie Newell, eds., *African Print Cultures: Newspapers and Their Publics In the Twentieth Century* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2016), 6.

13. Regular columns included *Male Mutterings, Chat With Grandma, Thoughts of A Native Daughter, Margaret Kwakwa* . . . The paper's advice column, *Nana Ama Advises You,* proliferated with letters seeking advice on all kinds of relationships.

14. Elizabeth Ohene (journalist), in an interview with the author, Accra, Ghana, August 7, 2023.

15. Elizabeth Ohene (journalist), in an interview with the author, Accra, Ghana, August 7, 2023.

by mobilizing Ghanaians to embody a new kind of citizenship. I argue that the chit, a critical policy innovation, placed women at the center of discourse about public corruption.[16] I then explore the gendered effects of economic decline, analyzing how women's perceived, and actual economic advancement led to an ideological hardening of their gender roles, even as men struggled to live up to the state's version of ideal manhood. It will also illustrate how the state displaced anger about the crisis onto market women/traders and conclude by bringing the seemingly disparate discourses about market women and young women together in a common frame.

In the final section, I analyze newspaper articles to show how certain columnists presented contemporary gender contestations as psychic tussles between hardworking men and greedy women. Unlike vampire stories or tales of disappearing genitals, the rumor that government officials were doling out Golfs to their lovers was fairly banal.[17] Regardless, rooted firmly in the material realities of the period, the rumor leads us to a discursive world where things are not as they should be—where young women wield near fantastical power over men through their sexuality, and powerful men fail to embody their own definition of ideal masculinity.

Of Crying Maidens and Hapless Leaders: What Does a Rumor Do?

The National Redemption Council/Supreme Military Council (NRC/SMC) regime ruled Ghana from 1972 to 1979. Following the overthrow of its first leader, General I. K. Acheampong, in 1978, Ghanaians agreed that he had "engaged in wanton dissipation of public funds" by "helping" women who cried in his office, granting them access to scarce public resources."[18] However, the specific allegation that young women received VW Golfs from government officials in exchange for sex remains a rumor, and this paper treats it as such.[19] Moreover, the phrase does not appear in primary sources. Rather, fragments litter newspaper references to "golf girls" and to "those young girls who received posh Golf (VW) . . . from those corrupt

16. My gratitude to Prof. Takyiwaa Manuh for drawing my attention to the centrality of the chit system in public discourse on women and corruption.
17. Luise White, *Speaking with Vampires: Rumor and History in Colonial Africa* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000); Julien Bonhomme, *The Sex Thieves: The Anthropology of a Rumor* (Chicago, IL: Hawoo Publishing Company, 2016).
18. J. Kwasi Tega, *The Legon Observer*, February 1, 1980, 44.
19. Agyeman-Duah, *General Acheampong,* 152.

officers."[20] Notably, both references appeared after the overthrow of the regime, further proof of its function as subversive speech in a repressive regime.

Though consigned to rumor and gossip, *fa wo to bɛgye golf* retains discursive power as an entry point into the society that produced it.[21] By all reports, rumors spread quickly in 1970s Ghana. A columnist for the *Mirror* called it a "hidden asset," commenting tongue-in-cheek that "rumour-mongering is a favorite pastime of Ghanaians and . . . something in which we all excel. And it's not just women who are tale-bearers . . . men are also thick in the 'they say . . . it is said' business."[22] In other words, everyone was talking, and they were talking, opined the columnist, because of official speech suppression.[23]

Accepting the veracity of a rumor as less important than its existence allows us to interrogate it as public discourse engaged in specific work. If it was doing "something" for those that spread it, what was it doing, and to what end? Stephen Ellis and Gerrie ter Haar suggest two ways of interrogating rumors. The first "avenue of investigation," which seeks to understand how and why a rumor becomes believable in a given context, helps explain why Ghanaians believed these rumors.[24] The gendered effects of the economic crisis, along with practices like 'sugar daddyism' and the popularity of the locally produced VW Golf, provided a "mental frame of reference" onto which *fa wo to bɛgye golf* grafted.[25] Following Luise White, I contend that rumors carry potency as disciplinary discourse: "the very

20. Joyce Tawiah, "Currency Change—Dereliction of Duty," *Legon Observer*, May 4, 1979, 153; Ajoa Yeboah-Afari, "Tolerance Please," *The Mirror*, June 22, 1979, 3.
21. White, *Speaking with Vampires*, 5.
22. Ajoa Yeboah-Afari, "A Hidden Asset," *The Mirror*, June 8, 1979, 3.
23. Yeboah-Afari, "A Hidden Asset." The NRC passed the Subversion Decree in 1972, empowering military courts to impose harsh penalties for subversive political activities, profiteering, and spreading rumors. Jon Kraus, "The Decline of Ghana's Military Government," *Current History* 73, no. 432 (1977): 215; Santrofi, "And It Came To Pass: Epistle No. 9," *The Legon Observer*, June 14, 1974, 295.
24. Stephen Ellis and Gerrie ter Haar, *Worlds of Power: Religious Thought and Political Practice in Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 36.
25. Ellis and ter Haar, *Worlds of Power*; Ama Ata-Aidoo, *No Sweetness Here* (London: Longman, 1970); Ayi Kwei Armah, *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (Edinburgh: Pearson, [1968] 1995); Bianca Murillo, *Market Encounters: Consumer Cultures In Twentieth-Century Ghana* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2017), 132; Takyiwaa Manuh, "Women and Their Organizations During the Convention Peoples' Party Period," in *The Life and Work of Kwame Nkrumah*, ed. Kwame Arhin (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1993), 113; Aygeman-Duah, *General Acheampong*, 113, 152.

act of talking about . . . others, disciplines; the very practices of sorting out the epistemologies that . . . scandalize creates and catalogues ideas about deviance and virtue, which are enforced with each telling."[26] This understanding of the utility of rumors reveals the structures of power within which *fa wo to bɛgye golf* operated and which Ghanaian women navigated during a period of instability and scarcity.

Golfs, "Girls," and Generals: Modernity and its Discontents

In the early post-independence period, vibrant urban life, embodied most clearly by young people, sparked narratives of moral decline in cities across Africa.[27] Ghana's military regime confronted similar concerns about particular markers of modernity. Widespread anxieties around socio-political changes resulted in the condemnation of young women's "comportment, work, relationships with men, and movement about town."[28] However, unlike its continental cohort, the NRC/SMC eschewed morality campaigns meant to police young women's sexuality.[29] While the state's elaboration of citizenship provided language with which to indict perceived deviance, narratives denouncing young women's sexuality came from below. This paper intervenes in the historiography to explore the particularities of the Ghanaian context and experience of gendered nationalist projects.

26. White, *Speaking with Vampires*, 61.
27. Kenneth Little, *African Women in Towns: An Aspect of Africa's Social Revolution* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1973); Nate Plageman, *Highlife Saturday Night: Popular Music and Social Change in Ghana* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013); Akyeampong, *Drink, Power and Cultural Change*; Ivaska, *Cultured States*.
28. Ivaska, *Cultured States*, 15. On Ghana's economic crises leading up to the NRC coup, see Maxwell Owusu, "The Search for Solvency: Background to the Fall of Ghana's Second Republic, 1969–1972," *Africa Today* 19, no. 1 (1972): 52–60; Eboe Hutchful, "A Tale of Two Regimes: Imperialism, the Military and Class in Ghana," *Review of African Political Economy*, no. 14 (1979): 36–55; Kwame Akon Ninsin, "Ghana: The Failure Of A Petty-Bourgeois Experiment," *Africa Development / Afrique et Développement* 7, no. 3 (1982): 37–67.
29. Ghana's engagement with state-led cultural policy occurred in the 1960s. See Jean Allman, "Let Your Fashion Be In Line With Our Ghanaian Costume: Nation, Gender, and the Politics of Clothing in Nkrumah's Ghana," in *Fashioning Africa: Power and the Politics of Dress*, ed. Jean Allman (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004).

Crucially, it centers a neglected group of women alongside the more visible and much-maligned market women.[30]

So, who were these deviant young women? An article in the *Observer* offered a sketch of these women alongside other groups accused of anti-social behavior: "[t]he makola women [traders] went about looking very 'pregnant' with [cash]; the . . . 'business executives' staggered around with 'weighted' briefcases; the up-and-coming 'Golf' girls moved about jauntily with bulging handbags under their arms."[31] Besides its value as one of two mentions I found in the primary sources, this quote is notable for painting these young women, alone among the "moneyed groups" as carefree. While the Makola women and business executives appeared burdened by their hoarded bills, the "Golf girls" moved about "jauntily," lightened by their ill-begotten cash. The *Observer*'s language also delineates the reproductive body of the productive Makola woman from the transgressive sexuality of the "Golf girl."

While these examples reference the amorphous category of young girls, this group would have comprised multiple constituencies. However, the urban setting and the word "girls" suggest they were imagined as young, educated, professional/working women. Thus, we could place them within the genealogy of the modern girl, the figure of urban feminine sophistication that emerged globally in the interwar years.[32] "Modern girls," explains

30. The absence of official state rhetoric aimed at vilifying young women or deploying them as scapegoats for economic decline differentiates Ghana's nationalist project of the 1970s from others like Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia, to name a few. For more on nationalist projects, see Alicia Decker, *In Idi Amin's Shadow: Women¸ Gender¸ and Militarism in Uganda* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2014), particularly chapter 3; Ophélie Rillon, "Controlling Youthful Sexuality in Mali's High Schools (1960s and 1970s)," *Clio. Women¸ Gender¸ History*, no. 42 (2015): 77–98; Audrey Wipper, "African Women, Fashion, and Scapegoating," *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne Des Études Africaines* 6, no. 2 (1972): 329–349; Ivaska, *Cultured States*; Cyprian Kambili, "Ethics Of African Tradition: Prescription Of a Dress Code In Malawi 1965–1973," *The Society of Malawi Journal* 55, no. 2 (2002): 80–99; A Special Correspondent, "Uganda under Military Rule," *Africa Today* 20, no. 2 (1973): 11–31; Karen Tranberg Hansen, "Dressing Dangerously: Miniskirts, Gender Relations, and Sexuality in Zambia," in *Fashioning Africa: Power and the Politics of Dres*s, ed. Jean Allman (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), 166–185; Miles Larmer, "Chronicle of a Coup Foretold: Valentine Musakanya And The 1980 Coup Attempt In Zambia," *The Journal of African History* 51, no. 3 (2010): 391–409.

31. Tawiah, "Currency Change—Dereliction of Duty."

32. Tani Barlow et al., "The Modern Girl Around the World: A Research Agenda and Preliminary Findings," *Gender & History* 17, no. 2 (2005): 245–294.

Lynn Thomas, "appeared to reject the roles of dutiful daughter, wife, and mother through their engagement of international commodity cultures, mass media, and political discourses."[33] Though several decades removed from the emergence of the interwar modern girl, the young urban women in 1970s Ghana embodied similar attributes. Like the Tanzanian "working girl" and the literary "good time girl," they belonged to the era of "decolonization, rapid urbanization, and the rise of African nation-states."[34]

Furthermore, attaching these young women to the VW Golf identified them with an enduring symbol of modernity.[35] Not only were cars a luxury for most Ghanaians, but the Golf was one of VW's newest models, introduced in 1974. Though produced locally, it would have been hard to obtain because of general commodity shortages.[36] Thus, the Golf likely conferred these young women with status that put them above many of their peers and elders.[37] The car also simultaneously displayed young women's performances of cosmopolitanism while hiding their bodies from the male gaze. This easily explains why men might have labeled illicit such vehicular displays of success to mollify feelings of inadequacy and critique what they considered a society gone awry. *Fa wo to bɛgye golf* co-mingled with ideas about consumerism, patriotism, and citizenship, proving a potent vehicle through which Ghanaians vocalized their opprobrium.

The January 13 Man: Remaking the Citizen to Remake the Nation

Having seized power from the democratically elected Second Republic on January 13, 1972, the NRC framed its coup d'état as a necessary intervention to liberate a beleaguered nation from "economic mismanagement

33. Lynn Thomas, "The Modern Girl and Racial Respectability in 1930s South Africa," *The Journal of African History* 47, no. 3 (2006): 461–490.
34. Emily Callaci, *Street Archives and City Life: Popular Intellectuals in Postcolonial Tanzania* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 64; Dina Ligaga, "Mapping Emerging Constructions of Good Time Girls in Kenyan Popular Media," *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 26, no. 3 (2014): 249–261; Stephanie Newell, "Making up Their Own Minds: Readers, Interpretations and the Difference of View in Ghanaian Popular Narratives," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 67, no. 3 (1997): 389–405.
35. Brenda Chalfin, "Cars, the Customs Service, and Sumptuary Rule in Neoliberal Ghana," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 50, no. 2 (2008): 427–428.
36. Aygeman-Duah, *General Acheampong*, 113; Jennifer Hart, "'NIFA NIFA': Technopolitics, Mobile Workers, and the Ambivalence of Decline in Acheampong's Ghana," *African Economic History* 44 (2016): 183.
37. Ivaska, *Cultured States;* Akyeampong, "Wo pe tam," 230.

and maladministration."[38] The NRC declared itself ready to eliminate corruption, instill discipline in public life, and restore the nation's pride.[39] In practice, this meant a complete takeover such that, by 1975, military officials ran all government institutions.[40] The NRC elaborated a decidedly nationalist vision for Ghana. Asserting "a nationwide yearning for change," the new government embarked on a mission to remake the country by remaking its people, in the process defining a new model citizen: "the January 13 Man."[41]

The regime described the January 13 Man with explicitly masculine language, enjoining him to "organize all . . . resources of spirit, and mind and muscle to make the necessary sacrifices in self-discipline and total effort . . . to face the problems of [the] society and solve them."[42] The ensuing economic war would be won through "revolutionary discipline" as embodied by this man, and the regime styled itself as his exemplar. This construction of citizenship and the January 13 Man's character were foundational to the regime's organizing principle of self-reliance. In an enthusiastic editorial in 1974, the *Times* exhorted the ideal male citizen to "deny himself some, at least, of his comforts, selfish pursuits, and purge himself of his vain dreams of amassing wealth at the expense of our country."[43] As the language and ideas of citizenship filtered into newspapers, Ghanaians understood the appeal to sacrifice as a joint undertaking by the state and citizens, with a reader of the *Observer* warning, "[i]f we are all sacrificing, let nobody . . . escape."[44]

Adopting the gendered meanings and language of the NRC's conceptualization of citizenship, popular discourse, as propagated in newspapers, often described women as threats to men's abilities to embody ideal citizenship. In the context of the economic war, the state's emphasis on discipline, and the perceived danger women posed to the entire project,

38. National Redemption Council, *The Charter of the National Redemption Council* (Accra: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1974), 4.
39. Agyeman-Duah, *General Acheampong*, 91.
40. Eboe Hutchful, "A Tale of Two Regimes"; Paul Nugent, *Boundaries, Communities and State-Making In West Africa: The Centrality of the Margins* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 443.
41. National Redemption Council, *The Charter*, 2.
42. National Redemption Council, *The Charter*, 2.
43. Editorial, "Long Live the NRC!," *The Ghanaian Times*, January 14, 1974, 2.
44. Afari-Gyan, "Salaries for N.R.C Men," *The Legon Observer*, June 16, 1972, 287.

gender discourse and critiques of corruption became tightly entangled.[45] For instance, an article in the *Mirror* castigated allegedly corrupt women for allying with "the bitterest enemies of Ghana," claiming they "encourage[d] bribery and corruption among some men in key positions."[46] Put differently, undisciplined women were preventing public officials from behaving in ways befitting the January 13 Man.

The sacrifices required of this man grew substantial as the regime implemented control policies to regulate the distribution of chronically scarce food and commodities.[47] The policies exacerbated shortages and created a vicious cycle of price hikes that, coupled with inflation, depleted the purchasing power of average citizens.[48] Amid the deepening economic crisis, as Bianca Murillo details, the NRC/SMC made itself a major mediator in Ghanaians' relationship with the market.[49] It introduced the chit, a voucher that gave customers access to specific items. When goods arrived in the country, trading companies were required to send itemized lists to regional offices before sale. Regional offices then created and distributed chits to consumers based on these lists. With chits in hand, people could purchase goods from trading firms.[50]

Intervening in a complex distribution system that managed the flow of goods from importers to households, this innovation intensified corruption and exacerbated uneven access to consumer goods. Military officials tasked with administering chits distributed them to select individuals and sold some for profit.[51] The chit system helps contextualize *fa wo to bɛgye golf* precisely because of its centrality to the distributive system within which women occupied a critical node and for its susceptibility to abuse. The state, by placing itself at the center of the distribution network, increased opportunities for contact between its agents and consumers, especially retailers, a role that had historically been dominated by female entrepreneurs.[52] In

45. Takyiwaa Manuh, "Women, the State, and Society Under the PNDC," in *Ghana Under PNDC Rule*, ed. Emmanuel Gyimah-Boadi (Dakar: CODESRIA, 1993), 187.
46. Margaret Kwakwa, "Margaret Kwaka Advocates . . . Advisory Bureau for Women," *The Mirror*, February 22, 1974, 4.
47. Emmanuel Treve, "The Management Of The Ghanaian Economy—The Reliance On Controls," *The Legon Observer,* March 22, 1974, 130.
48. Nugent, *Boundaries, Communities and State-Making*, 455.
49. Murillo, *Market Encounters*, 145.
50. Murillo, *Market Encounters*.
51. Murillo, *Market Encounters*, 139; Nugent, *Boundaries, Communities and State*, 455; Agyeman-Duah, *General Acheampong*, 113, 153.
52. Murillo, "'We Cannot Afford to Be Fooled': African Intermediaries on Shifting Commercial Terrain," Chap. 2 in *Market Encounters*.

a system riddled with corruption, women's position as middlemen in this network made them vulnerable to accusations of deploying their sexuality to access scarce resources.

As conditions deteriorated, collective pessimism about the future and discontent with the regime's performance set in. Increasingly, the state-owned press vilified groups accused of undermining the regime's efforts to make the country self-reliant. These groups of dissenters included university students, traders, professionals, and politicians, especially those who had served in the Second Republic. Market women/traders featured prominently in this discourse, lambasted for displaying antisocial behaviors that created disorder in the private and public spheres. This narrative constituted the prevailing gender ideologies and societal anxieties in which *fa wo to bɛgye golf* flourished as rumor/discourse.

"Men really are suffering": Gender Contestations Amid Economic Crisis

For men who dominated civil service and private wage work, the effects of the economic crisis were staggering. Wages stagnated and then fell to unprecedented "derisory levels."[53] Although the crisis affected female wage workers as well, there appeared to be a perception that they could mitigate their hardships by pursuing informal female-coded ventures like trading.[54] For single women, transactional relationships with men were one among several options they could leverage to mitigate the effects of the economic crisis.[55] Even in extramarital relationships defined primarily by affective ties, women expected some amount of material support from their partners.[56]

53. Gracia Clark, "Gender and Profiteering: Ghana's Market Women as Devoted Mothers and "Human Vampire Bats," in *Wicked" Women and the Reconfiguration of Gender In Africa*, eds. Dorothy Louise Hodgson and Sheryl McCurdy (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001), 294–95, 230; Eboe Hutchful, "A Tale of Two Regimes"; Ninsin, "Ghana."

54. Koo Pia, "Never Leave Him Alone", *The Mirror*, January 11, 1974, 10.

55. Deborah Pellow, *Women in Accra: Options for Autonomy* (Algonac, MI: Reference Publications, 1977); Carmel Dinan, "Sugar Daddies and Gold-Diggers: The White-Collar Single Women in Accra," in *Female and Male in West Africa*, ed. Christine Oppong (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983), 344–366; Carmel Dinan, "Pragmatists or Feminists? The Professional 'Single' Women of Accra, Ghana (Pragmatistes ou féministes? Femmes célibataires cadres à Accra)," *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 17, no. 65 (1977): 155–176.

56. Pellow, *Women in Accra*; Jennifer Cole and Lynn M. Thomas, eds., *Love in Africa* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009). Letters to the *Mirror*'s Advice column confirm this.

The economic crisis threatened and sometimes upended ideas about gender roles in conjugal and other intimate relationships. The crisis created new modes of dependency for both women and their partners as women's financial success through their formal and informal market activities increased. Husbands thus displayed ambivalence towards their wives' financial contributions.[57] Oppong, Okali, and Houghton found that husbands of professional and working women, while welcoming the additional household income, often demanded that their wives be "just women" at home.[58]

Men's anxieties about the changing gender dynamics proliferated in newspapers, where columnists promoted and mediated discourses of gender disorder. Stories abound about conflicts between different gendered groups—husbands and wives, consumers (men) and sellers (women), boyfriends and girlfriends—with some columnists describing the times as "topsy turvy" and decrying a perceived disordering of familial relationships.[59] In this world, a "son raises his hand against his father, [a] daughter against her mother . . . elderly wives start gallivanting while teenagers marry men whose children are older than their mother."[60]

The gender turmoil of the 1970s unfolded as a close repetition of that of the interwar period. During the infancy of the country's transition to a cash economy underwritten by cocoa production, some Asante chiefs arrested unmarried women on charges of sexual immorality.[61] While couched in the language of moral panic, Penelope Roberts and Jean Allman have argued that the arrests were rather indicative of male anxieties about broadening economic opportunities that gave women more autonomy over their labor and marital decisions.[62] Such independence and defiance suggest a connection to the modern girl archetype. Indeed, we could think of the "Golf girl" as the 1970s heiress to that earlier generation of defiant spinsters.[63]

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57. Clark, "Gender and Profiteering," 304.
58. Christine Oppong, Christine Okali, and Beverley Houghton, "Woman Power: Retrograde Steps in Ghana," *African Studies Review* 18, no. 3 (1975): 80.
59. Koo Pia, "A Challenge to Women," *The Mirror*, May 5, 1978, 6.
60. Koo Pia, "A Challenge to Women."
61. Jean Allman, "Rounding up Spinsters: Gender Chaos and Unmarried Women in Colonial Asante," *The Journal of African History* 37, no. 2 (1996): 195–214; Gwendolyn Mikell, *Cocoa and Chaos in Ghana* (New York: Paragon House, 1989).
62. Allman, "Rounding up Spinsters," 198; Penelope A. Roberts, "The State and the Regulation of Marriage: Sefwi Wiawso (Ghana), I900–40," in *Women, State, and Ideology: Studies from Africa and Asia*, ed. Haleh Afshar (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1987), 48–69.
63. Alys Weinbaum et al., *The Modern Girl around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 16.

The crucial difference between these two episodes is that the state in the 1970s did not police the sexuality of young women.

To be "just women," according to columnists like Koo Pia, was to inhabit the domestic sphere in a biddable, humble, and nurturing manner.[64] In multiple articles, he proclaimed failed womanhood as the root cause of disordered social norms; after all, "the morality of our nation lies with our women."[65] Furthermore, the refusal of "[m]odern mothers" to "breast-feed their children long enough" prevented them from becoming "upright, honest citizens."[66] Another column commented derisively on the usurpation of men's role as masters of their households, mocking wives for mislabeling their wedding rings "badges of servitude." He concluded that women disregarded their husbands because their ascendant economic positions freed them from relying on men for daily sustenance.[67] Therefore, he cautioned men to "never under-estimate a woman or the very foundations of your manhood would be taken from you."[68]

Defining a particular performance of domesticity as women's proper contributions to national progress was not new. In the immediate post-independence era, even as the Nkrumahist state promoted women's public roles, many men considered traits like "talkativeness, materialism, and distraction" as "intrinsic" to Ghanaian womanhood.[69] Moreover, for most Ghanaians, wifehood and motherhood remained the definitive experiences of womanhood, and they enacted citizenship accordingly.[70] Despite the insistence on seeing women primarily through the prism of hearth and home, the historiography on women and gender in Ghana paints a more expansive picture of their societal roles.[71] In addition to being wives and

64. Koo Pia, "A Challenge to Women."
65. Koo Pia, "A Challenge to Women."
66. Koo Pia, "A Challenge to Women."
67. Koo Pia, "Badges of Servitude", *The Mirror*, December 3, 1976.
68. Koo Pia, "You Will Have To Ask Madam", *The Mirror*, September 17, 1976, 3.
69. Jeffrey Ahlman, *Living With Nkrumahism: Nation, State and Pan-Africanism in Ghana* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2017), 170.
70. Ahlman, *Living With Nkrumahism*, 103; Ivaska, *Cultured States*; Plageman, *Highlife Saturday Night*, 166–167.
71. Jean Allman and Victoria Tashjian, *'I Will Not Eat Stone': A Women's History of Colonial Asante* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000); Gracia Clark, *Onions Are My Husband: Survival and Accumulation by West African Market Women* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Stefano Boni, "Twentieth-Century Transformations in Notions of Gender, Parenthood, and Marriage in Southern Ghana: A Critique of the Hypothesis of 'Retrograde Steps' for Akan Women," *History in Africa* 28 (2001): 15–41; Claire C. Robertson, *Sharing the Same Bowl: A Socioeconomic History of Women and*

mothers, women actively participated in broader economic and political structures.

Gender relations were complex and dynamic, complementary in some areas and competitive in others. So, while Ghanaian women enjoyed varying degrees of social and financial autonomy in their relationships with men, they did so within the constraints of gender ideologies that valued respect and humility as essential markers of appropriate womanhood.[72] Thus, even as urbanization, increased access to higher education, professionalization, and higher rates of entrepreneurship expanded women's public roles, misogynistic ideologies persisted and formed the basis of men's active resistance to women's economic and social advancement.[73]

The economic stressors of the times further complicated the relationship between the sexes as men came under immense pressure to meet state and societal standards. In an April 1973 article titled "How 'Free' is the African Woman?," a *Mirror* columnist lambasted men and women for what she described as an unsustainably enabling relationship that burdened men and infantilized women. Identifying a crisis of masculinity, the author mused:

> Although it appears women have more problems . . . this writer strongly feels that men are worse off . . . perhaps they enjoy doing all those things society expects . . . No woman is cursed for not owning a house or a car . . . Men are really suffering to make ends meet with the current economic ups and downs.[74]

Without resorting to the oversimplifying question of who suffered more, it is essential to note that the country's social, political, and economic upheavals disrupted many men's plans and abilities to attain and perform manhood properly. Attaining one or multiple forms of masculinity was the primary life goal for men, and as the cash economy and colonial administrative

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Class in Accra, Ghana (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1984); Naana Jane Opoku-Agyemang, "Gender-Role Perceptions in the Akan Folktale," *Research in African Literatures* 30, no. 1 (1999): 116–139; Manuh, "Women, the State, and Society," 187; Oppong, Okali, and Houghton, "Woman Power"; Miranda Greenstreet, "Social Change and Ghanaian Women," *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne Des Études Africaines* 6, no. 2 (1972): 351–355.

72. Opoku-Agyemang, "Gender-Role Perceptions," 122; Boni, "Twentieth Century Transformations," 36–37; Greenstreet, "Social Change," 351.

73. Oppong, Okali, and Houghton. "Woman Power"; Greenstreet, "Social Change"; Plageman, *Highlife Saturday Night*, 110–111; Akyeampong, "Wo Pe Tam," 227–229.

74. Margaret Kwakwa, "Margaret Kwakwa Asks . . . How 'Free' is the African Woman?," *The Mirror*, December 14, 1973, 6.

apparatus expanded in the aftermath of World War I, many young men migrated to cities to seek their fortunes and make themselves into men.[75] Amid the harsh economic and social conditions of the cities, amassing the markers of the big man or Presbyterian models of masculinity, as elaborated by Stephan Miescher, would have seemed a near-impossible task.[76]

The psychic pressure of achieving success in order to care for the family might very well be the "suffering" to which the columnist refers. In their quest for liberation, she urged women to consider whether they were fighting only for the "glorious privileges of men or . . . would be prepared to share the more serious and onerous responsibilities with all their inherent complications."[77] These complications were the financial demands that unduly burdened men. Thus, she concluded, true liberation could only happen if both sexes bore the yokes of adult manhood and womanhood equally. She argued that, "[i]t is high time men liberated themselves from the pressure of society and encouraged women to stand on their own two feet instead of giving [the] false impression that they can provide for all their material needs."[78] Perhaps they might have been able to do so in the past, but in the 1970s solely carrying the load of household expenses would have been a high bar to clear for most.

We must pause here and consider the contradictions this article presents. The title *How 'Free' Is the African Woman?* places it in conversation with the global feminist movement of the 1970s. This places it in a longer tradition of Ghanaian women's engagement with global issues.[79] Nevertheless, it is relentlessly critical of women, blaming them for the high incidents of public corruption while acknowledging the ideological constraints that prevented women from playing more assertive public roles. The ambivalence toward "women's liberation" challenges the universality of liberation and suggests that the 1970s was a transitory period for Ghanaian women. Newspapers debated abortion laws, marriage, divorce, and family planning

75. Akyeampong, *Drink, Power, and Cultural Change*, 152–153; Stephan Miescher, *Making Men in Ghana* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005), 12; Plageman, *Highlife Saturday Night*, 8–10.
76. Miescher, *Making Men in Ghana*, 2, 11.
77. Kwakwa, "How 'Free' is the African Woman?"
78. Kwakwa, "How 'Free; is the African Woman?"
79. Naaborko Sackeyfio-Lenoch, "Women's International Alliances in an Emergent Ghana," *Journal of West African History* 4, no. 1 (2018): 27–56; Manuh, "Women and Their Organizations," 108–117; Mansah Prah, "Chasing Illusions and Realising Visions: Reflections on Ghana's Feminist Experience", in *Gender Activism and Studies in Africa*, ed. Signe Arnfred (Dakar: CODESRIA, 2004), 27–40.

and published women's letters suggesting ideological shifts linked to the global women's movement.[80] Perhaps Koo Pia's tirade about breastfeeding might be read as evidence of changes in ideas about reproduction and mothering. It appears that every aspect of womanhood was being contested, contributing to men's anxieties.

As women challenged the ideological underpinnings of social organization and unwittingly threatened men's egos with their entrepreneurial success, newspapers reinforced "traditional" gender ideologies. A *Mirror* article shared advice from a successful businesswoman reminding women that "no matter their economic standing or status in society, they are morally bound to respect their husbands and other men . . . a woman's business interests should never be allowed to interfere with her domestic and other services as wife and mother."[81] Did this woman urge female deference to male authority to neutralize any ideological threat posed by her success? By 1978, when *The Mirror* published her advice, the economy and male frustration had deteriorated to unprecedented levels. The state directed this anger to market women. Perceived as arbiters of access to food and other commodities, they made convenient and plausible scapegoats.

"Woman No Good": Implicating Women's Sexuality in Transgressive Citizenship

The discourses about traders/market women and young women's sexuality appear unconnected. Yet, fundamentally, both categories of women were accused of engaging in antisocial behavior—withholding and extracting resources for personal enrichment at the expense of mutual survival and progress.[82] It is illuminating, then, that the so-called "Golf girls" were named alongside traders as a "moneyed" group through whose actions "a large majority of Ghanaians were reduced to near-total poverty."[83]

In the Ghanaian imagination, both groups harmed the nation, one directly through their marketplace activities and the other indirectly through their sexual relationships with government officials. Emmanuel Akyeampong noted in passing that the latter group's elite status shielded

80. Margaret Kwakwa, "Abortion, A Vital Topic For The Youth," *The Mirror*, January 11, 1974, 14; Margaret Kwakwa, "Marriage: Why Not Try Other Forms?," *The Mirror*, March 29, 1974, 7; Ajoa Yeboah-Afari, "Equal Opportunity," *The Mirror*, April 7, 1978, 3.
81. "The Humble Advisor", *The Mirror*, April 14, 1978; Oppong, Okali, and Houghton, "Woman Power."
82. Clark, *Gender and Profiteering*, 302–303.
83. Tawiah, "Currency Change—Dereliction of Duty."

them from violence during the 1979 revolution.[84] Thus, although both groups were subjected to discursive "witch hunts" meant to shame and discipline them, their stories ended quite differently. The violence meted out to traders and market women after the overthrow of the NRC/SMC regime and their textual and discursive visibility have earned them historiographic prominence. This scholarly attention, while warranted, has ignored subtler forms of discursive discipline, like reputational damage, that originated from the public.

Evoking ideologies that painted women as detrimental to progress, Koo Pia shared an alleged conversation between two women at a bank in which one agreed to entertain a man's suit only after confirming his hefty bank balance.[85] Labeling Ghanaian women mercenary, he lamented, "[it] is tragic for the nation if it indicates the sorts of mothers Ghana will be having . . . I shudder at the idea of what Ghanaian babies would be taught in their cradles."[86] In addition to reinforcing that women's ideal contributions to the country were through their domestic roles, the author positioned women's bodies as central to creating good citizens. Thus, deviation from the proper use of a woman's body would lead to disorder. Disciplined womanhood that prioritized and performed domesticity correctly built the nation. Conversely, disordered womanhood that glorified materialism hobbled, if not crippled, the nation. After all, these "modern mothers" refused to breastfeed for an appropriate length of time because of their vanity.

Money and the lifestyle it secured were presented as the primary drivers of women's relationship choices. Thus, in the NRC/SMC era, a man could only maintain a woman's affection with money. The implications of this perception were far-reaching. For if a man needed wealth to keep a woman, it stood to reason that he would go to great lengths to attain it—marriage being an essential step toward social adulthood.[87] Alternatively, he could perform wealth as recounted in the story of a man who pretends to own his employer's property to woo a woman. His house of cards comically crumbles when his girlfriend visits unexpectedly and finds him serving his employers.[88] Women's insatiable material desires, coupled with demands that their intimate partners satisfy them, presented a threat to domestic

84. Akyeampong, "Wo pe tam," 230.
85. Koo Pia, "Each for All", *The Mirror,* March 17, 1978, 15.
86. Koo Pia, "Each for All."
87. Kwakwa, "How 'Free' is the African Woman?"
88. Koo Pia, "A Fact of Life", *The Mirror*, November 13, 1973, 11.

and national order. In a nation-building project, they became highly problematic and a threat to the discipline required for success.[89]

Discussing the need for moral discipline in public life, a writer for the *Observer* urged male public servants to say "'no' to the enticements of a woman who wants a whole region's supply of essential commodities for herself."[90] This advice forwarded the belief that women possessed the power to cause egregious and criminal behavior in men. Another column recounted the story of a widower who married a much younger woman and declared, "I believe in my wife" during his baptism rather than professing belief in God.[91] While absurd, the scene is intended to elicit questions about the source of the young woman's power, with the church setting proposing a dichotomy between good and evil power. In the same column, to emphasize his point, the writer tells a second story in which a man is lured from his good "village" wife by a bad "city" woman.[92]

Evoking the supernatural, the specter of the dangerous woman was conjured to warn men who would otherwise exemplify the fortitude of a good citizen. After all, what was it about a woman's tears that could induce the head of state to "help" her, compel a man to give her the entirety of a region's allocation of consumer goods, or cause a man to profess divine belief in his young wife?[93] Still, women's otherworldly seductive powers did not entirely excuse men who fell prey to them. They were expected to assert their manhood by resisting temptation.[94] Thus, implicit in condemnations of women's deviant sexual conquests was a reprimand of the conquered man. The state, therefore, could not escape reproof, and the picture of the hapless head of state, undone by women's tears, supports this interpretation.[95]

If *fa wo to bɛgye Golf* were true, it threatened the very foundation of the social compact; these women posed an ideological threat to society.[96] For a populace fed an unrelenting diet of stories describing single women as

89. Manuh, "Women, the State," 187.
90. R. Kodzo Nyadzi, "Moral, Not Military, Discipline," *Legon Observer*, May 18, 1979, 187.
91. Koo Pia, "I Believe In My Wife", *The Mirror*, August 23, 1974, 4.
92. Koo Pia, "I Believe In My Wife."
93. J. Kwasi Tega, *Legon Observer*, February 1, 1980, 44; Nyadzi, "Moral, Not Military, Discipline"; Koo Pia, "I Believe In My Wife."
94. Kwei Duodu, "The Test of Manhood", *The Mirror*, April 7, 1978.
95. Tega, *Legon Observer*, 44.
96. Carolyne Dennis, "Women and the State in Nigeria: The Case of the Federal Military Government, 1984–85," in *Women, State, and Ideology: Studies from Africa and Asia*, ed. Haleh Afshar (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), 13–27.

greedy and dangerous, the leap to connecting such behavior to any display of wealth by a woman would have been short and easy. Moreover, the perception that women were deploying their sexuality to extract resources from highly placed government officials would have been viewed as their successful seduction of the state. This simply would not do, for it was *men* whom the state had always privileged with its attention, articulating citizenship in gendered language that recognized men as the true nation-builders.[97] *Men* were chosen to run the affairs of the state, drive economic progress, and preside over their homes in ways that produced orderly societal hierarchies.[98] The state's laws and policies, although gender-neutral in language, were underwritten by ideologies that excluded women from much of public life.[99] Thus, historically, it was *women* who were meant to agitate for the state's attention through activism.[100]

True or not, the rumor that the NRC/SMC regime spent lavishly on their young lovers undoubtedly alarmed and infuriated men who believed themselves more deserving of the state's attention since they, the industrious workers and citizens, were most affected by the economic crises.[101] Feeling scorned and neglected, these workers staged multiple strikes to redirect the state's errant gaze.[102] Through this prism, *fa wo to bɛgye golf* functions as a disciplinary discourse in reaction to the state's perceived disloyalty. Much like a wife who accosts her husband's mistress to publicly shame her into terminating the adultery, Ghanaians used discourse to sanction the immoral women they believed had seduced the state with their "bottom power."[103] In the state, Ghanaians saw a failed January 13 Man.

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97. National Redemption Council, *The Charter*; Ahlman, *Living With Nkrumahism*; Plageman, *Highlife Saturday Night*, 110–111.

98. Ahlman, *Living with Nkrumahism*; Murillo, *Market Encounters*, 130–135; Plageman, *Highlife Saturday Night*, 165–167.

99. Prah, "Chasing Illusions."

100. Prah, "Chasing Illusions."

101. The Humble Advisor column shared that a civil servant "appealed to the Government to decree the abolition of chits given to young girls and women," adding, "they are the cause of all the 'Kalabule' business in the country." Rather, "men who needed one or two items for personal use should be attended to." "The Humble Advisor," *The Mirror*, June 9, 1978, 16.

102. By some counts, there were 124 total strikes mounted by workers between 1972 and 1976. See Jon Kraus, "Strikes and Labour Power in Ghana," *Development and Change* 10, no. 4 (1979): 265.

103. Jacqueline-Bethel Tchouta Mougoue, "'Housewives at Husbands' Throats: Recalcitrant Wives and Gender Norms in a West African Nation, 1961–72," *Gender & History* 29, no. 2 (2017): 414.

Conclusion

By 1979, when the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council overthrew the NRC/SMC in a coup, the convergence of dire economic conditions, perceptions of profligacy among certain classes, and increased military suppression had intensified gendered disciplinary discourses. Thus, when a female *Mirror* columnist advised restraint in the junta's quest for justice, a male reader chastised: "if you are among those young girls who received posh Golf (VW), Volvo 244 DL, Passat and what-have-you from those corrupt officers then you had better shut up."[104] The reader's deployment of *fa wo to bɛgye golf* to encapsulate what he considered the rot of the preceding five years highlights the explanatory power of this seemingly innocuous phrase. Moreover, it confirms the rumor's centrality to understanding the relationship between women, the state, and society in 1970s Ghana.

Was it true that government officials gifted their "sugar babies" VW Golfs? Like any good rumor, the truth is muddled in the telling, making its value the window it opens onto its context and ideological moorings. I have argued that *fa wo to bɛgye golf* explains the full range of discourses about gender, citizenship, and public corruption in 1970s Ghana, embedded as it was within the economic crisis and the regime's respondent policies. Specifically, the chit system, which increased contact between government agents and the female-dominated category of traders, opened women up to accusations of using their sexuality to access public resources at the expense of the suffering male worker. This worker saw his wages stagnate and fall, placing him in a precarious economic position. Concurrently, women's improved financial standing threatened prevailing gender ideologies, which assumed women's submission to men's authority inside and outside the home. Newspapers provide overwhelming evidence of intense contestations about gender roles and ideology, staged primarily within intimate relationships.

There are many reasons to believe that 1970s Ghana presents a treasure trove of stories and lived experiences. Current historiographic avoidance can be attributed to a dearth of official sources and the general characterization of the NRC/SMC era as chaotic and unremarkable. But chaos can be endlessly generative. Myriad sources beyond the traditional archive can help historians reconstruct this consequential period in Ghanaian history.

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104. Yeboah-Afari, "Tolerance Please!"