

Introduction

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Since the 1990s we have seen large waves of migration – with varying intensity and via different routes – from the ‘Global South’, but also from Albania, Romania, to France, Italy, and Spain. While France has traditionally always been an immigration country with a long history of migration (cf. Mathis-Moser in this edition), Italy and Spain have only over the past three decades developed from emigration to immigration countries. The causes for these movements of people seeking refuge from the 1990s onwards are manifold: the collapse of communist regimes (in Romania in 1989, in Albania in 1991), the civil wars in Algeria (starting in 1991), Rwanda (1994) and Somalia (since 1991), but also poverty and hunger, as well as a lack of employment and perspectives in many African countries (e.g. Morocco, Senegal) are some of those reasons. The complex connections between these countries’ colonial past and contemporary migration are obvious and yet scarcely discussed.

The three decades since the 1990s, which are of interest here, are additionally characterized by the establishment and intensification of continually stricter border regimes, which materialize as walls and barbed-wired fences (e.g. Ceuta), as the European Border and Coast Guard Agency Frontex and as huge refugee camps (for instance in Lampedusa and Calais). Such border regimes are also found in new corrective, intervening immigration laws of the three Mediterranean countries: from the zero-immigration policy of Charles Pasqua to the restrictive laws under Jacques Chirac and Nicolas Sarkozy, from the “Legge Martelli” (1990) to the “Legge Bossi-Fini” (2001), from the reform of Spanish asylum rights (1994) to the “Ley de Extranjería” (“Ley Orgánica 8/2000”).

Starting in the 1990s, numerous literary texts¹ have been written on both sides of the Mediterranean Sea, dealing with these movements of migration, reflecting on reasons for migration and addressing cultural encounters and conflict scenarios. Many of those texts act as ‘interventions’² in the sense of Postcolonial Studies, in that they question material and discursive borders, and construct alternative perspectives for a radically changing European migration society. The same is true for film³ – and also popular music.

While relevant research has been done on literary and filmic productions that deal with this topic,⁴ the portrayal of contemporary migration issues in the field of popular music has scarcely been explored by Romance research. This present special edition of *ATeM*, which is the result of the conference “*Popular Music et migration / e migrazione / y migración: 1990-2015*”, wants to correct this deficit by posing the question to different genres and styles of popular music present in the Romance languages regions. With ‘popular music’,

we understand what Christofer Jost referred to as the “entirety of musical cultural practices, which originate in the bourgeois society (and urban centers) of the 19th century and whose development was significantly influenced by media practices of mass communication” (Jost 2012, 212; our translation). In the Romance languages, the English term ‘popular music’ is best suited to reflect this spectrum of meaning. A helpful definition of the referred to musical styles and genres can be found on the Italian web-page of the *International Association for the Study of Popular Music* (IASPM):

La *popular music* non è uno stile musicale, ma una galassia di musiche comprendente un vasto insieme di stili e generi circolanti attraverso i media e fruiti da un pubblico di massa. Ciò vuol dire ad esempio rock, pop, punk, rap e canzone d'autore, ma anche world music, musica per cinema e televisione, e persino musiche ‘classiche’ ed ‘etniche’ riciclate dal sistema dei media. (Cf. <http://www.iaspmitalia.net/cose-la-iaspm/>)

The contributions in this special edition of *ATeM* trace the question of how the problems of migration have been addressed in the popular music of Romance languages speaking countries in a period from the 1990s to today. The following research questions were central to us:

- What topics appear in the context of migration in popular music? Is the migration subject at the core; are their histories of migration, their reasons to emigrate and their experiences in the adopting society unfolded? Or is the focus more on the relationship of the migrated ‘I’ and the native ‘you’; thus, on the contact and conflict zone of a contemporary European migration society? How is illegality and clandestineness portrayed?
- Is the topic of migration addressed by certain genres more than others? And in what ways and manners do different genres deal with the topic differently?
- What literary, musical, visual, performative sources feed the productions that present migrating subjects? What perspectives are taken into account? How is the migrant subject given visibility and a voice? How are such speech acts achieved and why and when do they, in spite of good intentions, fail occasionally?
- To what extent can concepts of Postcolonial Studies be fruitful in the analysis? How can concepts of ‘transculturality’ and ‘nomadism’ be tied to popular music and migration?

While the majority of the collected articles here focus on exemplary case studies, the four essays in the first section (Mathis-Moser, Mertz-Baumgartner, Moll, Coudevylle-Vue) aim at giving an overview. Ursula Mathis-Moser and Birgit Mertz-Baumgartner provide a representative corpus of more than 50 songs each, from the chosen time frame, and examine essential questions in dealing with the topic of migration in France (Mathis-Moser) and Spain (Mertz-Baumgartner). The focus is on historical and social contextualization, as well

as on recurring themes and the speaking attitude of the *canteur* (Hirschi 2008, 281). In her essay about the Italian popular music, Nora Moll discusses five exemplary variations of the thematization of seeking refuge and migration in changing musical genres, while Audrey Coudeville-Vue takes a closer look at France with examples from ‘classic’ chanson and pop music (i.e. decidedly not rap, reggae or slam).

The case studies of the second section (Hirschi, Rieger, Lagabrielle, Chiriaco) analyze more deeply the perspective of the *canteur* (also in the sense of empowerment of the speaker) using concrete examples and investigating performative strategies, in part through the context of specific musical and intermedial genres. While Stéphane Hirschi focusses on the cultural theoretical concept of the ‘bâtardise’, the ‘bastardization’ – a concept that here encompasses primarily the mixture and migration of musical styles –, Dietmar Rieger asks under what conditions songs about migration, which dedicate themselves to political and humanitarian commitment, are successful and how or why they might fail. Renaud Lagabrielle shows in his analysis of a musical film how its basic intentions, namely to critically represent migrants without regular residence permit, fail. The, at least partial, usurpation of the migrant by ‘western’ views is also part of Gianpaolo Chiriaco’s article when he traces the artistic career of the Senegalese singer, author, and *griot* Badara Seck.

Finally, the third section collects four essays (Proulx, Reichardt, Martini, Fuchs) that orientate themselves strongly towards theoretical concepts of ‘transculturality’ and ‘hybridity’ but also ‘nomadism’ – terms that play a role in the earlier articles, too. The practice of the consciously chosen nomadizing between national and linguistic spaces is explored by Robert Proulx in his contribution about Lhasa de Sela, the Franco-Canadian singer with Mexican-American roots who died in 2010, but also, by Dagmar Reichardt in her article about Etta Scollo, whose poetics of a hybridization of cultures (here especially a Sicilian-German one) is analyzed using Deleuze/Guattari, Bhabha, Baumann and Welsch as theoretical background. In the two concluding essays (Martini, Fuchs) the unifying principle is the vision of a specific Mediterranean identity. While Simona Martini, in her analysis of songs by Almamegretta and Piero Pelù, stresses the artistic traces of the migration movement in the unifying context of the Mediterranean region, Gerhild Fuchs focusses on the pursuit of solidarity among the ‘subalterns’ of a ‘Global South’ and the resulting aesthetic strategies.

(Translated by Manuela Adrigan)

Endnotes

- 1 For example the play *La mirada del hombre oscuro* (1992) by Ignacio del Moral, the novels *Cannibales* (1999) by Mahi Binebine or *Madre piccola* (2007) by Cristina Ali Farah.
- 2 “Postcolonial theory intervenes with eurocentric narratives and the connected European amnesia to transform hegemonic structures.” (Huggan 2013, 12; our translation)
- 3 For example, *14 kilómetros* (2007) by Gerardo Olivares, *Éden à l’Ouest* (2009) by Costa-Gavras or *Terraferma* (2011) by Emanuele Crialese. But also, the documentary films *Lampedusa im Winter* (2015) by Daniel Brossmann and *Fuocoammare* (2016) by Gianfranco Rosi.
- 4 Some exemplary references for the Romania: Andres-Suarez/Kunz/d’Ors 2002; Gnisci 2006; Redouane 2008; Berger/Komori 2010; Berghahn/Sternberg 2010; Mazauric 2012; Deveney 2012; Schrader/Winkler 2015; Sieber/Abrego/Burgert 2015; Peralta 2016.

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