

Problematising PostHeimat

Prompted by recurring nationalist appropriations of the term *Heimat* and its enduring colonial connotations in the German context, we felt the urge to re-open the notion, to trouble it collectively, to shift its meaning *beyond* singular interpretations. Beyond Heimat, in this case: PostHeimat, does not mean abandoning the possibility of connecting to the term, but going through it, across it, and to find other and new meanings that signal a pluralistic re-appropriation of the notion.

PostHeimat, then, is a departure point to reflect on concepts like identity-formation, nation, racism, and colonialism – and to move to an understanding of *home* that is non-discriminatory, does not equate nation with ethnicity or language, and deeply recognises a post-migrant social theory. PostHeimat becoming points towards an emergent and as of yet incomplete idea. It stands for a heterogeneous process that resists forming a new canon, a new *Leitkultur*. PostHeimat proposes itself more as a conversation, one that does not shy away from admitting less uttered experiences. In doing so, it seeks to form part of a critical social imagination, a new ethics for a diverse commons.

Theatre and the performing arts have long been a site and practice for imagining collectivity, sociality, dividuality, and the relation of individuals to society. It can be a mode of thinking and enacting identities in a queer, plural, and shifting way. It is constituted by and concerns relations between persons – between actors and actors, actors and audiences – but also functions by way of multiple further mediations – through and across bodies, languages, materials, and the sonic. We want to build on this potential and reality of theatre as a *collective* practice to imagine Heimat *post-Heimat*. Or, as Dwight Conquergood put it, theatre is a form of [‘co-performative witnessing’](#) that brings about and imagines collectivities otherwise.

PostHeimat proposes an *Umleitkultur* (detour culture) rather than a *Leitkultur*, in which Christianity, Whiteness, Masculinity are not guiding unmarked principles for social norms; but instead, we let ourselves be accompanied by a distracting, queer, non-normative culture. Accepting detours, rather than straight roads.

PostHeimat understands that the term *Heimat* played a significant role in the German colonial imagination and its racist ideologies ([Kolonie und Heimat](#)), and that it reverberates in the post-colonial present. As such, PostHeimat takes an anti-racist stance that grapples with the enduring neo-colonial heritage of this past.

Heimat comprises *Heim*, and is linked directly to ideas and practices of hospitality, of welcome, of giving refuge, and of making home. PostHeimat recognises the privileged and

oftentimes asymmetrical, patronising, and even hostile character of guest-host relations. It seeks to reconsider *creating home* as a shared concern that prioritises the inalienable rights of safety and transnational citizenship over the not-quite logic of temporary asylum.

We advocate a move away from projecting migrants and refugees as ‘to-be-integrated’ members of a society, whose linguistic abilities, habits, and resources are regarded as ‘lacking’; PostHeimat rethinks the concept of post-migrant citizenship not from the perspective of integration, lack, and hierarchy, but recognises plurality as potential, multiperspectivity as richness, and diversity as value.

Heimat has been mobilised to design public cultural institutions, such as museums, archives, and theatres, that instantiate the ties between culture, citizenship, and nation; and it has been preserved through such institutional traditions. PostHeimat recognises the ambivalent power of institutions to perform, represent, and institute visions of society; PostHeimat efforts problematise and enact a pluralising politics also within and through institutions without seeking to reproduce hegemonising institutional agency.

We recognise the performativity of discourse, and consider these reflections as a first iteration of a PostHeimat *Umleitkultur*.

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This statement was drafted by the research group of the PostHeimat network during and after Encounter #04 at the Maxim Gorki Theater in March 2020.