Editorial

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This issue of *new formations* returns to some of the concerns that have animated the journal over the last fifteen years. The title 'After Fanon' takes its cue from the Symposium organised by the editorial board in September last year to mark the fortieth anniversary of Frantz Fanon's death. As Timothy Bewes points out in his preface to the papers, *new formations* 1 contained what was to become an influential group of articles on Fanon's legacy. The discussion conducted at the Symposium reflects how debates on Fanon have moved since 1987, but the points of contention were also influenced by the Symposium's own historical moment. Three days after 11 September 2001, the relationship between Third and First Worlds, the politics of violence, and, unexpectedly, religion were to the fore. When so much has been written about the attack on the symbols of American power, the discussion published here is reminder that, as Stuart Hall has pointed out, that event did not come out of clear blue sky, it had a history.[1] Fanon's writings still offer some of the most productive insights into imperialisms, past and present, and the dialogues recorded here demonstrate both the continuity and the immediacy of his thought.

1. Stuart Hall, 'Out of a Clear Blue Sky', *Soundings*, 19 (Winter 2001-2), 9-15.

The four articles that follow might be said to represent a part of Fanon's intellectual legacy. As Laura Chrisman comments in her introduction to this section, they represent a continuation of the theme of *new formations* 45, 'The Rendez-Vous of Conquest': Rethinking Race and Nation. More broadly, they represent the importance *new formations* gives to the field of postcolonial criticism, a field that in 1987 was still in its infancy. The section contributes to the journal's belief in the importance of politically committed critical work in that field as in all areas of cultural theory; and that commitment makes for at least one link between this section and the following. Both Rajeev Patke and Fabio Vighi find new resources in the writings of Theodor Adorno, a critic for whom the question of commitment was central. Both articles might be seen as a continuation of the challenge laid down by *new formations* 38, 'The Legacy of the Frankfurt School in Cultural Studies'. One of that issue's conclusions was that there is much work to be done if that legacy is to be properly incorporated into contemporary critical work. Patke's article addresses Neil Lazarus's contention in the issue that postcolonial theory needs to engage with Adorno's thought. In some ways Vighi's Adorno is a more familiar one, dealing as he does with the work of art. Yet Adorno's name is not usually associated with film theory. Vighi's article, 'Mimesis and the Un-reconciled Condition: A Theoretical Approach to Antonioni's Cinema', thus manages a twofold success: it illuminates Adorno's aesthetics through a reading of

the work of the Italian director Michelangelo Antonioni; and it offers new insights into Antonioni's films, particularly *L' eclisse*. Both Patke and Vighi find through Adorno what others have found through Fanon, the possibility of hope where there seems to be none.

Lisa Trahair's article, 'A Taste for Murder: Aesthetics in *The Silence of the Lambs*', is also a contribution to film theory, but this time its interest is Hollywood film, products of what Adorno would have called the culture industry, rather than high art. Trahair begins with Derrida's concept of the vicarious, using it to open up a discussion of the serial killer genre. She argues that far from being a retreat from art, such films themselves question the place of aesthetic practice in everyday life. Trahair engages with theories of film spectatorship, suggesting that the concept of the vicarious makes the issue of identification 'much more complicated than film theorists have previously acknowledged'.

The penultimate two articles in this issue focus on earlier moments in the history of spectacle. The object of analysis for Ben Highmore and Nick Prior is the modern city, the material space that gave rise to modernity's enthusiasm for spectacular pleasures. In '*Street Life in London*: Towards a Rhythmanalysis of London in the Late Ninteenth Century', Ben Highmore employs Henri Lefebvre's analysis of the 'diverse temporalities of everyday urban life'. The incorporation of movement and circulation into historical criticism, he suggests, opens up a new way to analyse visual images such as the series of photographs and commentaries collected in John Thomson and Adolphe Smith's *Street Life in London*. In such an analysis, the 'captured rhythms' bound up in the frozen image might be released. Nick Prior has a similar concern in 'Urban Portraits: Space/Body/City in Late Georgian Edinburgh'. At an earlier stage in the history of the city, Prior finds the dynamics of another modern capital are also defined by flow and he argues that: 'Popular prints sold and displayed in the High Street were a medium for the production of bodies in space, but they also acted as a potential obstacle in the path towards refinement that was so central to Edinburgh's leaders in the age of "enlightenment"'. Focussing on John Kay's popular caricatures, Prior, like Highmore, is also concerned to release the culture of the quotidian concealed in the historical object. Finally, Jane Kilby's review article, 'The Writing of Trauma: Trauma Theory and the Liberty of Reading', analyses the recent upsurge of interest in trauma theory in cultural studies.

In the first of a new series of short articles that review contemporary cultural events, Michael Calderbank offers an analysis of this year's exhibition of the Surrealists at the Tate Modern in London. He unpicks the contradictory implications of the use of the term 'desire' in the exhibition and asks whether the Surrealists still command the capacity to bring alarm to our apprehension of the everyday. The everyday, as pointed out by Rita Felski in *new formations* 39 is often the point at which

the politics of culture take place. The politicisation of the mundane, the trivial, the overlooked, is a motivating force behind this issue. In that sense, it follows Fanon, for whom the strategic neglect of the wretched of the earth was a matter of urgent and immediate concern. The legacy of his work reminds us that, in the surrealist-inspired words of Walter Benjamin, the overlooked contains 'explosive materials … latent in what has been'. To view them as such, Benjamin continued, is to treat them 'not historiographically, as heretofore, but politically, in political categories'.[2] As Fanon would surely have agreed, reflection on the explosive materials of history has never been more timely or more necessary.

2. Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, (Cambridge MA. and London: Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1999), [K2,3].