

Transplantation: Beyond Transcultural and Identity-Making Processes

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Abstract:

The connection between the practical, physical realization of the botany-born concept of transplantation and its usage as cultural metaphor in identity-building aspects opens a range of questions regarding the problematic transferral of the concept from the scientific subject to the cultural disciplines. The interdisciplinary reconstruction of this conceptual fracture is investigated by the publication *Kulturwissenschaftliche Konzepte der Transplantation* (2019) edited by Ottmar Ette and Uwe Wirth, in collaboration with Carolin Haupt.

Transplantation: Jenseits transkultureller und identitätsbildender Prozesse

German Abstract:

Der Zusammenhang zwischen der praktischen, physischen Umsetzung des aus der Botanik stammenden Transplantationskonzepts und seiner Verwendung als kulturelle Metapher in identitätsbildenden Aspekten wirft eine Reihe von Fragen hinsichtlich der problematischen Übertragung des Konzepts vom wissenschaftlichen Fach auf die kulturellen Disziplinen auf. Die interdisziplinäre Rekonstruktion dieses konzeptuellen Bruchs wird in dem Band *Kulturwissenschaftliche Konzepte der Transplantation* (2019) herausgegeben von Ottmar Ette und Uwe Wirth, unter Mitarbeit von Carolin Haupt, untersucht.

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Transplantation: Beyond Transcultural and Identity-Making Processes

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Transplantation is the physical act associated with the insertion of an alien plant with its roots into a receiving soil, in the hope of emphasizing and maximizing the florescence of all parts involved or preventing a damage or even the death of a unit. However, this process is not linear and purely pragmatic when it is employed in cultural terms. The implications and limits of the passage of this term from natural sciences to cultural and literary disciplines are discussed in the volume *Kulturwissenschaftliche Konzepte der Transplantation* (2019), edited by Ottmar Ette and Uwe Wirth in collaboration with Carolin Haupt. This book is published by De Gruyter, counting sixteen interdisciplinary contributions which explore the cultural employment of the practice of transplantation. Transplantation, as hybridity, is a borrowed biologism which refers to the history of translation theory implying a form of cultural translation and culture-crossing (Ette/Wirth, p. 3). Both transplantation and hybridity involve a “logische ‘Verlegenheit’” [logical ‘embarrassment’] (Ette/Wirth, p. 2) arisen from their “organic metaphors” (Young, as cited in Ette/Wirth, p. 1). However, where the “metaphorologische Interferenz” [metaphorological interference] (Ette/Wirth, p. 1) in hybridity falters in its conceptual implications, in transplantation, it becomes the model of transitoriness, originating from the botanical framework and transferred to the medical, technical, and cultural context (Ette/Wirth, p. 2-4). Therefore, this publication aims to investigate transplantation as a conceptual advancement to the cultural and media mixing that is usually associated with hybridity, questioning the relation of foreign-own in transplantation, the connection between historical semantics of translation theories and organic metaphors and the abstraction of cultural and theoretical concepts from the biologisms of hybridity and transplantation (Ette/Wirth, p. 2-3).

As discussed in the introduction and first paper of the publication, the epistemological reconstruction of the term and its usage as a “travelling concept” (Ette/Wirth, p. 4) coincide

with the history of transplantation, previously known as the “Oberbegriffe” [overarching term] of grafting (Fichtner as cited in Wirth, p. 11; Wirth p. 9). The concept takes its origin from horticultural and botanical knowledge, and successively, has been ‘projected’ into medical, surgical application (Wirth, p. 11). Here, the advancement of the term sees the employment of grafting in the creation of new associations or hybrids, also known as “Metaphernproduktion und Begriffsproduktion” [production of metaphors and concepts] (Ricoeur as cited in Wirth, p.12). However, grafting formulates an assemblage of elements; transplantation allows a chimerical conceptual and mechanical dimension, which questions the functions of the unit and sees its realization only through its survival in the donor-recipient paradigm (Wirth, p. 17-22).

In Ette’s contribution, the shift from grafting to transplanting sees the formulation of a transareal “transculturación” (Martí as cited in Ette, p. 46), in the process of the formation of a Latin American community in the 19th century. The metaphorical transplantation enables the project of “Zusammenleben[...] der Traditionen...der Kulturen“ [conviviality of traditions...[and] of cultures] (Ette, p. 38), by setting its cultural roots in motion to create a dynamic, community-building approach of integration rather than exclusion, therefore, without asserting an arrival (Ette, p. 56). In other (post-)colonial transcultural models, Müller’s, Wiemann’s and Simonis’s papers argue that transplantation contributes to the distortion of emancipation for all parties involved (Müller p. 265; Wiemann, p. 256). The practice questions the patterns of the process of cultural production, which involves a major loss and adaption from one side, highlighting the artificiality of Eurocentric transcultural circulations (Müller, p. 265-8; Simonis, p. 238). In the Zionist example, Kugele observes that the organic technique of transplantation becomes a system of resettlement and preservation of Jewish identity, the tentative solution of recreation of a home, which attempts to reconcile historical conflicts (Kugele, p. 285- 290).

Further papers of this edited volume problematize the role of interdependency of the transplantation practice in narrative. In Reinhard Jirgl’s and Dietmar Dath’s science fiction narratives, Bühler observes the ecocritical relationship being-nature, which shows the active role of the environment enacting as the social and cultural soil of the transplanted life form (Bühler, p. 83- 86). In the case of *Leben* (2013) by D. Wagner, in which the protagonist lives between death and life during a liver transplantation, Krüger-Fürhoff observes that the autobiography adopts foreign and self-quotations metaphorically indicating the grafting of a foreign body in the host (Krüger-Fürhoff, p. 149-150). At the end of *Leben* and in the graphic

novel *Patchwork* (2011) by K. Greves, the chimerical heterogeneity achieved by transplantation becomes the very motor of life, recycling existing materials to solve social conflicts and create a relationship of donor-recipients (Krüger-Fürhoff, p. 161-163). In this way, the technique of transplantation becomes a means to propagate life and benefit the whole, as Baumann analyses in Statius' *Silve*, where the technique of transplanting becomes a way to propagate poetry in different everyday contexts (Baumann, p. 105-121).

In the ethical-cultural discourse, Toepfer and Schicktanz argue that the cultural practice of transplantation opens the problem of individuality and autonomy restriction with repercussions for the collectivity affecting the "Gefühlsidentität" [emotional identity] of all elements involved (Schicktanz, p. 140; Toepfer, p. 68-79). By the same token, Hansen and Sánchez recognise that the technique of transplantation allows the literary and artistic possibility of self-reproductions in a clone or a transplanted monster symbolizing social negligence towards specific groups and normative transgressions (Hansen, p. 179-180; Sánchez, p. 207). As Sánchez formulates it, transplantation assumes the "Cut-and-Paste-Prinzipien" [principles of cut and paste] (Sánchez, p. 199); Millutat observes that its surgical tool of scissors, a hybrid and imprecise instrument later employed in the editing of texts, inevitably leaves scars, cracks, and losses, forming in-between categories (Millutat, p. 190-5; also see Simonis, p. 241).

This volume argues the cultural implications of transplantation through the analysis of selected aspects of this practice, emphasizing the origin and historical valence of the term. The book offers a strong theoretical framework in the introduction and first chapter, focusing on the relation between the cultural and biological implications of the term, followed by a more practical and interdisciplinary application of the practice throughout the contributions. The chapters are articulated in an analytical and meticulous discourse of the term, exploring the mosaic nature of the concept. However, the structure of the volume is not explicitly exposed, making every contribution an almost isolated chapter, which the reader might find difficult, at first, in trying to connect one with the other. Consequently, a minor weakness of the volume sees the arguments about the concepts of grafting and hybridity, which are strictly related to transplantation, implicitly established from the very beginning of the publications. Beside this minor criticism, the book advances the current scholarship related to the topic of transplantation and offers many points of analysis for the reconsideration of transcultural models in view of the cultural-biological concept. Especially interesting, this book aims to foster

the investigation of the conceptual fracture given by the “logische Verlegenheit” [logical embarrassment] (Ette/Wirth, p. 2) that arose from the primarily scientific nature of the term, analyzing the in-between gap through interdisciplinary and methodological perspectives. The innovative attitude of this publication leaves open suggestions for further research regarding the complex system of transplantation and its multi-level relevance in Cultural as well as in Literary Studies. The metaphorical concepts of transplanting, grafting, and hybridity reveal the means to express the cultural plurality “in dem jedes einzelne Organ Interesse am Überleben hat” [in which each individual organ is interested in survival] (Wagner, as cited in Krüger-Fürhoff, p. 164).