

## **CALL FOR PAPERS**

Gesellschaft für Anglophone Postkoloniale Studien / Association for Anglophone Postcolonial Studies  
(GAPS)  
Annual Conference

### **Representing Poverty and Precarity in a Postcolonial World**

May 25 – 27, 2017 - University of Bonn, Germany

#### **CONFIRMED KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:**

**Neil Lazarus (Warwick)**                      **Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor (Nairobi/Stellenbosch)**  
**Maria Eisenmann (Würzburg)**      **E.E. Sule (Lapai)**

Poverty and precarity are among the most pressing social issues of our day. The last fifteen years have seen not only an ever widening gap between rich and poor across the globe as well as an exponential growth in the number of border subjects – refugees, asylum seekers and illegal migrants –, but also a steady growth of fictional and non-fictional representations of disenfranchised groups and individuals. This correlates with an intensification of research into the visual and narrative forms of these representations. For its 2017 conference, GAPS invites panels and individual papers addressing conceptualisations of poverty and precarity and investigating the ethics and aesthetics of representing poverty and precarity across the postcolonial world.

The ‘new poverty studies’ and the ‘turn to precarity’ are firmly embedded in ethical criticism analysing the frameworks of representation that facilitate or disavow the affective and ethical responses to precarious subjects. Originally a concern of social studies and economics, poverty and precarity have increasingly been discussed in literary and cultural studies, as well as in the field of EFL teaching, in recent years. This growing interest may be attributed not only to the mediated awareness of the emergence of new forms of precarity, subalternity and marginality resulting from the effects of neo-liberal capitalism, terror and war, science and technology, environmental degradation and discrimination. It might also be related to a shift in definitions: social scientists such as Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum have linked poverty with social capabilities, arguing that poverty must be understood not “only as (relative) material deprivation, but also as an encompassing socio-cultural exclusion and a lack of agency, opportunities and access (to knowledge, traditions, rights and capabilities)” (Korte and Zipp 2014). Precarity has been conceptualised by Judith Butler (2009) as “that politically induced notion in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death”. Beyond the spectacular, these forms of poverty and precarity include the “slow violence” of economic and environmental exploitation (Nixon 2011), “modes of exhaustion and endurance that are ordinary, chronic, and cruddy rather than catastrophic, crisis-laden, and sublime” which Elizabeth Povinelli (2011) has termed “economies of abandonment”.

While poverty and precarity are global phenomena – even though the most haunting images continue to come from formerly colonised nations –, their representations in Anglophone literatures and other fictional and non-fictional media can be approached by using established frameworks of Postcolonial Studies. Since the representational appropriation of disenfranchised groups with usually limited access to self-representation poses both an ethical and an aesthetic challenge, investigations address the power of and over representation, questions of agency and voice, of authenticity and essentialisms, of marginalisation and subalternity. In this light, the conference might contribute to the current debate about Postcolonial Studies’ engagement not only with the colonial past, but also with the global present and future.

**Contributions may address, but are not limited to, the following thematic areas:**

- the relationship between poverty/precarity and social justice in a postcolonial context
- the intersections between poverty/precarity and age, disability, gender, ethnicity and social class
- the ethics of representing poverty and precarity
- intersections with discourses of ecology/ecocriticism and discourses of globalisation
- intersections between the local and the global in representations of poverty and precarity
- representational practices and devices contesting and/or reifying stereotypical images of poverty and precarity (language, metaphors, images, narrative strategies, aesthetics of the abject)
- spaces and embodiments of poverty and precarity
- new subalternity and subaltern cosmopolitanisms
- potentials and limitations of representing poverty and precarity in different modes and media; the impact of visual and narrative conventions
- the (discursive and material) legacies of the colonial past in the global present
- the production and representation of disenfranchised subjects in academic knowledge
- issues of poverty and precarity and their representation in intercultural learning, foreign language education and educational materials/textbooks.

The conference will also feature a **Teachers’ Workshop** as well as **author readings**. Further information, e.g. on travel bursaries, will be made available on the conference homepage (from October 1, 2016): <http://gaps2017.wordpress.com>

**Abstract submission and participation**

Please send abstracts (300-400 words) of individual papers or panels of three papers together with a bio note by **December 31, 2016**.

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. Please submit abstracts for project presentations (250 words) indicating your chosen format (paper or poster) by **March 1, 2017**.

For special requirements, please contact the organisation team.

**Contact and information: [gaps2017@uni-bonn.de](mailto:gaps2017@uni-bonn.de)**