

Gesellschaft für Anglophone Postkoloniale Studien

Annual Conference:

Ideology in Postcolonial Texts and Contexts

May 14 – 16, 2015

University of Münster

[GAPS is the association formerly known as GNEL/ASNEL]

Arising initially in the context of the French Revolution as a term to refer to the science of ideas (de Tracy 1796), the meaning of *ideology* shifted when Napoleon Bonaparte used it in a political context to verbally abuse his opponents ('ideologues'). Marx and Engels (1840s) likewise employed a critical notion of ideology – as 'false consciousness' – which also proved influential for the Frankfurt School. A further shift was stimulated by Althusser (1970) who emphasised the productive force of ideology as constitutive of the subject and society. More recently, the concept of ideology has itself come under scrutiny from a range of disciplinary locations. This entails not only the notion of 'post-ideology' but also the rejection of post-ideology as a "cynical, sober attitude that advocates liberal 'openness' in the matter of 'opinions'" (Žižek 1994: 15). While meta-critiques of 'ideology as a concept' have thus gained currency, the criticism of specific ideologies remains a powerful analytical approach.

In postcolonial studies, criticisms of both colonial and post-independence ideological formations have played a central role and linked the field to similar theoretical developments in, for example, cultural studies, feminist studies, and Marxist criticism. However, the deconstruction of colonial ideologies and their political and cultural manifestations have also met with criticism from within and outside the discipline, as the ideological foundations of the field itself have come under scrutiny. As Robert Young has remarked: "Is postcolonialism a critique or is it itself an ideology, and if the latter, what are the ideologies of post-colonial writing, whether literary, cultural, or critical/theoretical?" (1998: 5) These key questions are far from settled. Do postcolonial studies deserve to be slighted as an ideology? Can ideology be equally identified in different kinds of writing, from literary to theoretical, and does this delegitimise the truth claims of postcolonial studies? Can postcolonial studies be understood, perhaps, as a counter-ideology?

Contemporary postcolonial studies is a highly diverse field, methodologically as well as in terms of its multiple sub-disciplines, so that the impact of ideology-related thinking has triggered a broad range of inquiries. This conference thus reflects a wide range of approaches, from linguistics via literary and cultural studies to pedagogy and book studies:

- The global spread of English has not only led to the rise of new varieties of English but also to the emergence of new local and global language ideologies, which are in a constant process of renegotiation. Sociolinguists develop theoretical frameworks and analyse national as well as transnational language ideologies, which reflect postcolonial linguistic inequalities. Language ideological studies embrace a wide methodological field, which ranges from theoretical examinations of language ideologies and the elicitation of ideologies from language users to the analysis of societal language use.
- Postcolonial literary and cultural studies have been particularly engaged with the critique of colonial ideology and its continuing effects. Racial hierarchies, the assertion of Western exceptionalism and superiority, and the notions of underdevelopment and development, have been interpreted as false consciousness – albeit in hegemonic form. Literary texts and other cultural mediations continue to be either studied as vehicles of oppression or as tools of resistance and emancipation. While these readings and critiques have not lost their relevance, this conference also encourages its participants to move beyond such binary models – a project that may include understanding postcolonialism itself as ideology, as counter-ideology or, indeed, as post-ideology.

- English Language Teaching (ELT) – itself based within a normative framework inherent in all educational settings – addresses issues of intercultural, transcultural, and global learning and their diverse manifestations. Traditional notions of ‘understanding otherness’ are increasingly called into question in a context that seeks to transcend binary models. The current discourses on culture, identity, and literature in ELT reflect shifting paradigms informed by various ideological perspectives that need to be more comprehensively researched.
- In book studies, the production, distribution, and reception of books are shaped by ideological struggles in a variety of ways. Production concerns the book as a physical (and increasingly as a digital) object, strategies concerning authorship, printing, editing, publishing, and translation – including self-censorship; distribution raises questions about distribution channels and networks, rural vs. urban, and metropolitan vs. peripheral access to reading matter, and censorship; finally, reception refers to readers and their choices of reading, institutional selections of books (such as by libraries and book clubs), processes of canonisation, literary awards, and state-funding for the arts. Finally, external influences, like political and legal sanctions, economic and social conditions, are shaped by shifting ideologies and palpably influence the book trade.

In light of the foundational role of both ideology and the critique of ideology, in and beyond postcolonial studies, and given the significant theoretical developments over the past two decades, this conference sets out to revisit ideological configurations in postcolonial texts, contexts, and theories. Thematic foci include but are not limited to:

- De/Construction of colonial ideologies
- Modernisation theories and development theories
- Is there a particular postcolonial critique of ideology?
- Postcolonialism as ideology
- Globalisation as post-ideological ideology
- The critique of political religions after the post-secular turn
- Gender after ideology
- New spatial ideologies: Ideology and the cartographic imagination
- New totalitarianism and extra-ideological violence
- Ideologies of terror and counter-terror
- Language ideologies in postcolonial speech communities
- Linguistic discrimination and deference in a World Englishes framework
- Language ideologies as reflected in linguistic variation
- Language ideologies as reflected in linguistic landscapes
- Language ideologies as reflected in media
- Language ideologies as reflected in language policy
- Renegotiating standard language ideologies in the 21st century
- Ideological notions of ‘otherness,’ hybrid identity, and transculturality in postcolonial texts and contexts in English Language Teaching
- Transcultural competence and the critique of ideology in the classroom
- Curricular challenges, ideology in teacher education, and ideology in processes of teacher professionalization
- Ideologies of print and reading
- Postcolonialism and global publishing dynamics
- Ideological shifts during media changes (printing press, industrialisation, digital divide)

Please send abstracts (500 words excl. references) to GAPS2015@uni-muenster.de; they will be evaluated from December 1, 2014 until January 15, 2015. Abstracts in linguistics should clearly state the aims, method, and results of the research. Proposals for panels of three papers and for other formats are also welcome before January 15, 2015.

Travel Bursaries are available. Please check the conference website for details.