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Postcolonial Critique

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The debate on cultural globalization also often involves so-called postcolonial theory. What does this encompass? According to Ruth Frankenbert and Lata Mani (1993, 292), postcolonialism refers to a specific "conjuncture" of social force fields and a type of political positioning in relation to local conditions. Geopolitical power gradients strongly influence these social relations. They influence the emergence of certain subjectivities - and thus also the production of art and the formation of the aesthetic and cognitive categories of its perception. Since global power relations structure living conditions all over the world today, according to Frankenberg and Mani's definition the place where postcolonial power relations are in effect, is therefore equally ubiquitous. This place is neither outside social practices nor beyond the borders of western societies, but is rather reproduced within them as a social relationship of simultaneous inclusion and exclusion.

In the reception of these kinds of approaches in German-speaking countries, however, theoretical and artistic approaches that come from the local history of migration and minoritization are almost never taken into consideration. The reception applies instead almost exclusively to Anglo-American approaches. Conversely, migrants and members of minorities appear in this text corpus

primarily as speechless and powerless figures, for instance in Homi Bhabha's influential text Dissemi-Nation (Bhaba 1997, 186f.). There, following John Berger, a Turkish guest worker in Germany is described as a mute automaton of labor and "speechless presence". An image of helpless subalternity is thus generated, which characterizes not only the perception of migrants and the minoritized as a whole, but also all of their utterances. Another prejudice about postcolonial theory development maintains that it has only limited relevance in the German context, since Germany's colonies are hardly worth mentioning and the National-Socialist politics of subjugation are not comparable with the issue of actual colonial rule (Bronfen/Marius 1997, 8). The only possibility for adaptation is consequently an examination of the "effects of the mass migration of people and the global circulation of signs, commodities and information" (ibid.). What this means is not the paradoxical situation, for instance, that signs, commodities and persons can circulate relatively freely from north to south - but not necessarily the other way around. Nor does the "effects of global mass migration" mean the ongoing neo-colonial inequality that is reproduced within western societies in the form of the continuing inequality of migrants and minorities. What is actually meant by these effects, on the other hand, are banalities, such as the circumstance "that I can go into a club in Zurich as a Southern German and hear a dark-skinned person speaking Swiss German with his friends" (ibid., 6f.). These and other experiences induce the authors to describe postcolonial power relations as a kind of disco, in which "fusion cooking" is carried out next to "DJ culture". This is in proof of the "productivity of internal differences" (ibid., 3).

Yet even one of the early testimonies to the presence of Africans in Germany, does not at all indicate harmonious cultural contacts.

Albrecht Dürer's painting of an African in Augsburg (1508) obviously shows the slave of a merchant company based there. Even in the initial phase of the colonization of Africa and Asia, German merchant companies such as the Tuchers supplied the greatest financial contribution to the subjection, exploitation, and partial extermination of the population in those places. The African did not come to Augsburg by chance, then, but rather in connection with a globalizing international slave trade at the time, which spanned several continents. German merchant houses were also significantly involved in this. The first *asiento*, a kind of license for the acquisition of slaves, was issued in 1528 to the Germans Eynger and Sayler (Kloes 1985, 84). To negate a significant German contribution to the history of colonization, one would have to completely ignore these kinds of economic and political connections.

Even today, migration movements are hardly inspired by voluntary motivations, but move instead in the context of an increasingly globalized world market. Authors such as Ha (2002) accordingly stress the economic and political power gradients that structure the post-colonial situation as well as continuities in the economic function of immigrants and minorities as "buffers in the economic cycle", industrial reserves and menial laborers.

"Although there are important differences between migrant, forced and guest workers, and these cannot be treated equally or uniformly at all, it is worth looking for lines of connection. This makes it possible to reveal differences as well as what they have in common, which enable statements about structures that have a lasting effect, as well as discourses and practices across different eras. (...) When we look at the initial foundation of postcolonial migration in the Federal Republic of Germany, then we immediately recognize a number of historical, discursive and

functional parallels between so-called migrant, alien and guest workers, which indicate continued racist colonialist practices in Germany." (ibid.) Those who are "silent about colonial presences," according to Ha, should not even begin to speak of phenomena such as "hybridity" or postcolonialism.

Postcoloniality, according to Ha, is namely "not primarily a chronological epochal term marking the period after formal political independence from western colonial powers, but rather a politically motivated category of analysis of the historical, political, cultural and discursive aspects of the colonial discourse that is not yet closed" (Ha 1999). According to this reading, postcoloniality comprises "a site of political positioning. This site is woven into the memory and the legacy of a colonial past and its present formation and effectivity." (Gutiérrez Rodriguez 2000). The differences between the various local conjunctures of postcoloniality must therefore be investigated in a locally specific analysis. This investigation also enables the development of analytical instruments, which take into consideration the local historical and political background of phenomena of ethnicizing, gendering and class-specific positioning that are specific to globalization. Here, the analysis of postcolonial, feminist, and anti-racist critique means paying attention to the geographical and political context, in which this critique is produced and through which it is formed.

This also applies most of all to a critical consideration of the artistic and theoretical language of forms, which has repeatedly been named in conjunction with postcolonial critique as its privileged medium, specifically so-called hybrid mixed forms (Erel, 1999). As Umut Erel stresses, the possibilities of the hybridity discourse are not only subject to analytical and strategic limitations. Hierarchies of different cultural hybrids and genres also emerge

within the framework of a global, western-dominated capitalism that is nourished by local differences. The effect of these hierarchies is that primarily Anglo-American forms of hybridity are privileged over others and interpreted as universal and solely valid examples of cultural mixtures. In conjunction with the conditions of utilization in the global cultural industry, they are objectified, exoticized, sexualized, and thus de-politicized. In this hierarchization of cultural hybrid forms, a ranking prevails, which privileges the products of economically and militarily dominant countries such as England or the USA - but which rejects cultural productions from the global south as being archaic, backwards and thus inferior. The hierarchies of the international distribution of labor translate directly into culturally racist hierarchies in the aesthetic field. Different languages of form must first be recontextualized, in order for these reductionist readings to be interpreted as the effects of discursive power relations in the context of global capitalist forms of utilization.

In comparison, an analysis of various artistic and theoretical languages of form in postcolonial conjunctures that are just as diverse demonstrates the global interdependence (Shohat, Stam 2000, 28) of different forms of articulation all over the world. In contrast to cultural studies one-sidedly oriented to the cultural production of the north, Ella Shohat and Robert Stam argue for an analysis of the effects of global inequality on cultural and theoretical articulations worldwide, oriented to the world-system theory (Wallerstein 1974, 1980). In contrast to Eurocentric constraints, they favor an investigation of "multi-temporal heterogeneities", in other words the analysis of simultaneous, mutually superimposed space-temporalities, which influence the production of social texts. This approach is based on the assumption that structural overdevelopment and underdevelopment

not only influence one another in the area of economics, but also affect artistic articulations.

This becomes particularly evident if not only postcolonial contexts in the global northwest are investigated, but if these are also placed in relation to worldwide feminist articulations. Postcolonial contexts in Eastern Europe thus differ not only in their formal articulations, but also in the multiple logics of domination manifested in them in relation to colonialism, patriarchally organized nationalism, militarization and neo-colonialism (Grzinic 2000, Papic 1999).

What must be taken into consideration in categorizing different cultural and theoretical productions in different postcolonial contexts, are therefore the locally specific conditions of their production. The postcolonial cultural hybrid forms of the north are also entangled in global capitalism's ways of production and thus reproduce existing power gradients in the context of the international distribution of labor. Social inequality is coded as cultural difference or even deficiency and thus made invisible. This constant reproduction of culturalized inequality forms the law of the "unequal development" of global capitalism. The Eurocentric hierarchizations of various postcolonial contexts thus reproduce culture-racist mechanisms of exclusion, which for their part represent a fundamental structural element of global capitalist forms of utilization and/or exploitation.

In reference to the contextualization of various postcolonial articulations in conjunction with their global interdependence, the question - rephrased from a saying by Gayatri Spivak - must be raised, "what sort of coding has produced this text?" (Spivak 1990, 19). Spivak's interest focuses on the specific power relations that

enable an individual to describe and explain herself or himself within a certain logic. (Gutiérrez Rodrigues 2001)

In reference to the transfer of postcolonial approaches to the German context, in this sense we must not only ask with Spivak's words: Can the subaltern speak?, or even: Can the subaltern speak German? Instead the question must be: But even if he or she has been talking on for centuries - why didn't anybody listen?

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