

THREE STEPS IN CHROMATIC ABYSSES:
ON THE NECESSITY OF STUDYING COLONIALISM IN LATE LINGUISTICS

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N'est-il pas visible que la première démarche du philosophe, alors que sa pensée est encore mal assurée et qu'il n'y a rien de définitif dans sa doctrine, est de rejeter certaines choses définitivement ?¹

(Bergson [1911] 2011:4–5)

Three languages appear in this paper, English, French, German, and marginally Italian. Is it a coincidence that these were colonial languages, perhaps still are?

1. GESUALDO, OR THE DARK SPHERE. Thinking about language and colonialism is a serious and challenging task. Notably, it is an obligation of linguistics to think bitterly about itself. Linguistics should not look prematurely at colonialism from the outside, for the discipline itself is interwoven with colonial practices in its orders of knowledge and power structures, as already documented in the canonical works of Calvet (1974) and Errington (2001, 2008). To write about colonialism as a linguist therefore means to face the necessity of abandoning certainties of neutrality and realizing that one is entering a painful field of necessary self-analysis. In 2018, Anne Storch and Ana Deumert opened a new discussion about the COLONIAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF LINGUISTICS; see also Anne Storch's essential contribution *Whose Autobiography?* in this issue. This daunting task is indeed about autobiographical work and potentially unpleasant findings about relatives and ancestors, maybe even about something that I would call the disciplinary psyche of a field.

Writing about colonialism in the field of linguistics, which is perhaps more clearly delineated than any other in the humanities, first and foremost calls for finding a voice. But how does this voice sound, where does one begin, where does one find resonance for an overdue conversation that has only just begun about the colonial legacy of linguistics and linguistic desiderata that cannot and should not be lined up on a string of pearls in the exploration of colonialism? Do we need to be even more acutely aware that the pronounced interest in a history of European national languages is linked to an ideology of unity for which colonial action was one of its anchors (cf. Polenz 1999:27–28)?

How does one's own voice sound today? Perhaps like one of the polyphonic voices with their elusive and thus irritating transpositions in the music of Carlo Gesualdo (1566–1613)? One thing is obvious: euphony cannot be the answer because we live among the ruins of colonial and neocolonial practices (cf. Storch & Warnke forthcoming). And so in my mind and eventually in fact, I hear Gesualdo's six-voice motet *Plange quasi virgo*

¹ 'Is it not visible that the philosopher's first step, while his thought is still poorly assured and there is nothing definitive in his doctrine, is to reject certain things definitively?' All translations in the footnotes are the author's. Special thanks go to Carsten Junker for his support.

(1611),² although not without a concern that this might not lead me to a critical analysis of colonialism, but, on the contrary, that its sound might even carry me away. One might wonder if it is a good idea to choose pre-Enlightenment European aesthetics of suffering from the early seventeenth century as the starting point for rational scholarship today.

Importantly, I am not concerned with rational argumentation but rather with intuition, not with analysis—and here I would like to refer to Henri Bergson (1859–1941) (cf. Lawlor & Moulard Leonard 2016)—but rather with finding one, better yet, my starting point in thinking about language and colonialism. I am concerned with perceiving an unclear terrain of colonial duration we must enter and with leaving behind the analytical introductory seminar of terminological order so that we learn to sustain shifting positions and certainties. I am thus concerned with an intuitive starting point from where to frame the subject matter, with the untranslatability of a simple intuition in propositions, and ultimately with what Bergson ([1911] 2011:3) calls ‘l’incommensurabilité entre son intuition simple et les moyens dont il disposait pour l’exprimer’³ with reference to the doctrines of a philosopher. That is why I have spoken of a complex sound at the onset, in order to open up a possibility of listening—a matter of evoking an image, you might also say.

In POSTCOLONIAL LINGUISTICS, or also POSTCOLONIAL LANGUAGE STUDIES (cf. Warnke 2017), the task consists of questioning certainties, leaving behind secure positions of a professionalized and analytically versed linguistics of the twentieth century, entering the grey area of one’s own disciplinary biography, and thereby have bearing on the colonial autobiography of linguistics. One can also understand this as a decolonial practice, as a decolonization of beloved self-certainties—perhaps better still as a confrontation, but one can also call it differently, more modestly perhaps: a self-reflection. And I do not want these ruminations to be about more than that.

In a noteworthy medical and no less musicologically interesting treatise from 1973 by William D. Ober, M.D., Associate Professor of Pathology at Mount Sinai School of Medicine of the City University of New York, the author does not only reconstruct Carlo Gesualdo’s dark biography in light of medical history—Ober (1973:643) speaks of ‘psychobiography’—but he also characterizes Gesualdo’s challenging music precisely with reference to this biography. I would like to ignore the conclusions that William Ober draws on Gesualdo’s presumed ‘homosexual impulses’ (Ober 1973:644), however, since I shall draw my own:

‘Gesualdo’s expressive effects are achieved by slow progressions of chromatic chords and short, piercing cries of melody, which express pain, suffering, and thoughts of death—they alternate with brilliant contrapuntal passages to match words of joy, love, or any sort of active movement. He concentrated his imagination upon the darker aspects of life: the tragic, the grisly, and the bizarre; as a consequence his joyful moods and passages seem perfunctory,

² [http://www1.cpd.org/wiki/index.php/Plange_quasi_virgo_\(Carlo_Gesualdo\)](http://www1.cpd.org/wiki/index.php/Plange_quasi_virgo_(Carlo_Gesualdo))

³ ‘the incommensurability between his simple intuition and the means at his disposal to express it’

almost negative. The words upon which he seems to focus his most profound emotion are *duolo* and *dolore*, *martire* and *morire*, all to the accompaniment of *sospiri* and *lagrime*. It is the vocabulary of a masochist, and it permeates almost every single madrigal he wrote.’ (Ober 1973:639–640, original emphasis)

This is the voice that could be at stake, a voice of pain, martyrdom, death, a voice of sighs and tears: *duolo*, *dolore*, *martire*, *morire*, *sospiri*, *lagrime*. Before we can reflect on linguistics and colonialism, we are challenged—even though we may find the figure of the martyr most irritating—to create a certain sound ourselves and to listen to it. The point is to enter into a gloomy sounding space of one’s own biography. Yes, the discipline of linguistics also encompasses hearing, listening, attentively listening to, and not only speaking, writing and observing analytically.

Linguistics is not outside of colonial responsibility. Even though many are convinced that the discipline is utterly innocent, especially today. However, as James Baldwin (1924–1987) writes in *The Fire Next Time*: ‘But it is not permissible that the authors of devastation should also be innocent. It is the innocence which constitutes the crime’ (Baldwin [1963] 1998:292). These sentences fundamentally make it difficult to make oneself independent from and to withdraw to a scholarly standpoint of innocence. One only has to read Joseph Errington to understand how firmly linguistic practice is linked to colonialism, precisely where linguistic diversity is linguistically processed and translated into reductionist constructions of language. He writes about so-called COLONIAL LINGUISTICS: ‘Insofar as the label “colonial linguistics” covers texts that reduced complex situations of language use and variation to unified written representations, it can be considered here under a broadly ideological profile [...]’ (Errington 2001:20). In my experience (cf. also Baldwin [1963] 1998:293, Sombart 1928:245) —which come from a German context in my case—these are figures of the professional interest of linguistics which continue to shape the practices of the discipline to this day; the increased digitization of language and the associated corpus-linguistic subjugation of the concept of language even reinforces this. It is by no means unlikely that the practices of the structured explanation of systems have epistemological relatives in their colonial autobiography. We know far too little about this link, and it is one of the great tasks of linguistics to confront its colonial past and to question the pronounced interest in standardization, patterns, system, structure, and rule in relation to history and colonial history. Here the field is still at the beginning. Arguably, this task can only be conceived of as one of decolonization.

Of course Gesualdo’s apparently masochistic disposition can also be a warning against scholarly entering the gruesomely imagined gloom of colonialism as a practice of intellectual satisfaction in the critical project of northern sciences, satisfying oneself auto-aggressively with the shuddering horror of a colonial past and perhaps uplifting oneself morally at a critical distance, emerging once more as a victor. This would correspond to what Junker (2016) calls self-aggrandizement. This is a trap in which one can fall quickly and which we should see clearly here: To fall into a POSTCOLONIAL MELANCHOLIA (cf. Gilroy 2005:89–95, 98–106) that masks a hidden desire for former colonial splendor in the aesthetic horror of colonial perpetration and which finds itself in a ‘morbidly of heritage’

(Gilroy 2005:100, with reference to Patrick Wright). The difficult task in thinking about linguistics and colonialism is to counter the horrors of colonialism and the grim autobiography of linguistics without morally enhancing oneself. This is not about linguistic greatness or aesthetics, but first of all about listening as a search for one's own voice. Perhaps it is indeed an intuition that initiates a movement of thought.

2. EXPERIENCES, OR INSIDE THE REMAINING FIELD. Entering colonial space, positions and certainties also shift in the use of the academic term POSTCOLONIAL. For it is by no means trivial to use these terms, even if one may strongly support the project of POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES and postcolonial linguistics, and not least the idea of this newly founded journal. But rushing all too quickly into the sphere of safe concepts, into the research of and about the *post-*, could relieve us of more important tasks.

Which semantic dimensions are invoked by the use of *post-*? Sebastian Conrad (2012:6–7) has highlighted them by pointing out three dimensions of meaning: persistence, epistemology, and entanglement. Accordingly, postcolonial studies are concerned with the treatment of the continuing effects of colonial structures even after decolonization, with colonialism as an order of knowledge and a critique of it, as well as with the deconstruction of an assumed contrast between colony and metropolis, between the colonized and the colonizers in the sense of a critical examination of their entanglements. The semantics of *post-* is also characterized by temporal and modal use, with both dimensions of use interlocking; postcolonial(ism) has this in common with postmodern(ism). With regard to postmodernism, Martin Middeke and colleagues (2012:88, without original emphasis) claim that *post-* ‘suggests the chronological sequence of postmodernism [...], and more importantly, [...] points to a radical break with modernity’. Exactly the same applies to postcolonial(ism). On the one hand, we are dealing with the semantics of post-temporality which, on the other hand, is connected with the semantics of a radical turning away and deconstruction of colonial conditions, history, and present. The use of *postcolonial* is always indexical in so far as it indicates a temporal and modal speaking position, and is perhaps even intended to indicate it.

Now, in what situation does linguistics find itself confronted with the interdisciplinary dialogue of postcolonial studies, and where is the location from which linguists could support the postcolonial project? Where is linguistics prepared to join in this radical rupture and thereby assume a critical look at itself? One thing is obvious: in interdisciplinary postcolonial discourse, linguistics occupies at best a marginal position. One could also say that it positions itself in parts on the sidelines. For German studies, I can say so from my own experience. I have the impression of working in a field that is at a standstill, that, rather than moving, remains in places to which it turns its economies of attention (cf. Kaplan 2014:60–61). A shameful example of this is the lack of linguistics in the comprehensive documentation of the interdisciplinary reception of postcolonial studies in Reuter & Karentzos (2012). The discipline of German linguistics is barely present in the broad discussions of postcolonial studies.

Starting from the metaphor of the remaining field, I am particularly interested in the question of whether German linguistics today—as a LATE discipline, as I would call it, in the circle of postcolonial research—can enter the broad discourse of postcolonial studies,

as if its delay itself played no role at all and as if it were not important that it is colonialism which is ascribed the status of a remaining field in the discipline, in the sense of what, surprisingly, is still so unprocessed, as if it were left—remaining—in the academic disputes of Euro-American linguistics. Can German linguistics simply (belatedly) take on the critique of the persistence of colonial structures, the interest in colonial epistemologies, a thinking in entanglements, and a narrowing of temporal and modal attitudes, and relate them to its object, the (German) language? Does it matter that this is only done at its margins? One might say, yes, may linguistics finally awaken, especially in its self-created centers. But this means that linguistics has to deal with its own historical dimensions. If a colonial autobiography of linguistics is about persistence and thus also about duration and intuition, then this entails a call for engaging with today's linguistic constructions of language in which colonial traces have an effect. Postcolonial linguistics is about language ideologies that have shaped the field itself. When asked about colonial epistemologies, (German) linguistics must ask itself about the entanglement of its own order of knowledge with colonial certainties, about the meaning which a thinking in demarcations of standard and marginality has for the historiography of German language, and about what spatially fixed concept of language the discipline possesses. In short: the temporal posteriority of the project of a postcolonial linguistics must always also provoke a kind of self-critical thinking for individual philological disciplines. The remaining field harbors provocative forces.

The essential argument I want to put up for discussion here is that linguistics, in particular, has come of age, has already achieved essential scholarly achievements and has meanwhile become a LATE LINGUISTICS or at least is transitioning into that direction. Linguistics is not a young, curious discipline, rather it constitutes a mature, widely researched disciplinary order. For linguistics, therefore, there is no secure and independent *post-*, but rather a state of belated late existence, which is also characterized by an ideological entanglement in coloniality. Accordingly, Anne Storch (2016) shows how colonial language ideologies functioned as a structuring mechanism of the linguistic descriptive apparatus of African languages. Linguistics can therefore not claim an *ex post* status when participating in a postcolonial discussion. On the contrary, linguistics, in the sense of a colonial autobiography, should ask itself in which phase of its own history it finds itself today. This also presents an opportunity for linguistics to enter the postcolonial discussion of disciplines as a result of the quasi autobiographical reflection.

Giving linguistics a voice in the growing social interest in colonialism is also a political project. As Grütters & Müntefering (2018), for example, emphasize with reference in particular to questions of the provenance of museum objects and a discussion of the restitution of cultural artifacts as well as the transparent history of the origin of museum objects: 'The debate on the historical reappraisal of the colonial past must ultimately go beyond the museums; it must go further than the discussions in the German *feuilletons*' (2018, my translation). Grütters & Müntefering are also concerned with strengthening a necessary international cooperation in dialogue, without Eurocentric dominance, and with the knowledge and awareness of the colonial past of Germany and Europe. In linguistics—especially in Germany—much work has yet to be done. The same applies to the statement:

‘In fact, the memory of German and European colonial history confronts us with enormous historical, moral, and political challenges’ (2018). The cultural-political framework of a current engagement with questions of colonialism is thus clearly established.

Emmanuel Macron’s vision of a future cooperation with Africa, which he developed in 2017 at the University of Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso, also combines the demand for a critical examination of questions concerning cultural heritage and called-for restitutions (cf. also Sarr & Savoy 2018) with a clear commitment to a responsibility for the colonial past: ‘I am from a generation of French people for whom the crimes of European colonization are indisputable and part of our history’ (Macron 2017, my translation). Citing enslavement and trafficking in human beings as the worst disasters in shared history, the admission of guilt is recognizably grounded in knowledge of and notably picks up on the postcolonial interest in a history of entanglement: ‘We are a generation whose destinies are tangled, whether we like it or not [...]’. (Macron 2017, my translation). Macron, however, does not stop at admitting guilt; this is only one point. Above all, he develops ideas for a participatory, dialogue-based partnership with Africa. In the context of the Francophonie—and this should also be of particular interest to linguists in Germany—the role of the French language is considered to be highly relevant. Now, Calvet (1974:11, see also 216–236) already articulated a harsh critique of the colonial ideology of the Francophonie, calling it ‘last state of French cultural imperialism’. Against this backdrop, we must understand the argument for a pluralization of the Francophonie that can also be construed as a proposal to decolonize linguistic ideology. After all, Macron (2017) criticizes French as an instrument of power and pleads for a plural French that is not *le français de France* ‘the French of France’. Here, the ideology of linguistic diversity goes hand in hand with the call for a future cooperation between France and the African states, where the meta-linguistic argument is one of the anchors of offering dialogue. In a certain sense, linguistics here can occupy the center of transnational dialogue, this is where the discipline addresses the remaining field.

In the spirit of the colonial autobiography of linguistics, let us pursue the question in which phase of its own history linguistics today is confronted with the desideratum of a postcolonial debate. I propose that this is not a subsequent phase—this is not about a *post-*, but a late phase. Linguistics is late in dealing with colonialism because it has become old itself, it is in a state of late linguistics. This also applies to German linguistics. In the sense of our biographical work, I would like to encourage us to look at our own aging and consider our discipline an old one. Only in this way it will be possible for us to also take up the political debates of the present and place postcolonial linguistics at the center of our disciplinary attention. This is not a matter of evaluation but of the modalities of scholarly practice and self-knowledge.

3. PARTICULARS, OR LATE LINGUISTICS. Linguistics as a disciplinary formation of northern science is at least 200 years old. An important reference point arguably is Wilhelm von Humboldt’s lecture *Ueber das Vergleichende Sprachstudium in Beziehung auf die verschiedenen Epochen der Sprachentwicklung* ‘On comparative language studies in relation to the different epochs of language development’, held on 29 June 1820, which can be regarded as a founding document of general linguistics. But my question about the

age of linguistics is not so much concerned with years as with an understanding of an advanced disciplinary development that makes it seem plausible to me to speak of late linguistics. Late linguistics in my understanding is a term referring to an epoch of the phases of linguistics. The intention of using this term is to analyze the current state of linguistics. This linguistics is LATE because of its century-old tradition on the one hand, but especially because of its epistemic order on the other, which I would like to describe in the following.

What is *late*, belated, is surrounded by a peculiar aura: We can think of the LATE WORK of an artist, of LATE ANTIQUITY, of LATE MODERNITY. What they have in common is that they are surrounded by the nimbus of skill and meaning and perhaps also of mannerism, because traces of fragmentation, the decay of dignified achievements, and an incipient or unstoppable ruin in the practices of the productive and ever-same cannot be overlooked. Against this background, determining late linguistics turns out to be difficult. We need to think about a method that fulfills two conditions: on the one hand, it should contrast positions in the field with individual experiences and, on the other, take into consideration interdisciplinary positions with respect to the history of the field. Thinking about the age of a discipline presupposes an individual assessment of one's position just as it should consider relationships between positions. In other words, I am interested in transdisciplinary genealogies that I try to develop diachronically—from my own position. It should be noted here, however, that the project of a linguistic autobiography and a genealogy are not identical and in this respect, an argumentative tension emerges. While autobiography presupposes a continuity of an experiencing and writing agent, this is precisely not the case for genealogy, at least not in an obvious way. I am thus interested in two aspects: a self-analysis in which I see myself and the discipline as part of a disciplinary order whose colonial biography is yet to be written. And at the same time I also see myself as an analytical agent in academic work who critically examines the power structures inherent in linguistics. In this respect, autobiography and genealogy stand in a methodological contradiction in this text that I do not resolve. A third point should be added: I would like to address particular occurrences of positions in the history of the field. The point is by no means to capture the big picture, but to follow a small trace that leads to the remaining field. It is not the great pattern in the colonial autobiography of linguistics that we should seek, but the scattered coincidences, not least in the analogies of interdisciplinarity, which have much to tell us when it comes to scholarly self-location. Just as the report of old relatives, if restricted to major stages in life, remains interchangeable, but can be experienced up close with reference to small memories. In the project of a transdisciplinary genealogy of linguistics, it is always me who contrasts statements and experiences. Other actors would certainly arrive at different conclusions.

I call this practice of autobiography work, which should be an important part of postcolonial linguistics, a PARTICULAR GENEALOGY OF LINGUISTICS. By genealogy I mean a history of discourse-bound, i.e. power- and position-dependent claims to truth. I speak of a particular genealogy because I doubt a coherence of disciplinary history. In what linguistics is, many positions play a role, even and especially if some would like to see linguistics fixed as a unified linguistics. This will not happen. Of course, this also means

that I cannot speak of ONE linguistics myself, but rather rely on my disciplinary experience, which some share, but some do not, and which is always shifting. In any case, as a subject of my own discipline, I cannot exclude myself from this biographical work. Statements that I find are thus always understandable for me against the background of my own experiences. There is therefore no Archimedean point of linguistics from which the discipline can be absolutely grasped. So this is not a matter of neutrality, but on the contrary, of positions. I can convince myself time and again at conferences that experiences in linguistics can be made in completely different ways. In this respect, speaking of postcolonial linguistics is perhaps just another emblem nailed to a walking stick with which one struts through the discipline. But if there is such a thing as postcolonial linguistics, then it is plural, dependent on experience, and it refuses professional standardization. That is precisely why I am so interested in the particular. It is my methodological conviction that where the colonial autobiography of linguistics is taken into account, the particular should come to the fore. And this also includes particular references and analogies that go beyond linguistics in a narrower sense.

If linguistics is now old in years, then for me it becomes necessary to experiment, as it were, with relating the compound late linguistics to another compound. This may seem like a game, but I understand it as a conscious procedure, part of a movement which Bergson ([1911] 2011:5) calls *les zigzags d'une doctrine* 'the zigzags of a doctrine', and which also opens up a new perspective onto the subject matter of linguistics. I would therefore like to confront late linguistics with LATE CAPITALISM, not least in order to be able to consider the economic ecology of language science. Here I understand capitalism 'not only as an economic system, but also as a social model based on the pursuit of profit and the multiplication of resources used for this purpose through the production, purchase and sale of goods' (Leidinger 2008:20, my translation).

A first parallel between linguistics and capitalism can already be seen in the fact that both found their essential manifestations in the nineteenth century, manifestations which continue to have an effect to the present day. The relationship between capital and language is radicalized in the current '*economy of expression*'—in contrast to an '*economy of attention*'—as Kaplan (2014:60–61, original emphasis) explains the power of algorithms in the concept of LINGUISTIC CAPITALISM.

Let us think these analogies between linguistics and capitalism further. Let us try to use essential characteristics of late capitalism as a contrasting foil to reflect on a phase of the disciplinary development of linguistics that may have already occurred—in the sense of the contrast of statements and experiences as outlined above.

The discussion about late capitalism is not new. Theodor W. Adorno (1969) speaks about SPÄTKAPITALISMUS 'late capitalism' and INDUSTRIEGESELLSCHAFT 'industrial society' in his introductory lecture to the *16. Deutschen Soziologentag* in Frankfurt am Main in 1968. Jürgen Habermas deals with the problems of legitimation in late capitalism in 1973. However, I would like to go back further, to Werner Sombart (1863–1941). His main work of three-volumes (cf. Prisching 2017:79) bears the title *Der moderne Kapitalismus* 'Modern Capitalism' and develops a model of phases of capitalism. Sombart treats and coins the terms FRÜHKAPITALISMUS 'early capitalism', HOCHKAPITALISMUS 'high capitalism' and SPÄTKAPITALISMUS 'late capitalism' (cf. Sombart 1927a:XI, original

emphasis), late capitalism being a *bureaukratisierter Kapitalismus* ‘bureaucrathic capitalism’ (Sombart 1927b:806). Sombart (1927b:747) also speaks of *Alterserscheinungen des Kapitalismus* ‘age signs of capitalism’. With the outbreak of World War I, [sei] *das Zeitalter des Hochkapitalismus plötzlich zu Ende gegangen* ‘the age of high capitalism has suddenly come to an end’, signs of aging are obvious: *der erste ausfallende Zahn, der erste Ansatz zum Embonpoint, das erste graue Haar* ‘the first falling tooth, the first approach to the embonpoint, the first grey hair’ (Sombart 1927a:XII, original emphasis). For Sombart, one characteristic of the entry of the late phase of capitalism is the *organisatorische Denken* ‘organizational thinking’: *wo die Grundsätze normativer Ordnung anfangen, bestimmenden Einfluß zu gewinnen, schwindet der Kapitalismus langsam dahin* ‘where the principles of normative order begin to gain decisive influence, capitalism is slowly dwindling away’ (Sombart 1927a:XIII).

Now, this thought is of interest to me particularly with reference to analogy formation. Because linguistics has long since arrived in a state in which the question what linguistics should be has become a dominant organizational principle of the discipline. There is an implicit and extremely effective self-understanding of linguistics, which normatively only accepts as linguistics that which aims towards a structure- or system-fixed abstraction of linguistic usage. Notably, this is connected to the privileging of grammar in linguistics. Linguistics in this respect is a highly normative discipline that produces manifold varieties of OTHER linguistics, so-called hyphen-linguistics—this is also often used as a counter-argument, but these varieties have their place only because they represent deviations from the principles of normative order of linguistics—to wildly transfer Sombart’s formulation here. One characteristic is that these other linguistics function as hyphenated linguistics. Postcolonial linguistics could also be understood as yet another one of these deviations. And here I can already hear the question in the room, which every linguist knows: Is that even linguistics? This question, asked over and over again, not least in reviews and the context of research funding, it is the clearest evidence of the victory of the normative order in linguistics over the interest in language in Bergson’s ZIGZAG of intuitions. This is something we can observe in a cool and anger-free manner. The principles of normative order characterize linguistics like perhaps no other field in the humanities. Mind you, this is quite productive, especially since they cannot detain an interest in language in a broad sense. At the edges of the standard there is great variety and color. But the more heterogeneous this periphery becomes, the more normative the center gets, it seems to me. Sometimes you would want to suspect that is going to work its way into the hexis. It is in this situation, in this late phase of the disciplinary development of linguistics, that the opening up to colonialism in the sense of postcolonial linguistics takes place.

It is productive to think this further and to continue drawing the analogy between late capitalism and late linguistics. Werner Sombart presents the concept of late capitalism in condensed form in a lecture at the conference of the Verein für Sozialpolitik in Zurich on 13 September 1928. The title of his lecture is *Die Wandlungen des Kapitalismus* ‘Transformations of Capitalism’. In this lecture, Sombart discusses three characteristics of a transformed capitalism: *territoriale Verbreitung, Gestaltwandlungen and Bereichswandlungen* ‘Territorial expansion, changes in form and changes in sectors’

(Sombart 1928:244). On the last page of the text (Sombart 1928:256), Sombart highlights the term late capitalism once again. Let us take a closer look at these three characteristics in my proposed experiment of creating an analogy.

A. TERRITORIAL EXPANSION. According to Sombart (1928:245), it can be assumed that capitalism, which he regards as destructive, will spread to Asia and Africa as YOUNG CAPITALISM. However, an active interest of old capitalist Western Europe and the United States in it is clearly held back by a lack of capital. The importance that the old capitalist countries once had in the construction of capitalism is thus dwindling in the course of its territorial expansion, says Sombart. The productivity of old-capitalist labor is also declining, but, conversely, young capitalism will influence the old-capitalist countries (Sombart 1928:246).

If we transfer this thought to the argument that we find ourselves in a transitional state or already in the phase of late linguistics, then clear parallels can be discerned here. In the course of a global distribution of knowledge, it can be assumed, not least against the backdrop of postcolonial conditions, that the export of old linguistic ideas from the Euro-American think tanks of linguistics is decreasing and marked by dwindling originality. A clear sign for this phenomenon is the insistence of the discipline on established terrains as core areas of linguistics, of which one would sometimes want to assume that they have been researched to exhaustion; grammar is one of them. In addition, in the course of digitization there is a shift in linguistic competence to the domains of the owners of algorithms, who thus also own language to a large extent. Linguistics thereby loses its autonomy. The example of postcolonial linguistics in particular now shows in two respects that the diagnosis of late linguistics is important for an understanding of the tasks of postcolonial linguistics. On the one hand, the belated entry of linguistics into the postcolonial debate is already an unmistakable sign of declining productivity and of a tendency towards an auto-reflective redundancy of content with a dwindling pace of renewal (cf. Sombart 1928:248). On the other hand, in the course of postcolonial provincialization (cf. Chakrabarty 2000), Euro-American scientific models can also be expected to see a decline in the export of old linguistic ideas (cf. Sombart 1928:247); this probably also applies to the theoretical and empirical products of linguistics. Thus, if the twentieth century, as the great linguistic century, as the phase of the HEYDAY OF LINGUISTICS, is characterized by an enormous expansion of ideas and productivity of conceptual work on language, which has ultimately even lead to an interdisciplinary LINGUISTIC TURN, then this dynamic is markedly decreasing in my opinion; the field tends towards repetition. At the same time, linguistics has also become more polyphonic, and at the major international conferences it is no longer just Euro-American linguistics that speaks. Productive ideas take place at the margins of the discipline. I do not want to go so far as to speak of a dwindling significance of core linguistics—on the contrary, this core is obviously strengthened again and again by turns on the sidelines—but of a fundamentally changed scenario that marks a new phase. It is precisely in this phase that postcolonial linguistics gets established, and we should not overlook this. Therefore, let us reckon with a global interweaving of voices and a disappearing of Euro-American voice in linguistics, and let us be open to this thought.

B. CHANGES IN FORM. Another feature of late capitalism is *GESTALTWANDLUNG*, the transformation of form (Sombart 1928:248). Especially with regard to this concept, Sombart's text can be read as a key text (cf. Spieß 2013) for the understanding of the state of linguistics today. Such analogies can certainly also be established in other disciplines. As a linguist, I focus on the case of linguistics, especially since we are dealing here with questions of the future direction of postcolonial linguistics. Sombart (1928:248) distinguishes between two forms of change in capitalism: what he calls a transformation of the outer form and one within its inner being. Sombart's observations and arguments are strikingly timely with regard to external changes. The outward appearance of capitalism is bundled in the context of the centralization of capital, the concentration of businesses, the formation of cartels and corporations, and the emergence of large individual enterprises (Sombart 1928:248). In this context, a new feudality emerges as a system of dependencies and a *Plutokratie und ‚Finanzokratie‘* 'plutocracy and "financeocracy"' (Sombart 1928:248–249). This describes the current state of linguistics very accurately, at least in Germany: collaborative research projects, research groups, research priority programs, research training groups, collaborative research centers, and individual projects funded through third-party funding are the gold standard of linguistics. This is what is asked for and must be reported on. The yardstick of linguistic success is nothing more than a plutocracy in the humanities. The conditions of knowledge production can certainly be described as feudal, because they are characterized by capital-bound dependencies.

The transformations that Sombart (1928:249) calls transformations of the inner structure and which he distinguishes according to economic convictions, aspects of order, and associated processes are no less interesting in the project of analogy formation for an understanding of the late phase of linguistics. As far as the so-called economic outlook is concerned, Sombart (1928:249) first of all notes a "*Durchrationalisierung*" *des kapitalistischen Geistes* "total rationalization" of the capitalist spirit'. Necessary knowledge about the circumstances of actions increases significantly and the entrepreneur is inclined to build the enterprise on a system of knowledge. (Sombart 1928:249). Interestingly, Sombart here also speaks of the *INTUITIVE*, which is, however, diminished in view of these knowable circumstances of actions. That seems to me a very precise formula also for what characterizes today's linguistics at its core. A system of systematic description that has developed precise ideas about what one needs to know in order to participate in the linguistic production of a systematic concept of language; I refer here once again to Bergson ([1911] 2011), who impressively treats and absolutely appreciates the significance of intuition, certainly for philosophy. One of my experiences is that young linguists do not dare to trust their intuitions, an impulse of thinking that kindles dynamics of theory formation, and to write an innovative, border-crossing text, but instead to restrain themselves and submit to an internalized norm; this even extends to the formulation of titles of linguistic publications. Sombart describes the type of entrepreneur in this late phase of capitalism very aptly, and as linguists of late linguistics, we can also recognize ourselves in it: '*Der Chef einer solchen Unternehmung bekommt den Charakter eines – meinerwegen genialen – Finanzministers, er erhält die Prägung eines Beamten, der sich im Bereiche eines außer ihm gesetzten Systems von Tatsachen zu bewegen hat.*' 'The head

of such a company is given the character of a finance minister—an ingenious one for my sake, he receives the imprint of a civil servant who has to move within the scope of a system of facts established outside of his control.’ (Sombart 1928:249). Who is not reminded of the budgeting of research and the associated reporting system; here, too, Sombart (1928:249) has long since conceived of the matching counterpart: *Budgetierung der Wirtschaft* ‘budgeting of the economy’. It seems as if linguistics, as perhaps the humanities in general, are moving along a clearly predetermined path of a logic of economic development. What I find particularly interesting about this is Sombart’s (1928:250) observation or thesis that, among other things, it reduces audacity. This is an excellent diagnosis also for late linguistics. And coming back to postcolonial linguistics, I presume some in the discipline would consider it too exotic—I consciously use this colonial expression. Why else would they not have dealt with it extensively in concert with the other humanities long ago, why is there no large collaborative research funding scheme in Germany? Linguistics is a conservative discipline that is characterized not least by anxiety. Daring here is not considered a recipe for success, even if there are many daring colleagues, and I feel connected to these colleagues intellectually. However, I am talking about disciplining a discipline and not about people. To pursue postcolonial linguistics in times of late linguistics, therefore, should not mean, in the logics of centralization, plutocracy, and the rationalized avoidance of linguistic daring, to set up a program that tells us again and again, above all, the history of a Euro-American discipline that has failed to care about colonialism for a long time. When we say that postcolonial linguistics is also about autobiographical work, this means that postcolonial linguistics should be a program of emancipation from features of late linguistics. In more specific terms, the aim in postcolonial linguistics should be to establish other formats of scientific exchange which are characterized by what Paul Gilroy (2005:xv) calls CONVIVIALITY:

‘I use this to refer to the processes of cohabitation and interaction that have made multiculturalism an ordinary feature of social life in Britain’s urban areas and in postcolonial cities elsewhere. [...] The radical openness that brings conviviality alive makes a nonsense of closed, fixed, and reified identity and turns attention toward the always unpredictable mechanisms of identification.’

Postcolonial linguistics is also about a social project of sociability and cheerfulness in which attention (cf. Kaplan 2014:60–61) is an ethical program.

When Sombart (1928:250) talks about the order of late capitalism, he is interested in the fact that a *freie individualistische Ordnung* ‘free individualistic order’ gives way to a *System der Selbstbindung* ‘system of self-commitment’, not least within the framework of bureaucratization. This reads like Michel Foucault (1926–1984) *avant la lettre*; it is about the power of discourse, whose dispositive power becomes dominant. Robert Niemann (in print) has recently addressed the entrepreneurial scholarly subject, highlighting that the current academic subject is less a creator of critical knowledge than a strategic self-manager. With Niemann one can also say that the issues at stake here are those of SUBJECTIVATION and GOVERNMENTALITY in Foucault’s sense. There is much to be said in linguistics about the system of self-commitment associated with such concerns: above all, where this system seems internalized, where young researchers think about how they can

pay tribute to grammar, where they can integrate remote topics in which, actually, they are acutely and intuitively interested, with secure instruments so that they do not become suspect of individualism. Also where older scholars have done so in the past. Such linguistics produces a system of paralysis. And I consider it a realistic danger that the program of postcolonial linguistics also internalizes a self-commitment to the parameters of late linguistics. Even a glance at introductory textbooks to linguistics tells us a great deal about this system. One should only look at what is covered at the beginning, in the first chapters of such introductions, and how, in a structure of increasing distance from the linguistic center, this and that is added in the peripheries. Postcolonial linguistics should not pose here as the addendum of the addendum, but pursue a different centering of questions. Otherwise, it has not understood its own autobiography. Not least, Sombart also looks at the process of economic life in late capitalism. I let a quotation speak for itself here, a quote that is not only close to my biographical thinking, but that everyone may also translate into their own experiences as linguists: 'Im ganzen läßt sich hier sagen, daß, wo früher ein natürlicher Ablauf war, sich heute ein System künstlicher Eingriffe einstellt. Das bewegliche System ist durch das starre System abgelöst'. 'All in all, it can be said here that, where there used to be a natural process, today a system of artificial interventions is emerging. The movable system has been replaced by the rigid system.' (Sombart 1928:251). That this agile system in linguistics may not have ever functioned beyond colonial ideologies, however, should be remembered in the process of building complexity.

C. CHANGES IN SECTORS. Finally, Werner Sombart addresses the question of whether capitalism will displace or be displaced by other economic forms. The starting point for these considerations is the assumption that other economic forms will coexist alongside capitalism (Sombart 1928:253). Sombart is thinking here of pre-capitalist economic forms such as handicraft trades, but also of post-capitalist economic forms such as cooperative economies. Sombart's (1928:254) diagnosis is clear: *Für den Kapitalismus in den alten Ländern wird sich also neues Betätigungsfeld nicht mehr öffnen* 'For capitalism in the old countries, therefore, new fields of activity will no longer open up.' However, it can be expected that a trace of capitalism will reach into the future. Sombart (1928:254) calls this trace ÖKONOMISCHE[N] RATIONALISMUS 'economic rationalism', which first came into the world with capitalism. This he associates with *Entseelung* 'the discarding of the soul' and a *Primat der Wirtschaft* 'primacy of the economy' (Sombart 1928:255). Sombart's elaborations are particularly worthwhile reading here, and if one wants to assure oneself of the author's ethical attitude, reading these thoughts is highly recommendable. In the conclusion, Sombart (1928:255) speaks of the curse of economic rationalism.

Here, too, parallels to late linguistics ultimately become apparent. For the purpose of analogical thinking, I would like to refer these to pre-linguistic and post-linguistic concepts of language. Linguistics does not own language. People have been thinking about language for a long time. Thus, before the emergence of linguistics as an academic discipline, language-philosophical thinking should be mentioned, but also ideas about language beyond conceptual rationalization, for example in *sinnbildlichen bzw. metaphorischen Redeweisen über Sprache im Kontrast zu den begrifflichen* 'symbolic or metaphorical

ways of speaking about language in contrast to the conceptual' (Köller 2012:1) and, to say it in the words of Anne Storch (2016:156), what is particularly important in contexts of postcolonial discussions, *[d]ass Sprache anders konzeptualisiert werden kann, als dies in westlichen Gesellschaften der Fall ist* 'that language can be conceptualized differently than is the case in Western societies' These conceptualization exist alongside linguistics; notably, it must be expected that laypersons will also have views on language that should not be overlooked (cf. Antos 1996). Also worth mentioning are guides, for example on academic writing, some of which are part of the tradition of language advice books (cf. Niemann in print). This is the one side to which linguistics opens up to questions regarding the competence in thinking about language. Over the last decades, the other side has developed new areas of research in interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary dialogue which only permit a clear demarcation of concerns and responsibilities of linguistics at the cost of a narrow limitation of its responsibilities. In other words, linguistics does not stand alone; its claim to be responsible for language is flanked at least by these two sides. Postcolonial linguistics, in particular, cannot ignore this, because it must also learn to listen to others in the course of observing the history of global entanglements. Linguistic rationalism will not be the only language in speaking about, and above all in listening to, language.

I think we can learn from Sombart here, too. Postcolonial linguistics in the phase of late linguistics means recognizing the procedures and results of dominant forms of linguistics. One example would be the enormous rise of corpus linguistics facilitated in the framework of digitization, considering alternatives in thinking about language as possible options, as well as recognizing changes in the responsibilities for language in the most diverse domains of human thought, such as poetic work. After all, a novel like Tomer Gardi's *Broken German* from 2016 of course says a lot about language in a postcolonial world, and not necessarily any less than corpus linguistics would be capable of saying. We should perhaps also take up Sombart's idea of the discarding of the soul here. Postcolonial linguistics should be an open form of linguistics, which again places the *economy of expression* (Kaplan 2014:60–61, original emphasis), also celebrated in linguistics, much closer alongside talking and sounding and also listening:

'Sprache in der kolonialzeitlich gegründeten und ruinös nichtenden, fixierungsfixierten Linguistik ist fast nie das Reden und Erklären und schon gar nicht das Schweigen im Reden und Zuhören, sondern eben fast immer etwas, das festgeschrieben gehört (der Standard, die Orthographie, das Korpus) und nicht gerade zu intellektueller Beweglichkeit einladender Modelle bedarf, die das, was man halt so eigentlich tut, wenn man spricht, wegerklären (Standardisierung, Ausgleich, Sprachkontakt, code-switching, Superdiversität).' (Storch & Warnke forthcoming)

'Language in linguistics founded in colonial times and ruinously failing in its fixation to fix is almost never speaking and ringing, and certainly not keeping silent in speaking and listening, but almost always something that must be written down and fixed (the standard, the orthography, the corpus) and does not exactly require models inviting intellectual mobility that explain away what one actually does when speaking (standardization, balance, language

contact, code-switching, super diversity).’

I would therefore like to propose to develop postcolonial linguistics as a linguistics of listening and not of explaining. Scholars will have to grasp and learn what this means in practical terms, and for this they need to find adequate practices and languages. I am afraid, however, that the language of linguistic rationalism is unsuitable for such a task.

The attempt to conceptualize the phase in which linguistics is increasingly concerned with postcolonial objects indeed leads me to the diagnosis that this takes place in late linguistics. And this assessment prompts some considerations that are both a warning and desire for a further development of postcolonial linguistics. Certainly one can also argue about the term late linguistics, and here too, Sombart (1928:256) contributes a wise comment with regard to late capitalism:

‘Ich weiß freilich, wie groß die Abneigung gerade in den Kollegenkreisen ist, fremde Terminologien zu akzeptieren, wie Max Weber es einmal ausgedrückt hat: »als ob es sich um die Benützung fremder Zahnbürsten handelte«. Immerhin ist mit der Möglichkeit zu rechnen, daß andere Ausdrücke sich eher durchsetzen. Aber worauf es vor allem ankommt, ist ja nicht der Name, sondern die Sache [...].’

‘Of course, I know how great the reluctance is among colleagues to accept foreign terminologies, as Max Weber once put it: ‘as if it were the use of other people’s toothbrushes.’ After all, the possibility is to be reckoned with that other expressions rather prevail. But what matters most is not the name, but the thing [...].

Other people’s toothbrush that we have used opens up a view of linguistics in a state in which we can EXPECT Euro-American linguistics to be put into perspective, a linguistics which bears the traits of feudal rationalization and dissolves, or rather secures, itself at the edges. Postcolonial linguistics is either part of this late linguistics or undermines it. It must decide whether it wants to be part of the FRANTIC HUMANITIES, rushing from conference to conference, from keynote to keynote, from excellent programs to much-quoted publications, leaving a considerable ecological and psychological footprint. It must decide whether it wants to conduct BINGE RESEARCH, largely exhausted—in the double sense of the word—in an ‘*economy of expression*’ (Kaplan 2014:60–61, original emphasis). Living in Late Linguistics.

4. FROM THE ABYSSES NEVERTHELESS TO A SMALL PANORAMA. Those who will be startled by the realization that in linguistics things seem to have moved a long way and that we encounter an old discipline should be reminded that age is a relative matter. In its youth, linguistics was by no means the fastest, perhaps even then showing signs of age. At least in its prominent articulations. Jürgen Trabant corroborates this when he shows accordingly that Wilhelm von Humboldt’s program of a comparative language studies had come too late since linguistics had already taken a different direction, ultimately even an *antiphilosophischen naturwissenschaftlichen Weg abseits von Philologie und Literatur* ‘antiphilosophical scientific path apart from philology and literature’ (Trabant 1990:59).

Thus—without wanting to appear presumptuous in comparison, much rather self-critical—it may also be possible that the program of postcolonial linguistics comes too late and, moreover, is completely unsuitable as a rejuvenating cure. The discipline that has grown old could prove to be too unwieldy and bad-tempered. At the same time, we are talking about the edges of the field where things change. Here, at the edges, perhaps, a panorama of future linguistic practice is opening up, which may have quite a bit to do with Humboldt's explosions of ideas and with the *Vermählung von Philologie und Sprachwissenschaft, die darüber hinaus auch noch notwendigerweise auf eine hermeneutische schöpferische Tätigkeit des Forschers hinausläuft* 'the marriage of philology and linguistics, which also necessarily leads to a hermeneutic creative activity on the part of the researcher' (Trabant 1990:59, original emphasis). In other words: no isolation of linguistics on the insides of late-linguistic buildings with a brutalistic aura.

Starting from a sound as an image for an intuition in thinking about the colonial autobiography of linguistics may be an unusual procedure. In this way, however, we can sense that the experiences of scientific subjects can be regarded as conditions of research and that this must be taken into account in postcolonial linguistics. Linguistics, after all, does not stand outside of the colonial and neo-colonial apparatus. One's own positions bound to experience and initiating a movement of interest and thought, they must stand at the onset of postcolonial linguistics. All of us have to question ourselves.

Pursuing postcolonial linguistics therefore also means to not simply take up concepts such as persistence, epistemology or entanglement, but rather to be prepared for radically breaking with the colonial world in linguistics as well. Postcolonial studies are an important point of reference here. Within the framework of disciplinary biographical work, however, it is also important to recognize the place of the appearance of postcolonial interests in linguistics. As we have seen, linguistics has become an old subject, and postcolonial linguistics in this respect is part of late linguistics. Practices in this field will show whether postcolonial linguistics, by radically opening itself to other fields and people in the spirit of conviviality, can contribute to the emergence of another linguistics. There is a tremendous amount of work to do, as the programmatic text by Dewein and colleagues (2012) already shows, to which I also refer when it comes to questions of the implementation of my considerations. Epifania Akosua Amoo-Adares' concept (in print) (UN)THINKING SCIENCE, for example, shows into which kind of resonance space postcolonial linguistics can enter.

And while I'm finishing my work on this text, I have not heard Gesualdo for a while. Right now, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, KV 271, II. Andante, bar ninety-six to one hundred, is playing in rather old European style. By the way, documenta11 provided me with the first postcolonial impulse and thus sustainably ignited my intuitive interest. I have just learned that the former director of this epoch-making exhibition, Okwui Enwezor, died today at the age of 55.

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smilingly, as if it were a crazy idea. This thought has not let go of me since then and found its way in Bergson's zigzag. I would also like to thank Anne Storch and Ana Deumert, who gave me the opportunity to reflect on the colonial autobiography of linguistics at the *20th International Congress of Linguists* in Cape Town in 2018. Even though I talked about another topic, the search for my own professional autobiography became part of the ZIGZAG that led to this paper. Anne Storch in particular should be thanked for opening up linguistics, which makes life bearable in The Late, and which shows what convivial linguistics can be; one of the most important voices for me in the ZIGZAG of what I call linguistics. I thank Carsten Levisen for his thorough reading and his many priceless suggestions. My special thanks go to Bruno Arich-Gerz for a detailed engagement with my work, for extremely valuable suggestions, and also for what he calls *responses* and *stray complementary ideas*, which have taken my reflections further, not least away from me into a space of resonance in which I like to see the text extend further. Finally, I extend my thanks for a WhatsApp communication to my highly esteemed colleague Massimo Salgaro from the University of Verona, who made the old-sounding Italian vocabulary of Carlo Gesualdo even easier to understand. With her keen eye, Hiltrud Lauer has significantly supported the creation of this text. Finally, I would like to thank Carsten Junker once again for the fact that as a Germanist I can speak to the wide world of academic English—and for much more.

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