Call for Papers

Crossing Thresholds: Decoloniality and Gender in Caribbean Knowledge

The workshop aims to provide an opportunity for junior researchers (especially doctoral and postdoctoral candidates) to present their projects and engage in interdisciplinary cooperation on current perspectives regarding decolonial gender issues within Caribbean Research. Proposals may be submitted in multiple fields, including:

- African Studies
- Art History
- English, French, Spanish and Portuguese Literature
- Gender Studies
- History
- North- and Latin American Studies
- Media- and Drama Studies
- Political Science
- Religious Studies
- Sociology
- Social and Cultural Anthropology

Presentation languages: English, French, Spanish and Portuguese

Date: 23 - 25 January 2013

Location: Leibniz Universität Hannover
Romanisches Seminar
Königsworther Platz 1
30167 Hannover
Germany
Organizing Group

The workshop is hosted by the Society of Caribbean Research (SoCaRe) and the Institute of Romance Languages at the Leibniz Universität Hannover (Germany).

Organizers:

- Pauline Bachmann (M.A.)
- Julia Borst (M.A.)
- Rebecca Fuchs (M.A.)
- Bastienne Schulz (M.A.)
- Martina Urioste-Buschmann (M.A.)
- Prof. Dr. Anja Bandau
- PD. Dr. Martha Zapata Galindo

Topics

Topics related to the Caribbean region and opening up through decolonial perspectives may include:

- gender-critical approaches to representations of imperial power
- artistic negotiations (art performance, theatre, film, literature) of gender discourses (e.g. in the context of feminism and queerness) within the Caribbean and its diaspora
- gender-related migration movements from and to the Caribbean
- female agency in the context of slave rebellions, marronage and processes of political change
- Caribbean women’s movements
- LesBiGay participation in politics, societies and religious practice
- homophobia
Concept
The cultural location of the Caribbean keeps resisting all academic labeling. Colonial plantation economy, enslavement, postabolitionist migration movements into and contemporary diasporic movements from the region, as well as the coexistence of European and Creole languages have turned the Caribbean into a zone of cultural contact in transoceanic frames of reference. In the context of colonial experiences of Creolization, gendered self-understanding in the Caribbean is linked to an ambivalent relationship towards metropolitan gender discourses of the Global North. This ambivalence enables Caribbean thinkers to critically consider Western and Non-Western epistemologies from a double perspective.
Decoloniality aims to criticize universalistic claims to Western modernity and related paradigms. In this sense, decolonial options require a corresponding mode of thinking which remains aware of the continuity of hegemonic monopolies of power upheld by the former colonial empires even after the majority of colonies has gained political independence. The concept of coloniality, understood to be the epistemological domination of knowledge, images and symbolic systems by the Western world, implies an imbalance of power between ‘center’ and ‘periphery’ as well as control over cultural and epistemic productions. This hierarchical relation of power, which is constantly in the making, must not be considered exclusively through the category of race (Quijano) but has to be extended to conceptions of gender and sexuality. As a consequence, decolonial gender theorists claim to think of entities such as race and gender as mutually intertwined and embedded within colonial structures of power. Only from this intersectional perspective and by ceasing to marginalize and hide (epistemologically) the female ‘subaltern’ Other by focusing on the emancipation of ‘white women’ is it possible to reveal the impact of a “modern/colonial gender system” (Lugones, “Coloniality”). As a concept of hybridity, Gloria Anzaldúa’s “mestiza consciousness” refers exemplarily to a feminist border thinking which not only questions the logics of coloniality and the corresponding rhetoric of modernity, but as an intersection (class, race, gender) focuses on decolonial options within cultural border situations which concern marginalized experiences of gender-queer identity positions.
Within an interdisciplinary context, the workshop aims to discuss Caribbean perspectives which open up emic avenues out of purely Western paradigms of feminism (Paravisini-Gebert) and which unveil pre- and decolonial conceptualizations of gender (see e.g. Oyèwùmí’s
research on gender among the Yoruba). By breaking down the biologically defined dimorphism and patriarchal frame of gender relations of Western typology (Mills), LesBiGay and transgender self-conceptions as well as corresponding bodily practices, excluded empirically and discursively by the “global design” (Mignolo) of Western heteronormativity, come into sight (Lugones, „Coloniality“; Hawley).

The main goals of the workshop are consequently to critically examine supposedly ‘universal’ paradigms and categories of thought in terms of queering (Roßhart), to explore shifts of signification with regard to apparently valid patterns of thought (Butler) and to reflect upon decolonial options for thinking about gender and queerness by referring to subaltern productions of knowledge. It is crucial to note that categories of gender and queerness cannot be considered as isolated entities but have to be imagined intersectionally (Lugones, „Coloniality“) and reflected critically in relation to colonial experiences (La Fountain-Stokes).

From this perspective the workshop discusses socio-cultural processes, discourses and performative expressions within the Caribbean region which allow us to explore and analyze decolonial paradigms by referring to the key category of gender. In this sense, Caribbean postulates and representations of women’s emancipation are to be considered in the context of decolonial extensions of feminist discourses. Then again, decolonial approaches to Queer Theory shall be explored so as to question patriarchal and naturalized constructions of gender within the region, with alternative non-Western conceptualizations in mind.

Please send paper abstracts (300 words) to juniorresearch@caribbeanresearch.net by July 31, 2012.
Bibliographic References:


La Fountain-Stokes, Lawrence. „De sexilio(s) y diáspora(s) homosexual(es) latina(s): cultura puertorriqueña y lo nuyorican queer.” *Debate Feminista. Las "raras"*. 15.29 (2004): 123-157.


