

## **Seminar on the Politics of Memory and a Critique of Transitional Justice**

This seminar, introduced by Thushara Hewage and Ahilan Kadirgamar engaged with *Omens of Adversity*, David Scott's meditation on the catastrophic experience and memory of the failure of revolution on the Caribbean island of Grenada during the 1980s. Hewage spoke on the location of "revolutionary time," and tragedy in David Scott's conceptualization of "thinking," while Kadirgamar raised the subject of the political-economic and geopolitical conditions for the contemporary hegemony of transitional justice as a distinctively liberal means of figuring claims on justice, reconciliation and political settlement in societies deemed "post conflict," such as Sri Lanka.

Discussion focused on the pressing issue of the pursuit of justice at the present juncture in Sri Lanka. Among the questions raised, was whether transitional justice and its technologies comprise the sole means for thinking through this subject, what a more organic, autochthonous process might consist in, and how an understanding of its ideological character might produce a more critical engagement with whatever mechanism of transitional justice is eventually introduced in Sri Lanka. Key topics here included the place of socio-economic justice within transitional justice. Is it sufficient to view social justice as a supplement to the latter, or might a more substantive commitment to social justice demand a different conception of justice entirely? Significant here was consideration of the shortcomings of the earlier period of transitology, attendant on the Ceasefire Agreement between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government, and the importance of distinguishing between socialism and the social democratic regimes, which contributed to emergence of transitional justice in Latin America. Other, conceptual considerations concerned the degree of centrality of atelos of liberal democracy as a background assumption of transitional justice; the relationship between state sanctioned and commissioned memorialization vis a vis more localized and autonomous initiatives; and whether the demand for criminal justice, for individual liability and punishment expresses as innate human need, or is historically and ideologically constituted.