

Postcolonial Transfers – Translation, Transition, Transformation

Annual Conference of the Association for Anglophone Postcolonial Studies (GAPS)

Osnabrück University, Osnabrück, Germany

May, 14-16, 2026

*It is a familiar minor climax in our stories, leaving what we know and arriving in strange places,
carrying little bits of jumbled luggage and suppressing secret and garbled ambitions.*

(Abdulrazak Gurnah, *By the Sea*)

Postcolonial worlds are shaped by layered and often contested histories of movement – of bodies, of ideas, and of resources. From the violent colonial imposition of dominant norms to the global circulation of anticolonial resistance and theoretical paradigms, transfer in these contexts has rarely been smooth or symmetrical. To transfer is to bear across – to ferry across – borders and different contexts, in space, in time and of knowledge. Postcolonial scholars have long theorized transfers and their ramifications, from Edward Said's travelling theory, to Mary Louise Pratt's contact zone, or Paul Gilroy's roots and routes. Today, postcolonial discourses are increasingly transferred to and for widely different political projects and contexts, e.g., claims of "reclaiming sovereignty" (in Brexit discourse), the use of postcolonial critiques by authoritarian regimes to deflect international human rights criticism (as in China's or Russia's framing of Western criticism as neocolonial interference), or the strategic mobilization of postcolonial narratives in global environmental justice movements that link colonial histories to present ecological injustices (e.g. Indigenous climate activism or Global South advocacy in climate negotiations). At the same time, there is a resurgence in discussions of and demands for transfers of a sometimes more material variety: redistribution of wealth, reparations, restitution (cf. Coates, Táíwò, Savoy). The GAPS 2026 conference seeks to take up these varied questions of transfer, along with the translations, transitions and transformations they bring with them, complicate, or refuse. What enables and inhibits transfers? What interrelated processes of translation, transition, and transformation attend them? How and to what degree does anglophone postcolonial scholarship transfer into society, into teaching, into action?

Translation, transition, and transformation offer critical tools for exploring how anglophone postcolonial literature, theory, and cultural production negotiate movements across linguistic, temporal, and ideological borders. We invite proposals that examine not only how ideas or forms are transferred but also how they are reworked, reimagined, and sometimes resisted in new contexts. This includes reflections on how postcolonial texts respond to and reshape inherited discourses through acts of linguistic or cultural translation, if and to what degree identities and communities transition under shifting political regimes or migratory pressures, and how aesthetic or epistemological frameworks are transformed in encounters with difference. We are especially interested in contributions that trace the tensions and contradictions inherent in these processes—where meanings shift, transmission falters, or adaptations yield unexpected consequences. Rather than presuming seamless exchange, the conference specifically aims to address and discuss the **disjunctures and disruptions** that characterize postcolonial transfers of knowledge, culture, language and power.

This conversation gains particular relevance in light of contemporary appropriations and redeployments of postcolonial thought. As theoretical concepts travel into new geopolitical and ideological terrains—including their instrumentalization by nationalist movements, or selective adoption in post-socialist European contexts—they are frequently detached from their original critical

frameworks. The resulting shifts raise important questions about the politics of translation and the risks as well as the possibilities of theoretical and political transformation across global contexts. We welcome engagements with what this means for the practices of anglophone postcolonial studies, of didactics, and of knowledge transfer.

Suggested Topics

We invite contributions on (but not limited to) the following areas:

- Cultural, theoretical, linguistic, and legal transfers in post/colonial contexts & of postcolonial discourses and the critical frictions and affordances they generate
- Transfers of knowledge, resistance movements, and scientific/academic concepts
- Postcolonial knowledge transfer in teaching, society, and activism
- Transfer of people (migration, diaspora, exile) and their cultural forms
- Transfers of resources, technologies, and data in neocolonial economies
- Reparations and restitution
- Post/colonial (mis)translations
- Translation and globalization, migration, and diaspora literature
- Political, economic, and cultural transitions in postcolonial societies
- Temporalities of interruption, continuity, and futurity in postcolonial narratives
- Postcolonial literature as a site of transitional justice, memory, and reconciliation
- Identity transitions and transformations in migratory and diasporic contexts
- Cultural, social, and epistemic transformations resulting from colonial and postcolonial encounters
- Implications of political change and transformation of economic structures
- Theoretical transformations: hybridity, transculturality, entangled histories
- Global and environmental transformations in postcolonial contexts
- Language contact and change, multilingualism, language policy, translanguaging

We also welcome proposals reflecting on the epistemological implications of processes of **postcolonial transfer**, particularly those exploring **interdisciplinary perspectives** between literary studies, cultural studies, history, linguistics, didactics, and translation studies.

Abstract Submission

Please submit your **250–300 word abstract** for individual papers or your panel proposal (with a short description of the panel and abstracts for each paper) by **Monday, 6 January 2026** to gaps2026@uni-osnabrueck.de. All presenters must be GAPS members by the time of the conference.

Work in progress – including MA/MEd, PhD, postdoc, or early-career research projects – may be presented in the *Under Construction* section of the conference, either as a paper or a poster presentation. Abstracts for these should also be **250–300 words**, indicating the chosen format.

A limited number of **travel bursaries** are available for emerging scholars, part-time, or currently unemployed presenters who are or will become GAPS members. Please indicate in your submission if you wish to apply. The travel bursaries include a conference fee waiver.

GAPS strives to create a conference in which everyone can participate in critical discussions of all topics. In an effort to create an environment in which this can be done with sensitivity, presenters

are encouraged to consider whether a content note might be warranted in order to prepare audience members for potentially harmful content. If a paper contains discussions and/or representations of violence and harm, GAPS invites presenters to portray such content in ways which contribute to criticizing the reproduction of violence and harm without merely reproducing them. This includes, in particular, reflecting on the potential effects and aims of presenting such content in different forms (visually, orally, as text on a slide etc). Content notes should be included in submitted abstracts for later inclusion in the conference program, and should be phrased as specifically as possible.

The conference venue and its facilities are wheelchair accessible.

For any queries or special requirements, please contact the conference organizers:

Lucy Gasser, University of Osnabrück and Laura Zander, University of Osnabrück at gaps2026@uni-osnabrueck.de.
