



Poetics of Law/Poetics of Decolonization



May 17 – May 18

UC Riverside, CHASS INTS 1113

In the theorization of law and literature and in the conceptualization of decolonization, both the law and decolonization have often been thought in terms of narrative, but rarely in terms of poetics. To think law and decolonization together with poetry is to enable an interrogation of the very moment of making and unmaking of institutions. Where narratives legitimate the coming-to-be of established law, or enter new subjects into that law's purview, poetic language can be seen as a suspension of decision or an undoing of sense. Poetry's capacity for generating, dissolving and multiplying possibilities suggests a conception of justice that is not about the restoration of persons or things to their proper places but about the capacity to cohabit in "the togetherness of the diverse", as Theodor Adorno once described just relations. The conference on "Poetics of Law, Poetics of Decolonization" will focus on the investigation of legal and poetic form, each in relation to the other, and, together, in relations to histories of colonialism, of juridical institutions, of colonial settler-colonial violence, and of anti-colonial struggle and practice.

Keynote Speakers

Rei Terada (UC Irvine)

Nathaniel Mackey (Duke)

Schedule

Thursday, May 17:

2:00-2:30: Introductions: welcome by CHASS Dean and Georgia Warnke

2:30-4:15: Jeff Sacks (UCR), "A collar of wasps for my throat of earth: Legal Violence and the Sense of the Poetic"; Sara Salih (U. Toronto), "Thirteen ways of not looking at a blackbird"; Nouri Gana (UCLA), "Idiom, History and Play: Darwish and Decolonial Poetics". Moderator: Jody Benjamin.

4.30-5:45: Keynote: Rei Terada (UCI), "Cedric Robinson's Terms". Moderator: Andreja Novakovic.

6:00-7:00: Reception

Friday, May 18:

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9:30-11:15: Jodi Kim (UCR), "Debt Imperialism, Militarism, and the US Settler Garrison in Asia and the Pacific"; David Lloyd (UCR), "Critique of Violence, Critique of Rights: Walter Benjamin and Palestinian Rights"; Veli N. Yashin (USC), "As if the self is enough to make a poem . . .: Addressing the Sovereign at the Ends of Empire". Moderator: Bronwyn Leebaw.

11:30-12:45: J. Kameron Carter (Duke University), "Mystic S/Zong (The Sacred, Overboard)"; Natalie Melas (Cornell University), "Occasional speaking: Aimé Césaire's Anticolonial Speech and the Poetics of the Hour"; Moderator: John Kim.

1:00-2:30: Lunch

2:30-4:15: Colin Dayan (Vanderbilt University), "The Morality of Murder; or, Gaza, 2004-2018"; Fred Moten (UCR and NYU), "this unholding (Long Soldier Lays Down the Law)"; Josie Saldaña (New York University), "Is There Such a Thing as 'White Law'? Speculative Freedom in the Cortes de Cádiz". Moderator: Sarita See.

4:30-5:45: Keynote Reading: Nathaniel Mackey. Moderator: Allison Hedge Coke.

All events are free, open to the public and disabled accessible.

Sponsors

Sponsored by a grant from the Center for Ideas and Society.

Special thanks to the Dean of the College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, the Departments of Comparative Literature, English, Hispanic Studies, and Religious Studies, the Program in Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies and Undisciplined Encounters for their support of this conference.

Image – Artist: Emily Jacir. Photo credit: Fabio Mantegna, 2015

Speaker Bios

Nouri Gana is Professor of Comparative Literature & Near Eastern Languages and Cultures at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). He is the author of *Signifying Loss: Toward a Poetics of Narrative Mourning* (Bucknell UP, 2011/2015 paperback), and the editor of *The Making of the Tunisian Revolution: Contexts, Architects, Prospects* and of *The Edinburgh Companion to the Arab Novel in English* (Edinburgh UP, 2013). He is currently completing a book manuscript on the politics of melancholia in the Arab world and another on the history of cultural dissent in colonial and postcolonial Tunisia. He is spending this academic year between Tunisia and Turkey on a New Directions Fellowship awarded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in the United States.

Sara Salih is Professor in the English department at the University of Toronto. She is the author of *Representing Mixed Race in Jamaica and England from Abolition to the Present* (Routledge, 2010) and *Judith Butler* (Routledge, 2002), and has edited *The Judith Butler Reader* (Blackwell, 2004), Mary Prince's *The History of Mary Prince* (Penguin, 2001), and Mary Seacole's *Wonderful Adventures of Mrs Seacole in Many Lands* (Penguin, 2005). She is currently working on a project about representations and perceptions of animals.

Rei Terada is Professor and Director of Graduate Studies in the Department of Comparative Literature, UC Irvine. She is the author of *Feeling in Theory: Emotion after the 'Death of the Subject'* (Harvard UP, 2001; René Wellek Prize, 2002) and *Looking Away: Phenomenality and Dissatisfaction, Kant to Adorno* (Harvard UP, 2009). Her two recent articles on the ideological prehistory of "postracial" racial thinking, part of her current project, appear in *European Romantic Review*; the manuscript in progress is called *Fantasies of Relation: "Postracial" Logics in Enlightenment Philosophy*.

Jodi Kim is an Associate Professor of Media and Cultural Studies at the University of California, Riverside. She is the author of *Ends of Empire: Asian American Critique and the Cold War* (University of Minnesota Press, 2010) and Co-Editor of *Critical Ethnic Studies: A Reader* (Duke University Press, 2016). Her essays have appeared in journals including *Social Text*, *American Quarterly*, *positions: asia critique*, and *Women's Studies Quarterly*.

David Lloyd, Distinguished Professor of English at the University of California, Riverside, works primarily on Irish culture, settler colonialism, postcolonial and cultural theory, and visual art. His most recent books are *Irish Culture and Colonial Modernity: The Transformation of Oral Space* (2011) and *Beckett's Thing: Painting and Theatre* (2016). A collection of essays on aesthetics, representation and race, *Under Representation: The Racial Regime of Aesthetics*, will appear with Fordham UP in 2018. *Arc & Sill: Poems 1979-2009* was published in 2012.

Veli N. Yashin is an Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Southern California. He has earned his doctorate from Columbia University in Arabic and Comparative Literature, and he is the winner of the 2013 Horst Frenz Prize of the American Comparative Literature Association. Yashin's research and teaching focuses on modern Arabic and Turkish literatures and more broadly engages the theoretical implications of the complex entanglement between aesthetics and politics, between issues of cultural and political representation. His work has appeared in the *Yearbook of Comparative Literature*, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, the *Journal of Arabic Literature*, and *Middle Eastern Literatures*. He is currently finishing his first book entitled *Disorienting Figures: The Sovereign and the Author in the Ottoman Nineteenth Century*.

Kameron Carter is Associate Professor at Duke University Divinity School with additional appointments in the University's Trinity College where he also teaches in the English department and in the Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies department. Professor Carter works in black studies, drawing on theology, aesthetics and critical theory along with literature and experimental poetry in doing so. Driving his work are questions pertaining to the theory of blackness as entailing an alternative practice of the sacred. He engages blackness as exceeding the human and as of the Earth. Professor Carter is the author of *Race: A Theological Account* (New York: OUP, 2008) and is the editor of *Religion and the Future of Blackness* (2013). His next book, *Black Rapture: A Poetics of the Sacred*, the first installment of the *Mystic Song* trilogy, is in the final stages of preparation.

Natalie Melas teaches comparative literature at Cornell University. She is the author of *All the Difference in the World: Postcoloniality and the Ends of Comparison* and co-editor of the *Princeton Sourcebook in Comparative Literature* and various essays. Her current research addresses the comparative temporal vocation of poetry and poetics on the periphery of the modern imperial system. She thinks she is nearing completion on a book provisionally entitled, *Poetics and Politics of Untimeliness: Césaire, Cavafy*

Fred Moten teaches in the Department of Performance Studies at New York University. His latest work is *consent not to be a single being* (Duke University Press, 2017/2018). He and Stefano Harney are authors of *All Incomplete*, forthcoming next year from Minor Compositions/Autonomea.

Colin Dayan is Robert Penn Warren Professor in the Humanities and Professor of Law at Vanderbilt University. The recipient of numerous awards including NEH and Guggenheim fellowships, she has written for *The Yale Review*, the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, the *London Review of Books*, and other publications. Her books include *Haiti, History, and the Gods*; *The Story of Cruel and Unusual*; *The Law is a White Dog*; and *With Dogs at the Edge of Life*. She is currently at work on a book called *Melville's Creatures*, and has just completed a memoir called *In the Belly of Her Ghost*.

María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo is Professor of Social and Cultural Analysis at New York University and the author of *The Revolutionary Imagination in the Americas and the Age of Development*, (Duke University Press 2003) and *Indian Given: Racial Geographies across Mexico and the United States* (Duke University Press 2016). She has received various grants and awards over the course of her career, from the Ford Foundation, the Mellon Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Humanities, among others.

Jeff Sacks is Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Comparative Literature and Languages at UC, Riverside. He is the author of *Iterations of Loss: Mutilation and Aesthetic Form, al-Shidyaaq to Darwish* (Fordham UP, 2015), and has translated a volume of poetry by Mahmoud Darwish, *Why Did You Leave the Horse Alone?* (Archipelago, 2006). He is presently writing a book about simplicity, entitled *Simplicities: A Colonial Archive*, and a second book called *For Decolonization: The Lyric Poem and the Question of Palestine*.

Born in Miami and raised in Southern California, poet, novelist, editor and critic **Nathaniel Mackey** is the author of numerous books of poetry, including *Nod House* (2011), the National Book Award-winning *Splay Anthem* (2006), *Whatsaid Serif* (1998), and *Eroding Witness* (1985), which was chosen for the National Poetry Series. He has published several book-length installments of his ongoing prose work, *From a Broken Bottle Traces of Perfume Still Emanate*, beginning with *Bedouin Hornbook* in 1986. The first three volumes of Mackey's series were published together by New Directions in 2010. A recording of Mackey's work *Strick: Song of the Andoumboulou 16-25* was released in 1995 by Spoken Engine Company, with musical accompaniment by Royal Hartigan and Hafez Modirzadeh. Mackey's critical work includes *Discrepant Engagement: Dissonance, Cross-Culturality, and Experimental Writing* (1993) and *Paracritical Hinge: Essays, Talks, Notes, Interviews* (2005).

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