

Call for Papers  
Comparative Studies in Literature and Culture (CSLC) Annual Symposium  
*(In)Visible Histories: Counterhistory, Race, and Visuality*  
University of Southern California  
February, 2021

**Keynote Speaker:** John Jennings, Professor of Media and Cultural Studies at the University of California at Riverside. Professor Jennings is the author of a diverse body of work on Afrofuturism, the EthnoGothic, and Blackness and its representations. He is the co-adaptor of Octavia Butler's *Kindred* and *Parable of the Sower* graphic novels; co-creator of *I am Alfonso Jones*; co-author of *Out of Sequence: Underrepresented Voices in American Comics*; and co-editor of *The Blacker the Ink: Constructions of Blackness in Comics and Sequential Art*.

The 2021 CSLC Symposium Planning Committee is pleased to announce that its annual Symposium, “(In)Visible Histories: Counterhistory, Race, and Visuality,” will be held as a weekly virtual series at the end of February, 2021. The Symposium will look to Professor Jennings’ body of work as a foundation for investigating Michel Foucault’s concept of the counterhistory and its connection to race. After Foucault’s “*Society Must Be Defended*”, we understand counterhistory as a challenge to historical hegemonies, which can be mobilized across the political spectrum. The counterhistorical discourse of revolution is thus matched by the counterhistorical discourse of racism. In using counterhistory as a framework for interrogating archives, we invoke archival practices that move beyond Foucault, including Saidiya Hartman’s (2008) method of “critical fabulation,” which describes the endeavor to use fiction to fill the gaps in archival history; Achille Mbembe’s (2016, 2019) theorization of necropolitics on the ways in which sovereign power instrumentalizes life and death; and Christina Sharpe’s (2016) idea of “the wake” left by slavery, as affecting the Black diaspora and its relationship to space and power. We further suggest that the parallel concept of counternarrative may be generative in thinking about fictional hegemonies and narratives “from below.”

In conjunction with Professor Jennings’ work on Blackness and its myriad imaginings, this Symposium aims to examine the negotiative and disruptive effects of counterhistories and/or counternarratives on racial and racist hierarchies. Considering the politically indeterminate nature of counterhistories and counternarratives, in particular the ways in which they can both oppress and resist oppression, we seek to examine the intersections and impasses of historically marginalized identities and experiences within this discursive frame. We are further interested in how a consideration of counterhistories can open up novel ways of seeing, as well as shed light on hidden economies of visibility and the power structures that underpin them. By welcoming work from a variety of cultural, disciplinary, and theoretical approaches, we hope to foster a dynamic, collaborative environment in which to explore the ways in which counterhistories and other counter-hegemonic approaches might complicate, bolster, or unravel hegemonies in productive and unexpected ways.

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We warmly welcome academic papers and creative projects on a range of topics, including but not limited to:

- What counterhistory/counternarrative makes visible or possible
- The graphics of counter-hegemonic work
- The EthnoGothic and its imaginings
- Biopolitics, biopower, necropolitics
- Counterhistories and counternarratives about minorities/marginalized identities in a global context
- Racism and white supremacy as counterhistory
- Counterhistory through the prism of Afropessimism
- Speculative and science fiction, including Afrofuturism and/or Indigenous futurism, as counternarrative
- Alternate-history fiction as performing counterhistory
- Postcolonial and/or anti-colonial fiction, documentary, and/or history
- Theorizing counterhistory and/or counternarrative
- Translation as counter-hegemonic practice
- Counternarrative/counterhistory and its relation to media technologies
- Regimes of visibility/invisibility, their relation to power, and the role of media representation in creating 'commonsense' knowledge
- Sur- and sousveillance cultures
- The "postracial" discourse on modernity and/or the modern world system
- Creative projects (in progress or finished): writing, film, illustration, mixed media, comics, and more

Papers should take no longer than 15 minutes to present, and the use of slides is encouraged.

Abstracts (250 words) and a short bio (50 words) should be submitted by: December 18, 2020

Please send any questions or submissions to [cslc.symposium@gmail.com](mailto:cslc.symposium@gmail.com)

Sincerely,

The CSLC Symposium Planning Committee and Event Organizers

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