

# ENTANGLED HISTORIES AND VOICES

## Popular Music & approcci postcoloniali / approches postcoloniales / acercamientos postcoloniales

International Symposium, **May 6-8th 2020**, University of Innsbruck

During the last decades, an expanding transnational field of historical research generated a series of concepts that became fruitful for cultural studies as well as for literature. Besides ‘transfer history’ and ‘histories croisées’, the concept of ‘entangled histories’ – theorized by Shalini Randeria and Sebastian Conrad – has proven particularly fruitful in tackling issues of cultural production and reception through an intersectional and interdisciplinary approach. The conference wants to use ‘entangled histories’ as a critical lens to look at popular music both in Romance-speaking Europe and in national or regional contexts that were once colonized or occupied by nation-states speaking Romance languages (Italy, France, Spain, Portugal).

One central question is how popular music creates or challenges narratives of transnational intertwining, shaped within texts or through musical compositions and performances. History will be therefore conceived, with Shalini Randeria, as “complex weaves of shared histories” (1999, 17), as histories of exchanges and interactions. From the perspective elaborated in the field of postcolonial theories, colonial histories can be read as complex processes of multidirectional transfers.

We would like to intersect the concept of ‘entangled histories’ with the analysis of different styles and genres of popular music within the context of Romance languages (from songwriting to funk, from soundtracks based on texts to musicals, from rock, pop, punk or rap to world music) in order to investigate how (post)colonial encounters manifest themselves through sounds, texts and performances. Like ‘approaches’, the word ‘encounters’ unfolds different meanings. Encounters can be understood as concrete, personal gathering of musicians that are influenced by their respective renditions of the past, but also as material and acoustic encounters that take the forms of instruments, sounds, and voices. Encounters result in three-dimensional movements and journeys, are based on dialogical structures (that can be musically constructed as well as questioned) and reciprocal influences (for example, the intervocality of hooks). Such movements may involve the trajectories of people as well as of musical and linguistic elements, as these emerge from the evocation of ‘foreign’ voices, sounds and from a variety of sound effects. Voices can therefore be interpreted as material presences, resonances, embodiment, or as metaphor for social and political agency.

While the conference is interdisciplinarily organized and prioritizes multimodal investigations, proposals exclusively based on lyrical analyses and on musical/sound analyses are both welcome. Approaches rooted in cultural studies are also encouraged. We are interested in research in the field of popular music in Romance-speaking Europe or popular music in countries that were occupied or colonized by Italy, France, Spain or Portugal. Despite the focus on Romance languages, we also welcome research on popular music that are not in a Romance language but still address the themes of the conference (for example, Wolof in Senegal or Amharic in Ethiopia).

The following guidelines serve as suggestion for possible angles – among many – within the described areas:

- What kind of influences and reflexive interactions are determined – at the level of popular music – between Romance countries and the territories of their colonial endeavours? Examples: Themes; motives; music criticism; styles appearing within texts; genres and styles of music; intervocality of hooks; the materiality of sounds; voices as cultural memories; biographical crossroads and interfaces.
- How does a confrontation between colonial and postcolonial histories take place within texts or even musical compositions? How can contemporary phenomena such as racism be connected with colonialism through musical productions and performances?
- What role do colonial histories play in the Western imaginaries of African music and in the construction of alterity and blackness? How do ethnic characterization and stereotypes play out in popular music?
- How can archives (sound archives as well as archives of popular music) that (pre)serve a colonial heritage grapple with contemporary contexts?
- How do globalized music styles such as reggae, rap or world music deal with contested territories of histories?
- How is spoken word – an artistic practice that deals with voices, sounds, and texts in specific ways – creating a musical entanglement of transnational agencies in different areas of the world (from Addis Ababa to refugee camps in Italy or France)?
- What role do ‘entangled histories’ of popular music play within the context of contemporary movement of migrants and refugees (the so called ‘refugee crisis’)?

We welcome proposals with title and abstract (about 300 words) by **November 30th 2019**, to be sent to the following email addresses. Official languages of the conference are: Italian, French, and Spanish; contributions in English and Portuguese are also accepted.

We are glad to announce our keynote speaker **Iain Chambers** (Naples). Writer and vocalist **Gabriella Ghermandi** (Bologna/Addis Ababa) will participate with a performative lecture. The conference is connected with the research project “Ethiopian-Italian Relationships in Popular Music” (<http://www.afrovocality.com/>), based since June 2019 at the Archives of Text and Music Studies, University of Innsbruck, and is part of the cooperation with the research network on popular music “Les Ondes du Monde” (<https://www.lesondesdumonde.fr/>).

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