

EDITORIAL

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There is a little less talk about Michel Foucault than there once was. But his voice continues to speak to us through the publication of his Collège de France lectures and his influence on political theory and cultural studies continues to grow. He was and remains one of the giants of twentieth-century French cultural theory.

The previously unpublished interview contained in this issue, and here titled, 'Foucault Recalled', occurred at a key turning point in Foucault's thought. But the year it took place, 1979, also marks the moment when Foucault's writings began to make an impact on British intellectual thought. The questions asked by Frank Mort and Roy Peters and the careful answers of the respondent reflect the different theoretical paradigms on each side of the channel that preceded the encounter. Contextualising the moment, Mort and Peters offer us a retrospective on the circumstances of the meeting. A quarter of a century later, their account impresses, not just in Foucault's intellectual openness, but also in his warmth and generosity to two youthful British researchers.

The three essays that follow address the interview's significance then and now. Christopher Lane's essay, 'Foucault and Extradiscursive Sexuality' demonstrates that the theoretical controversies Foucault's complex relationship to psychoanalysis set in train are still very much alive. David Glover's essay, 'Foucault, Sexuality, Liberalism: a Commentary', teases out some of the ambiguities in the development of his thought and examines the faltering status of the concept of biopolitics in Foucault's writings on sexuality and governmentality. Moya Lloyd and Andrew Thacker, in 'Still Thinking Differently: Foucault Twenty Years On', trace the recent history of Foucault's impact on the humanities and the social sciences, arguing that his thought continues to provoke.

Continuing to talk of Foucault, Tom Roach in his essay, 'Impersonal Friends: Foucault, Guibert and an Ethics of Discomfort', deploys the idea of friendship to address the pitfalls and opportunities that are part of recent debates about same-sex communities. 'Impersonal Friends' continues and develops some of the debates about sexuality and the state begun in *new formations* 52, *Cultures and Economies*, notably by Cora Kaplan and Mandy Merck. On a related theme, but in another context, David Alderson in 'Queer Cosmopolitanism: Place, Politics, Citizenship and *Queer as Folk*', reads the British television drama series, *Queer as Folk*, against the politics of urban regeneration in the post-industrial North. He finds that the politics of acceptance, even where they exist, are not unproblematic.

The aesthetics and the aestheticisation of terror have never been more

urgently discussed. Three essays in this issue explore artistic responses to the problem of representation. John Marks, in ‘W.G. Sebald: Invisible and Intangible Forces’, reads Sebald’s original engagement with recent European history in relation to the work of Gilles Deleuze. David Cunningham, in ‘Asceticism Against Colour, or Modernism, Abstraction and the Lateness of Beckett’, demonstrates that there is still much to be learnt on the subject from Adorno’s readings of Beckett. Stephen Morton in, ‘The Situation is Really Terrible Here’, explores the response of the artist Alia Hasan-Khan to the ‘war against terror’.

S.I. Martin’s novel, *Incomparable Worlds*, combines the author’s unmatched knowledge of the history of black London with an imaginative response to a vital, but little known, part in that history: the lives of the small population of African descent that lived in London in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Alongside an interview with Martin, we publish two new critical responses to the novel: Leila Kamali’s, ‘Circular Talk’: The Social City and Atlantic Slave Routes in S.I. Martin’s *Incomparable World* and Chris Campbell’s, ‘Writing, Representation and Rescue: Narrating an Eighteenth-Century History’.

Finally, in a forceful and timely intervention, ‘The Hidden Powers of Injury’, Lynne Segal tackles the dilemmas of Jewish identity now, offering serious reflection in a period when such discussions are rarely calm or historically grounded.

In upcoming issues, new formations will cover the contribution of critical realism, the cultural politics of the new imperialism and new assessments of the work of Siegfried Kracauer.