



The Biopolitics of America: Bodies, Environments, and the Liberal Imagination

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Sandow Birk. *Salinas Valley State Prison (SVSP) - Soledad, CA*. Image courtesy of the artist and Catharine Clark Gallery.

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"Nature will arise, and will be heard": Death and the Regularization of Native American Lives in Early American Literature

In *Society Must be Defended* Foucault linked the role of death in biopolitics to racism, which functions under the banner of human species. Achille Mbembe took this as a stepping stone for asking the question about the place of death and the dead, the wounded or the slain body and how they are inscribed in the order of power. Following Foucault's theory of biopolitics as thanatopolitics and Mbembe's thereof generated theory of necropolitics, my presentation will describe how a highly popular book of early American literature, John Neal's *Logan* (1822) reflects and questions some of these issues within a Native American context. When thinking about the necropolitics of the Native American in early American literature, two topics stand afore: nature and spectrality. While the link between death and Native American bodies within the confines of biopolitics in the early Republic has been explored before, the role of nature within this constellation – which in my opinion is essential – has not been sufficiently explained. In addition to highlighting the fusion between the symbolic Native American body and nature into a biopolitical image, I will extrapolate from Foucault's and Mbembe's theory into the field of spectrality; a field that holds a whole repertoire of social and cultural imaginaries of the Early Republic, within which death – otherwise outside the power relationship – could be recuperated for biopolitical purposes.