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**Autor\*innen/Author(s):** Tauchnitz, Juliane and Julia Borst

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Contact: [borst@uni-bremen.de](mailto:borst@uni-bremen.de)

# Migratory Movements and Diasporic Positionings in Contemporary Hispano- and Catalano-African Literatures: Introductory Reflections

JULIANE TAUCHNITZ AND JULIA BORST

Migratory movements and questions of both forced and voluntary mobilities and immobilities of individuals and communities seem to dominate recent global political, juridical, sociological, and cultural debates. These phenomena are considered to be a specific signum of the present age. At the same time, the accentuation of their contemporaneity tends to disguise awareness of migratory movements being as old as humanity itself. This special issue of *Research in African Literatures* focuses on these matters through the lens of perspectives articulated by Hispano- and Catalano-African authors in their writings. These reflections, however, cannot be reduced to mere illustrations of the discourse on migration(s) of and within a lived reality but have to be acknowledged as complementing those positions as much as they challenge or even destabilize predominant paradigms.

To bring together literary texts written by authors of African origin in Spanish or Catalan under this particular emphasis might, on first sight, seem to be a pretentious, new hegemonic and generalizing classification of pluralistic literary creations and situations. As a matter of course, the diverse historical, sociocultural, and (geo)political contexts are explicitly taken into account when raising the question of how these texts deal with the mentioned phenomena. Notwithstanding, migratory movements, diasporic constructions, and transcultural subject positions represent preeminent topics that emerge in many of these works—even though they originate from very different contexts that range from Equatorial Guinea to the North African Maghreb. For this reason, transcending geographical, cultural, and linguistic delimitations in studying these literatures may offer revealing insights into both the literary texts and the underlying theoretical concepts.

The heterogeneous contributions combined in this volume, which includes scientific analyses and contributions by writers—an essay by Donato Ndong-Bidyogo, an interview with Joaquín Mbomio Bacheng (both from Equatorial Guinea), and a so far unpublished short story by Moroccan writer Ahmed Ararou—deal with the aforementioned topics. The literary texts studied in this special issue

offer differences in perspectives that address both (the elaboration of) actual migratory experiences and insightful reflections on these issues that do not necessarily involve physical movement but engender and create diasporic positionings. On this account, the articles' order does not pay attention to the "provenience" of the authors whose texts are examined but corresponds to recurring thematic foci; an order that allows for a comparison of diverging standpoints instead of arranging the papers according to territorial or even national affiliation.

Three principal axes guide the analyses of the present contributions. First, the papers discuss "movements" in diverse constellations and on different levels (real and/or imaginary). This discussion includes a historical dimension that tackles a continuity of colonial structures and a coloniality of power, experiences of displacement that transcend the initial migratory process and challenge the possibility of return to the so-called "homeland," or an exploration of positionings of the diasporic subject that oscillates between Europe and Africa continuously relocating itself *in-between* cultures.

Second, the analyses focus on the idea of "communities" within the migratory situation, which are conceptualized as diasporic groups and networks or (new) developing—real or symbolic—identity formations that result from a context of marginalization and, as a form of resistance against discrimination, might lead to strategies of self-empowerment for the diasporic subject. In this context, alternative forms of communalities are discussed that direct the attention to key aspects such as respect, solidarity, "coexistence," or questions of belonging.

The third main focus logically follows from the two other axes: the challenging of paradigms frequently determined by colonial thinking patterns. In a general way, this challenging is certainly not new; yet, the innovative potential of the special issue is that it questions and deconstructs—that is, *de-* and *re-territorializes*—categories (mostly recognized as obsolete or overcome nowadays) such as "center" and "periphery," homeland and *hostland*, (national) identity, homogeneity of communities, or a still stereotypical thinking of Africa and Europe within the specific context of recent migratory flows between the two continents and the resulting emergence of "new" communities.

Several of the articles submitted to this special issue concentrate on specific works or particular writers who were crowned with success by critics and readership, e.g., Catalano-Moroccan author Najat El Hachmi with her prizewinning novel *L'últim patriarca* [*The Last Patriarch*] or Equato-Guinean writer Donato Ndongo-Bidyogo, who is considered one of the most renowned Hispanophone African authors. It would be premature and reductive to infer that this predominance points to larger scientific interests or even established research tendencies. Nonetheless, this focusing on particular writers (as well as the close readings of individual literary texts in most contributions) can be regarded as a signifier that, after a first period of collecting, sighting, and making the field of Hispano- and Catalano-African literatures more visible and accessible, we are entering a period in which the still barely known or marginalized writings are approached using concrete research questions and an increasing theorization of these literatures. This is a tendency to which this special issue intends to contribute.

We wish to thank *Research in African Literatures* for giving this publication project a visible platform within African literary studies. Penultimately, our sincere

thanks are due to our proofreader, Anne Wegner, for collaborating with us on this issue. And finally, we express our deep gratitude toward the contributors—scholars and especially the writers—for investing a lot of working time and patience into this publication.

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