

texts is key when dealing with cultural products, which underpins the need to approach them with care and expertise from a variety of disciplines and emphasises the necessity of continued widespread exchange.

Johanna Marquardt (Mainz)

Conference Report

This year's Annual Conference of GAPS "Nationalism and the Postcolonial" took place from May 9-12 in the picturesque city of Mainz. In their Call for Papers, the 2018 organizing team led by Rainer Emig (Gutenberg University, Mainz) argue that nationalism is an "ambivalent phenomenon" which, by some intellectual positions, was considered a relic of a modernity that has been replaced by the 'open minds' and permeable borders of liberal post-nationalism. In the aftermath of what is deemed 'traditional colonialism', nationalism was made out to be 'a thing of the past' and an instrument of colonial and imperialist oppression. Yet, and as the Call further outlines, nationalism has played a key role in identity politics in supposedly postcolonial countries. The conference organizers thus direct our attention to the conundrum that an engagement with the recent surge of nationalist discourses produces: On the one hand, nationalism lends expression to a misguided essentialism that seems to have lost its right to exist to the untamed, yet liberating forces of globalization. On the other hand, nations are symbolic representations of constructing (national) identities which enable a differentiation from the colonizer. National formations, in these contexts, are considered as achievements, as tangible results of liberation, and indicative of a change in power paradigms.

This tension was well-reflected in presentations given at the 2018 GAPS conference. The panels "Celebrating the Nation", "Between Pleasure and Pain: Interrogating the Nation through Aesthetics" and "Nationalism and Nostalgia" paid tribute to the affective and uniting force that national unity promises, but is constantly unable to deliver. Laura Chrisman (University of Washington) aptly represented this state of (un)fulfillment in her keynote "'That place of Bubbling Trepidation': Reflections on the Nation and the Transnational Turn": a national fabric is ambiguous, active, and by default dependent on and interconnected with other national frames, yet lives off the fiction of homogeneity and insularity. The nation points its gaze inwards to create a sense of cohesion and continuity, whilst it also requires others to construct and affirm itself. The panels titled "Theorizing Nationalism" and "Teaching the Nation", for example, grappled with the question of how to approach this concept that is both caught in and reliant on "processes of discursive marking" of "similarity and difference", as Stuart Hall elaborately argues (128). A nation requires its counterpart, its "symbolic other" which defines its "constitutive outside" (Hall, 128).

Yet, as this conference has shown, this symbolic other is no longer confined to being derived from colonial identity-political constellations. 'Postcolonial' national

identities are no longer grid-locked in the colonizer-colonizer scheme that has left its mark on national discourses after independence, as the organizers rightfully argue, and have moved way beyond it. In her keynote, Nikita Sud (University of Oxford) directed our attention to the many shifts and rifts in post-independence Indian nationalism. Sud outlined that India's "inclusive nationalism" of the 1980s was characterized by the catchwords 'difference and unity', and seemingly managed to incorporate a wide range of differences under what Ernest Gellner has dubbed a "political roof", the Indian nation. Development was the rallying point which enabled this form of inclusive nationalism. Today's India under the Modi government has made Hindu nationalism India's primary framework of imagining national identity, and has sparked Hindu supremacy discourses. Encounter has been replaced by the rhetoric of exclusion, but Indian nationalism is an example of how national identities are *not* negotiated in relation to (post)colonialism(s) anymore.

This conference also represented perspectives on nationalisms which traditionally play a marginalized role in negotiating national narratives: The panel "Indigenous Nationalism" featured papers which engaged with modes of indigenous nationalisms and pursued the question of where indigenous peoples (are) position(ed) (themselves) in the overarching national frames. Under the headline "Nationals no More: Refugees and Exile", scholars showed how contemporary forced migrations leave their imprint on traditional national discourses. As the papers and discussions in the context of this year's annual conference have shown, 21st century nationalisms are characterized through imploding cultural confinements as well as transnational and transcultural entanglements.

GAPS 2018 marked a timely intervention into the discourses surrounding a nowadays ubiquitous ideology - nationalism - and gave us insights into how the nation is called upon, used and abused in varying contexts, and for different identity-political purposes. What might sound a truism has actually shed a prominent light on what the humanities can contribute to the discussion: Nations and nationalisms are first and foremost imaginary and imagined frameworks which are brought into being, disseminated and (de)constructed through cultural productions and encounters. The nation cannot be reduced to its capitalist provenance or industrial origins, and it is most certainly not a 'thing of the past'. Nationalism is very much alive and kicking. What I take away from this conference is the acknowledgment that contemporary nationalisms in postcolonial contexts have moved far beyond the colonizer-colonized paradigm. Yet, it is also 'our disciplines' that remain somehow confined to the colonial binary, it may seem. In the discussions that I witnessed, formative frameworks of how we as scholars approach and theorize national imaginations were called into question, particularly with regard to a persistence of heteronormativity and the dominant legacy of imperialism. It can and should be the task of organizations such as GAPS to research and make visible the links, entanglements and engagements between - for the lack of a better terminology - formerly colonized countries, and an independence of colonial power relations.

Finally, I would like to cordially thank the organizers for bringing together this wide range of papers, topics and positions in this intriguing and thought-provoking conference. The venue, Erbacher Hof, took excellent care of us conference guests and provided more than what was necessary to make the conference a success. The conference lunch room in particular proved to be 'the place to be' if one wanted to continue the substantial discussions that the papers evoked. The 'Under Construction' sections of the conference offered a glimpse at the futures of the field and possibly the organization. The reading by Oladipo Agboluaje, the walking tour of Mainz and the conference dinner were most welcome items on the already rich program.

I am very much looking forward to attending GAPS 2019 in Bremen.

Hanna Teichler (Frankfurt)

Conference Report

At a time when far-right nationalism is becoming a matter of concern in the West, the theme 'Nationalism and the Postcolonial' seemed at first glance as an odd choice for convening the 2018 international conference of the Gesellschaft für Anglophone Postkoloniale Studien (GAPS). Not only did the pairing of nationalism and postcolonial immediately suggest a link between the postcolonial and nationalism; it seemed to place a focus on the postcolonial world and shift attention from resurgent nationalism in the West, a hemisphere that is ostensibly not part of the postcolonial world.

However, on reading the Call for Papers for the conference, the organizers and hosts at Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz had been careful to draw attention to the ambivalence of the ideology of nationalism, noting how it functions differently in different contexts and can be put to different uses. Hence, the Call recognized that nationalism, at one point considered outmoded in the West and a relic of the emergence of the modern nation-state, was once again reasserting itself following a shift in global geopolitics that has seen countries such as Britain and the United States search for identity and national relevance in an increasingly globalising world. The above resurgence notwithstanding, the Call also pointed out how nationalism has been instrumental in decolonial processes in formerly colonised countries of the Global South; processes which, I hasten to add, have contributed to the global shifts whose results are now visible in the collapsing of national borders and the waning power of former empires such as the British.

The concerns raised in the CfP reverberated in the three keynotes and in most of the papers presented at the conference. Interdisciplinary in its scope and with speakers drawn from universities from different parts of the world, the conference had close to 50 paper presentations categorised in thematic panels. For example, the panel on "Theorizing Nationalism" featuring speakers Frank Schulze-Engler (Frankfurt), Ryszard W. Wolny (Opole), and Przemyslaw Górecki (Poznan) spoke