

// Call for Papers

## SCIENCE, CULTURE, AND POSTCOLONIAL NARRATIVES

// Annual Conference of the German Association for Postcolonial Studies (GAPS)

// University of Oldenburg, 13-15 May 2021

### Confirmed Keynote Speakers:

**Warwick Anderson**, U of Sydney

**Josie Gill**, U of Bristol

**Jaspreet Singh**, author of *Helium*

**Pettina Gappah**, author of *Out of Darkness, Shining Light*

**Graham Huggan**, U of Leeds

**Banu Subramaniam**, U of Massachusetts Amherst

Science is at the heart of some of the most vexing questions facing postcolonial studies today: think, for instance, about the role of science in struggles for environmental justice, in postcolonial responses to the debate about the concept of the Anthropocene, in cultural and political responses to pandemics from HIV/AIDS to the coronavirus, or in the imagination of postcolonial futures in contemporary science fiction. Science – itself a heterogeneous set of concepts, practices, settings, and knowledges – often occupies a profoundly contradictory position in such debates: it may be referenced, all at once, as cause of environmental degradation, but also medium of diagnosis, and as remedy; it is historically connected to histories of colonial oppression but also to the promises of post-independence modernism; it has sometimes been co-opted by parochial nationalism, yet science education also promises improvement and emancipation for marginalized and disenfranchised people.

Since the late 1980s, science and technology studies (STS) have critically interrogated the (self-) image of science as a unified practice – universal, objective, and culturally neutral. From the acrimonious opposition of science and cultural studies during the “science wars” of the 1990s, recent scholarship has moved to more nuanced understandings of the entanglements of science and its cultural contexts. Where early proponents of postcolonial STS concentrated on rehabilitating indigenous knowledge vis-à-vis “Western” science, more recent approaches have questioned this dualistic opposition and instead argued for a critical geography of scientific production.

Yet the cultural imagination of this connection has rarely been made a focus of research. This is true for the incisive research in the social sciences and anthropology on the ambivalent relation of science and postcolonial modernities, as well as for the burgeoning debate about literature and science in literary criticism, which has often retained a focus on European and American texts. While genres such as postcolonial science fiction and Afrofuturism have already been recognized in this context, the range and variety in which the nexus of science and culture is addressed and represented in postcolonial narratives across the anglophone world remains underexplored.

Against this background, the conference seeks to facilitate conversations on science and culture in postcolonial contexts that bring together different disciplinary perspectives such as postcolonial literary scholarship, science and technology studies, literature and science studies, history and philosophy of science, and the environmental humanities. This critical reflection will provide new perspectives on themes and debates such as postcolonial science fiction, the Anthropocene, new materialism, bio-colonialism, and global disparities in scientific mobility. We encourage a broad understanding of ‘postcolonial narratives’ and invite contributions that explore entanglements of science, literature and culture across different genres and media forms, including literature, film and other visual media, and public discourse.

Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- Representations of the role of science in social/political conflicts:
  - Questions of environmental justice
  - The corona-crisis, HIV/AIDS, and other pandemics and public health crises
  - Biotechnology/bioprospecting/biopiracy
  - Nuclear (weapons) technology; nuclear testing, waste, and resource extraction
  - Class/caste conflicts over science education
  - Science, colonialism and neo-colonialism
  - Science, culture, and religion
  - Science and the global economy
- Roles and relations of the sciences and the humanities in the Anthropocene debate
- English as “the language of science”
- Postcolonial and transcultural perspectives on science education
- Science and culture in the EFL-classroom
- Science and nationalist movements
- Colonies as “laboratories of modernity” (Paul Rabinow)
- Narrating knowledge practices in different historical and cultural settings
- Science, narrative, and indigenous knowledges
- Postcolonial perspectives on the “globalization of knowledge”
- Postcolonial technoscience and biopolitics
- Postcolonial perspectives in/on the medical humanities
- Professional and intellectual migration, global disparities of knowledge production
- Scientist characters in postcolonial fiction
- Postcolonial science fiction, Afrofuturism
- Historical fiction, (postcolonial) revisions/rewritings of the history of science

Please submit abstracts to [gaps2021@uni-oldenburg.de](mailto:gaps2021@uni-oldenburg.de) by **December 31, 2020**. For further details, please check the conference website: <https://gaps2021.uol.de/>

Work in progress in anglophone postcolonial studies – including M.A./M.Ed., PhD and Postdoc projects as well as ongoing research projects in general – can be presented in the “**Under Construction**” section of the conference, for which poster presentations are also welcome. Submit abstracts for project presentations to [gaps2021@uni-oldenburg.de](mailto:gaps2021@uni-oldenburg.de) by **March 1, 2021**.

Please note that all speakers except invited guests and students must be members of GAPS. A limited number of **travel bursaries** are available for emerging scholars, part-time or currently unemployed speakers who are, or will become, members of GAPS. If you wish to apply for a travel bursary, please indicate so via e-mail to the conference organizers by March 1, 2021.

### Conference Organizers:

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