

Editorial

Misogyny. Between music, internet, Church and politics

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The term misogyny, which comes from ancient Greek, can be more accurately translated as hatred of women. Misogyny describes the assumption of an ontological inferiority of women, as expressed since antiquity in various writings in philosophy and literature, but ultimately also in Christian beliefs, witch hunts and scientific treatises. Although the term denotes something very specific—the devaluation of women—it has also been used for many years more generally as a devaluation or structural disadvantage of femininity. Misogyny is often understood and studied as a supra-historical and cross-cultural phenomenon. However, misogyny must be distinguished analytically from other related terms, such as sexism, antifeminism or antigenderism. For example, “antifeminism” should only be understood here as misogyny that is to be seen directly as a reaction to the women’s movement, as a resistance to its real or supposed goals, and is not directly based on misogyny. In reality, however, the phenomena cannot be so clearly demarcated: for example, a misogynist attitude is often the precondition for or is expressed in antifeminist actions (Schmincke, 2018).

Music and the Internet

I would like to illustrate how misogyny is expressed on the internet and in music today with two examples: The #aufschrei debate on Twitter and the German rap group “187 Straßenbande”.

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The Internet is a new medium for networking and has, of course, long been used by various political movements and groups. For example, an anti-sexist hashtag called #aufschrei first appeared in January 2013 under the message "(W)ir sollten diese erfahrungen unter einem hashtag sammeln. ich schlage #aufschrei vor" ("We should collect these experiences under one hashtag. I suggest #aufschrei."). It preceded the hashtags #metoo and #everydaysexism, which are better known in the Anglo-American world, and triggered a controversial debate about misogyny in Germany. Only the day after the first message, 38,387 tweets were responded to and in the first four days of the campaign, 16,664 different people tweeted under the hashtag #aufschrei (Drüeke & Klaus, 2014). At first, the content focused on describing women's own experiences of everyday sexism in different areas of life and work, which highlighted the large role that misogyny and experiences of violence play in the daily lives of many women. Later, the debate moved away from individual experiences to a broad societal debate and critique of misogyny. However, the critique of patriarchal structures and heteronormative patterns, which reached a wider audience through #aufschrei, also called many opposing positions to the stage. Anti-feminist and masculinist positions are not a new phenomenon; however, they have found new forms of dissemination and networking through the Internet, where the dominance of elitist actors, far-right and anti-feminist tendencies as well as social inequalities are reinforced and expressed in increasingly extreme statements and insults (Drüeke & Klaus, 2014).

Thus, on Twitter, with #gegenschrei and #tittenbonus, not only sexist hashtags were launched as a direct reaction, but also numerous anti-feminist and sexist tweets in the #aufschrei itself. Since the turn of the millennium, masculinist online networks and subcultures have formed, such as the "Incel movement" or the "WikiMANNia", which was launched in 2009 as a "knowledge database on the disadvantages of boys and men" (Drüeke & Klaus, 2014). Nearly 50 misogynistic homicides are now associated with the violent Incel movement and "WikiMANNia" sees itself as an "antithesis of feminist victimhood and hate ideology", and is also considered misogynistic (Tomkinson et al., 2020). There are now 5,836 articles on "WikiMANNia" (1) and the homepage of already had 556,716 clicks in 2016 (2) and is thus the most visited page of the anti-feminist men's rights movement (Rosenbrock, 2012).

(1) Wikiamannia [Hrsg.]: Homepage: <http://www.wikiamannia.org/WikiMANNia>, Abruf: 12.02.2022.

(2) Wikiamannia [Hrsg.]: Homepage: <http://www.wikiamannia.org/WikiMANNia:Zugriffszahlen-Statistik>, Apruf: 12.02.2022.

The examples show that anti-sexist and feminist contents are fiercely contested in the public process of self-understanding. In the public sphere of the Internet, the poles of the social lines of conflict become evident: On the one hand, articulations of feminist protest become visible, on the other, these are directly opposed to anti-feminist and sexist contents.

However, misogyny in Germany is also repeatedly expressed in music, especially in the rap genre. The male-dominated German rap that has been making inroads in recent years is in many cases homophobic and/or misogynistic. The Hamburg-based hip-hop group 187 Strassenbande, founded in 2006, has been conquering the German music market since 2014 and has been charting for months in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. The vocalist, "Bonez MC" (real name Johann Lorenz Moser), is followed by 2.7 million people on his Instagram profile, where he regularly posts misogynistic statements, 3.4. It should be noted that most of his subscribers are under the age of 30 and many are underage. He is a role model for many teenagers in German-speaking countries and his sexist statements are influencing an entire generation. Those who do not follow him on social media hear the misogynistic lyrics of his "187 Strassenbande" on the radio and in every second car in major cities. They actively insult women, portray them as sex objects and glorify sexist violence against women and other population groups. Without having to name specific examples of lyrics, misogyny and sexism have been finding expression in "gangsta rap" for years. The mostly male rappers try to distinguish themselves as true male types through their lyrics and thus use stereotypical gender roles. An integral part of this is the humiliation of the opposite sex, which can have serious consequences in society. While, for example, the "187 Strassenbande" are regularly awarded for their musical successes, the impression is growing, especially among the younger generation, that the stars reflect a desirable lifestyle and that their lyrics are therefore generally acceptable. The general establishment of songs with radical lyrics on radio, advertising and in social networks also promotes the general acceptance of radical statements and the establishment of misogynistic thoughts and also deeds in society (Drüeke & Klaus, 2014).

(³) Instagram: bonez187erz: https://instagram.com/bonez187erz?utm_medium=copy_link, Abruf: 12.02.2022

(⁴) Laut.de: <https://www.laut.de/News/Bonez-MC-Frauenverachtende-Insta-Story-24-08-2020-17287>, Abruf: 13.02.2022

Anti-gender, the political right and the Church

Rappers also explicitly oppose feminism in their lyrics, leading to a growing aversion to feminism among certain sectors of the population. In 2015, Sabine Hark and Paula-Irene Villa first coined the term “anti-genderism,” which describes anti-feminist, anti-gender, anti-justice, and anti-discrimination agitations both within the political right and certain Christian movements (Strube et al., 2021). In particular, the growth of right-wing populist attitudes and policies aimed at transforming human rights-based democracies into closed illiberal or folkloric societies is described as being significantly accompanied by aggressive attacks on sexual minorities and scientific gender studies. Also described here are the anti-feminist masculinists or “men’s rights movements”, which are again operating virtually, as well as the emergence of a European religious right. It is very interesting that anti-genderism and misogyny within the right-wing spectrum reveal themselves as a strategic means of “self-deprecation” as well as emotionalization in the context of a “politics with fear” (Strube et al., 2021). The “natural gender difference” is misused as a pseudo-democratic stereotype in current right-wing populism. In this context, a growing cooperation between the (Catholic) Church and national populist governments is observed, especially in Eastern Europe, for example with Viktor Orbán in Hungary (Bozóki & Cueva, 2021). The Church bears a large share of responsibility for the misogyny established today in our patriarchal and capitalist society. The insistence on the biological difference between the sexes and the consequent “traditional Christian” image of the family is undoubtedly partly responsible for the oppression of women: “As male and female he created them”. It is precisely these “Christian guiding principles” that are used by the political right to cover up anti-democratic objectives behind the “protection of traditional values or the traditional family” (Strube, 2021).

I believe that right-wing governments and ideologies deliberately focus on misogyny and that this goes hand in hand with the systematic dismantling of the democratic constitutional state. Therefore, for me, the struggle for feminism should be seen more broadly as a struggle for democracy. Changes of a political, socio-economic or technical nature accompanying the transformation to our modern society (e.g. industrialization, urbanization, capitalism, liberalism, democracy) break with traditional structures and values. This gave rise to a tension between freedom and fears, which is expressed today, for example, in debates like #aufschrei on Twitter. The dawn of modernity is accompanied by more freedom for all, but this is synonymous with the loss of certain privileges of dominant population groups. In my opinion, this is exactly where other inhumane views and behaviors such as racism, anti-Semitism or homophobic movements arise: from the fear of losing privileges. But this is exactly what capitalism contributes to, which in my opinion

promotes the oppression of women and a society of elbows. Especially in today's digital and individualized society, misogynistic thinking and ideologies seem to be gaining ground, which concerns me personally. We live in a capitalist system where the goal is profit and not people's needs, and in a patriarchal system where men have more rights, influence and power. Both structures are characterized by a strongly hierarchical form of organization. They require individuals to conform and subordinate themselves. In capitalism, following Marxist argumentation, the working class must subordinate itself to the capitalist class and patriarchy demands the subordination of women. I strongly oppose false role models, capricious prejudice, exploitation and oppression. Feminism is the answer to capitalism. Women's struggle is a class struggle.

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