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HEIDELBERGER  
GRADUIERTENSCHULE  
FÜR GEISTES- UND  
SOZIALWISSENSCHAFTEN



UNIVERSITÄT  
HEIDELBERG  
ZUKUNFT  
SEIT 1386

**The Prosthesis as a Trope: Subjectivity and Image in the Construction of the Other in  
Latin-America and Europe**

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**Romanisches Seminar**

This work aims to propose, develop, and describe the “prosthesis as a trope” as a mechanism for analyzing and deconstructing culture and aesthetics as a structural colonial mechanism. In first place, the term *prosthesis* immediately refers to its materiality, but by understanding it as a trope, —although it does not ignore this aspect— it implies an approach based on its symbolic nature. To this extent, the prosthesis should be understood as ambivalent; not only from its material and symbolic constitution, but also as a mechanism for the analysis of culture. Therefore, it can function, on the one hand, as a tool to conceal, hides, and simulates. Yet, on the other hand, it can be an instrument that reveals and contemplates the construction of other bodies and other identities. In this way, this work wonders how the images that we construct of the other, from a gender, race, and class perspective, can be understood as prostheses that are put before as imaginaries and are reproduced as discourses within culture. More precisely, how these images intervene in the construction of subjectivities —in this case of Latin America and Europe— and how these images fix them or, whether, it redefines them. Although this project focuses on the images that are reproduced of the other as a prosthesis, it also intends to make the mechanism of the “prosthesis as a trope” work in an independent way and be taken as a tool of analysis applied to other Subjects of analysis.

Under this framework (the prosthesis as a trope, and the image as a discourse, representation and unfolding of the world) this project aims to analyze how the images that are constructed of the other function as prostheses. Thus, for instance, if this aspect is considered based on the American miscegenation process (understood as a prothetic<sup>1</sup> process) —where there is an imaginary of whiteness as an ideal—, the skin becomes a prosthesis, whose discoloration implies the construction

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<sup>1</sup> In Spanish, the word “proteico” related with Proteus Myth, refers to changing. In his book *Definición de la cultura* and specifically in the essay: “La identidad lo político y la cultura” Bolívar Echeverría refers to the prothetic character of culture (2010 152).

of certain imaginaries and discourses unfolded in an imagined identitary representation. This is observed in the caste paintings<sup>2</sup> of the 18th century where the materiality and the discursiveness of a prosthetized other are combined. Moreover, if one thinks about the “indiátides” that the Indian Kondori sculpted on the front of the church of San Lorenzo de Potosí, it is seen how the construction of an image is possible as a prosthesis that re-signifies.

Another example of the functioning of the image and the discourse as a prosthesis can also be read from a gender perspective. This occurs with the change in the image of woman, from a wild and unstable being in the 17th century, to passive and obedient at the end of the 18th century. This transformation in the construction of femininity responds to an ensemble of political and social events taking place in the transition to capitalism where women were deprived from their participatory faculties and relegated to a domestic space. “Women were treated with the same hostility that was conceded to Indian savages” (Federici, 161). Thus, the persecution of women at this time can be related to the colonial process that took place in America. These images that are constructed of the other and that become trans-national and trans-temporal discourses to establish a subordinate social function is what I propose to analyze under the mechanism of prosthesis.

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<sup>2</sup> Caste paintings were paintings that represented the colonial caste system in the 18th century, based on the classificatory spirit of the Enlightenment. In this way each individual was placed in a social position based on his or her skin color or according to the performativity that proved his or her whiteness. Related to this Ruth Sonderegger discusses the category of taste in relation to the good. In this way, an aesthetic possibility becomes almost an ethical justification for presenting American’s mestizos as uncivilized. (Sonderegger, 2019).

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