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

International Conference, Würzburg, July 28-30, 2016

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

Mark Rifkin (Greensboro)

Carceral Space, Fugitive Motion, and Indigenous Ecologies

The vast intensification and proliferation of apparatuses of imprisonment over the last forty years suggests a growing experience of emplacement in terms of racialized carcerality for black subjects in the U.S. These dynamics serve as the background and impetus for Walter Mosley's *Futureland: Nine Stories of an Imminent World*, a collection of linked stories set a few decades into the future. While largely focused on African Americans, the text presents these patterns as expanding to incorporate vast swaths of the population, generating compounding modes of segregative racialization, and in this way, it offers a speculative vision that theorizes contemporary formations of what can be characterized as *neoliberal apartheid*. However, communal claims to place play no role in Mosley's social mappings. He figures freedom not in terms of collective habitation but in/as flight, mobilizing a poetics of fugitivity in which not being located anywhere in particular becomes the avenue to emancipation from omnipresent geographies and strategies of incarceration. By contrast, Daniel Wilson's futurist *Robopocalypse* series offers a vision in which connections to territory remain a durable part of human social life. Himself Cherokee, Wilson draws on principles of indigeneity to highlight the existence and emergence of forms of collective territoriality (human and otherwise) that serve as the basis for life itself. In juxtaposing these futurist articulations of fugitivity and indigeneity as ways of conceptualizing place, I aim to explore some of the tensions that arise in trying to put African American and Native American political histories, framings, and geographies into meaningful relation.