

Lyric and Law: A Comparativist Roadmap

Postdoc Colloquium: Villa Vigoni, German-Italian Cooperation in the Field of Humanities and Social Sciences

Status: Pre-Submission, Funding Pending

Duration: 2 days

Possible dates: Early October 2020

The working language for the colloquium will be English.

Maximum number of postdoc participants: 16

Organizers

Dr. Birte Christ, Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen

Dr. Guido Mattia Gallerani, Università di Bologna

Dr. Stefanie Mueller, Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster

Project

Within the transdisciplinary field of law and literature, poetry has been neglected as an object of analysis. The central question of this colloquium will be in which specific ways *lyric* poetry engages with the law that are different from other literary and aesthetic conversations with and about the law. Organized around four research areas - metaphor, form, personhood and temporality – the goal of this postdoc colloquium is to establish a roadmap for new research on lyric and law with a focus on non-Anglophone lyric and legal traditions in conversation with the predominant Anglophone ones.

Disciplines

American Literary and Cultural Studies

Anglophone African Literature

Comparative Literature

German Literature

Italian Literature

Law

Corpora for analysis: German and Italian Poetry

Research areas

The colloquium will be organized as four in-depth conversations on these areas:

1. **Metaphor:** we want to discuss examples in which metaphors have become contagious, leading to a heightened sense of poeticism in both lyric and law;
2. **Forms:** through a discussion of the lyric's formal logic as both affirming and consistently transgressing, we want to explore the limits of rule-bound formality in both lyric and law and what are the consequences for the body of the text in each;
3. **Person:** as much recent scholarship has shown, legal personhood is one of the most important areas of the law in an international context, in particular in Human Rights law. At the same time, it is the central category of analysis in the scholarship on lyric. How do lyric and law each make and unmake the person at the center of each discourse?

4. **Temporality:** law's time has often been criticized for its artificiality, creating immortal corporate bodies or pursuing the settlement of lawsuits beyond the lifespans of the natural members involved in it. Prosody, the rhythmic structure of versed text, allows the lyric to establish both mutually maintaining as well as conflicting temporalities that allow us to interrogate the stability and power of artificial temporal regimes, both in lyric and law.

Structure of the colloquium

Each participant will be asked to choose one research area and a poem in Italian or German (with English translation provided) that speaks to an issue relevant to this area. All poems will be circulated in advance – one month before the seminar – among the participants. Each conversation on one research area will proceed as four to five individual discussions of poems guided by the “expert” participant who chose the poem; the “expert” will provide guiding questions, background information, as well as prepared micro statements and theses to propel the discussion forward.

Bibliography

Christ, Birte and Stefanie Mueller (2017). “Towards a Legal Poetics.” *Amerikastudien/American Studies* 62.2: 149-68.

Christ, Birte (2017). “State Killing and the Poetic Series: George Elliott Clarke’s *Execution Poems* and Jill McDonough’s *Habeas Corpus*.” *Amerikastudien/American Studies* 62.2: 279-300.

Dolin, Kieran. “Introduction to Law and Literature: Walking the Boundary with Robert Frost and the Supreme Court.” *A Critical Introduction to Law and Literature*. Cambridge: CUP, 2007. 1-16.

Gallerani, Guido Mattia (2018). “Beyond Forensic Poetry: Lyric and Legal Languages in Contemporary Poetry.” *Law, Culture, and the Humanities*, Online First, First Published July 19, 2018. DOI: 10.1177/1743872118789984.

Eberle, Edward J., and Bernhard Grossfeld. “Law and Poetry.” *Roger Williams School of Law Faculty Papers* Paper 3. 17 March 2005. Web. 28 March 2017.

Johnson, Barbara. “Anthropomorphism in Lyric and Law.” *Yale Journal of Law & the Humanities* 10.2 (1998): 549-74.

David Lloyd, “Nomos and Lyric: On Poetry and Justice,” *Law, Culture and the Humanities*, published online November 24, 2017, DOI: 10.1177/1743872117740647.

Mueller, Stefanie (2017). “Exceeding Determinacy in the Language of Personhood: *Citizens United*, Corporations, and the Poetry of Timothy Donnelly and Thomas Sayers Ellis.” *Amerikastudien/American Studies* 62.2: 301-322.

Olson, Greta (2017). “Figuring Human Rights and Troping Law and Literature: Li-Young Lee’s Poetic Investigations of Migration and Refugeeism,” *Amerikastudien/American Studies* 62.2: 257-278.

Jahan Ramazani, “Poetry and the Law,” in *Poetry and Its Others: News, Prayer, Song, and the Dialogue of Genres* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2014), 46-60.

We invite all interested postdocs who, according to Villa Vigoni Postdoc Colloquium’s eligibility, are based in Italian or Germany institutions to write to all three organizers (birte.christ@anglistik.uni-giessen.de, s.mueller@uni-muenster.de, and guido.gallerani@unibo.it) by **5 December**, 2018. In the message the potential participants will give some information:

- Name, affiliation in Italy or Germany, postdoc status, email.
- How their research profile could match the colloquium’s project, in particular by precisising their research interests in the field of Law&Literature, Law, Poetry (5-10 lines).
- Mention of their previous publications that could contribute to the discussion within the four research areas.