

A Critical Interpretation of a “Love Song” to Germany (2003)

Abstract

Ten years after reunification in 1990, patriotism still remained a difficult subject for many Germans. When the music band Mia (or MIA) wove the colors of the German flag into a song about giving patriotism another chance, there was considerable controversy—the song was interpreted by some as an attempt to normalize nationalism.

Source

It Is What It Is: Bloody Stupid

Berlin Band Mia Sings a Black-Red-Gold Love Song to Germany

Hand in Hand with Martin Walser, Mia Enters “New German Territory”

We’re used to quite a bit of nonsense from the Berlin band Mia: the NDW [Neue Deutsche Welle] plagiarism of their debut CD last year sold them to the media as electropunk; this year they opened the Love Parade together with a brass band and—as a plea “for love and not for material satisfaction”—walked around the Victory Column [in Berlin] once. Reason enough not to pay further attention to the band.

With their latest single, however, Mia forfeited the right to be ignored on account of their own stupidity. “Was es ist” [“What It Is”] is the name of the song whose refrain they borrowed from Erich Fried’s poem of the same title: “It is what it is, says love. What is it, asks the mind. I look forward to my life, make fresh tracks in the white beach.” A love song, then, a youthfully naive piano ballad, and basically not worth mentioning—if the white beach were not German history and if the declaration of love were not directed toward Germany. “A sip of black coffee wakes me up. Your red mouth touches me gently. At this moment, it clicks, the yellow sun rises.” Coffee, mouth, sun—the German national colors have seldom been foisted upon us in such an unabashedly dressed-up way.

Hand in hand with Martin Walser, Mia traipses along the pristine beach and, as singer Mieke continues, “enters new German territory.” A few bars later she jubilates: “If you ask me now where I come from, I don’t feel sorry for myself anymore. I’m risking something for love. I feel ready.” One even wants to defend the pathos-filled lyricist Fried, who had to flee to England in 1938 to avoid being murdered by the Germans and who really can’t be held responsible for such lyrical appropriation. Despite the new melody—it is what it is: the old song of healthy national feeling and the need to finally wipe the slate clean. As if a lack of patriotism had ever been a problem in this country.

Writing on the internet, music producer Nhoah describes what led to Mia’s sudden euphoria for Germany: “Then came the Iraq war. I was in Buenos Aires, and as a German I suddenly stood for peace. A completely new feeling! Cab drivers raised their thumbs. People shook my hands and encouraged me ‘contra la guerra.’” What is obviously the most beautiful thing about this war is that one is finally allowed to be unreservedly pro Germany again. [...]

Source: Phillip Meinhold, “Es ist was es ist: saudämlich,” *taz*, November 12, 2003. Available online at:

<https://taz.de/!682062/>

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