The ‘Black’ Face of Eurocentrism: What’s Whiteness Got To Do With It?

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My Concept

Eurocentrism. What’s ‘blackness’ got to do with it? If we regard Eurocentric epistemologies as various exercises in performing ‘whiteness’ (Wallerstein, 1997; Wallerstein, 2003; Mignolo & Escobar, 2010), then on the surface, nothing much. However, if we view ‘blackness’ as an “artefact” of whiteness (Fanon, 1986[1952], p. 6), then we might just have a clue as to the true identity of contemporary Eurocentrism. Toni Morrison guides us in our thinking about the artificial construct of ‘blackness’ when she describes an Africanist presence of ‘blackness’ in American literature that acts as an existentially dialectical tool of ‘whiteness’ (Morrison, 1993).

However, it is the idea that ‘blackness’ is disavowed and as a consequence, its alter ego, pathological (Altman, 2006) that is of extreme interest to me. If we can reframe the ‘blackness’/‘whiteness’ dialectic using a psychoanalytical register, we will be able to better define ‘whiteness” underlying drives behind its manifestly political intent (Hook, 2005). This is important because the invisibility of ‘whiteness’ in terms of its universal “eye” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 3) couches its drive for mastery in its guise of ‘blackness’.

And nowhere can this be felt more keenly than in the market, where ‘blackness’ is traded as a market commodity (Collins, 2006). However, if market ‘blackness’ is literally just a ‘black-face’ (Gubar, 1997) form of ‘whiteness’ in disguise, I’m interested in exploring its market transformation into a commercial hegemony via its neoliberal cults of ‘market freedom’ and ‘individuality’ (Graeber , 2006; De Angelis , 2001; Bentham, 1787; Hayek, 1976). This for me, marks a new direction that brings together the concepts of globalisation and postcolonial theory as two sides of the same coin (Krishnaswamy, 2002).

So I would like to explore how Eurocentric expansion via neoliberalism has taken the form of a soft global power that commodifies culture (Adorno, 1991) as a commercialised form of ‘blackness’. As the foremost American cultural export, I believe that ‘blackness’ is used to pervasively promote Eurocentric institutions (Hobson, 2012) via its “coloniality of power” (Mignolo, 2002) of the market. From this perspective, I tend to position commercial ‘black’ culture as a form of global romanticism (Kvifte, 2001) called Afro Neo Romanticism (Clennon, 2015). For me, Afro Neo Romanticism’s function is to (re)present a market-driven postmodern image of Eurocentrism (and Post Colonialism) that uses ‘black’ visual and cultural signifiers (Baudrillard, 1972) to expand its global cultural expansion whilst further subjugating the people from whom the signifiers originate. So I conclude by calling out the inherent political and institutional power of popular culture and its consumption, alongside its role in structural oppression. I would also like to bring to mind possible forms of ‘political’ acts of resistance against the “coloniality” of ‘blackness’. Here I am thinking of both civil and cultural forms of resistance. A parting thought: in terms of using commercial
subversions of marketised ‘blackness’ as forms of resistance, are artists such as Beyoncé, her Lemonade album and her cultivated-authenticity (Benjamin, 1999; Lewandowski, 2005) resisting the ‘coloniality of blackness’ or are they complicit in its domination?

Works Cited


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1 which appear to be unwittingly inspired by Walter Benjamin’s concept of urban dialectics and cultivated-authenticity (or open spaces, as Benjamin would see them)-as-revolution


