

# Foucault Studies

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## EDITORIAL

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SPECIAL ISSUE ON FOUCAULT AND DISABILITY. We are pleased to present *Foucault Studies* 19, which includes a special issue on “New Work on Foucault and Disability” guest edited by Shelley Tremain (Independent Researcher based in Ontario, Canada). The special issue examines the connections between Foucault and disability through various lenses, including feminist philosophy, governmentality, biopower, neoliberal policies, and historical epistemology. Tremain further elaborates on the topic of the special issue in her introduction, in which she also presents the individual contributions to the issue by Kelly Fritsch (York University, Canada), Xuan-Thuy Nguyen (Mount Saint Vincent University, Canada), Scott Yates (De Montfort University, UK), Aimi Hamraie (Vanderbilt University, USA), and herself. We would like to thank Shelley Tremain for preparing this stimulating issue, which not only commemorates the determining collective work *Foucault and the Government of Disability* (University of Michigan Press, 2005; enlarged and revised edition 2015) she edited ten years ago, but also offers new perspectives and challenging views on a now well-established and growing field of theory and practice.

ORIGINAL ARTICLES. In addition to the contributions on Foucault and disability, this issue also brings four original articles. In “Foucault on Ethics and Subjectivity: ‘Care of the Self’ and ‘Aesthetics of Existence’,” Daniel Smith (Pennsylvania State University, USA) challenges the criticism directed toward Foucault’s late works on ethics, often considered as “anarchist,” “nihilist” or “relativist,” and attempts to give consistency to the “care of the self” and the “aesthetics of existence,” which are at the core of Foucault’s ethics. With the conceptual help of Agamben (form-of-life) and other commentators such as Veyne (singular morality), Hadot (philosophy as a way of life), and Deleuze (immanence), Smith argues that Foucault’s ethical subject ought to be understood neither as governed by an external law nor as aligned with its inner substance, but rather experienced in terms of process, relation, and creativity.

Elisa Fiaccadori (Independent Researcher based in Italy) provides a complex account of the relationship between two principal terms within the Foucauldian account of power, that of sovereignty and biopower. The discussion she provides in “State Racism and the Paradox of

Biopower” is one that unfolds the ambiguous explanation provided by Foucault, which oscillates between an account of the “replacement” of sovereignty by biopower and another of the co-extensive development and complimentary functioning of these two terms. This problematic is traced from Foucault’s lecture course *Society Must Be Defended* and the *History of Sexuality Volume I*, where the opposition between the power to make live and take life is refracted in the work of several contemporary authors. These extend from Hardt and Negri’s new capitalism, where biopower displaces sovereignty as “real subsumption” takes over from the formal subsumption of Fordist capitalism, to Agamben’s treatment of Schmidt and the biopolitical as “state of exception.” Throughout, Fiaccadori uncovers the generative tension that operates between these two terms, where the giving and taking of life are described as interpenetrated political processes. The discussion traces this dynamic to the present situation through an account of the sovereignty of state racism, which licenses the imperative to kill in the defence of popular life, and specifically to the case of Nazism, a topic close to Foucault’s own biographical experience, and which he dealt with in the concluding lectures of the 1975-76 course.

Sean Erwin’s (Barry University, USA) article “Political Technique, the Conflict of Umori, and Foucault’s Reading of Machiavelli in *Sécurité, Territoire, Population*” takes issue with Foucault’s claim that the Prince, above all, seeks to secure the territory. Against such primacy of the relation between the sovereign and his territory, Erwin shows how key passages of the *Principe* and the *Discorsi* support the fundamentally different view that the immanent relation to the people is a key concern for Machiavelli. This becomes particularly apparent with regard to Machiavelli’s understanding of the political humors, the umori: The laws and institutions of a well-ordered city should allow the people to vent their desire not to be ruled. The desire to dominate and the desire not to be dominated are to be articulated within a political space. In Erwin’s words, ‘the immediacy of princes to peoples springs from the fold formed by the difference between the qualities of umori’. Seen in this light, Machiavelli assumes a rather different – and more complex – position in the genealogy of modern political technologies than the one attributed to him by Foucault.

Seeking to clear the ambiguity around the concept of *dispositif*, Nick Hardy’s (University of New Brunswick, Canada) article, “*Alea Capta Est: Foucault’s Dispositif and Capturing Chance*,” engages Foucault’s arguments on what is a *dispositif*, what it does, and how it works. The article relates Foucault’s texts to Louis Althusser’s later work to emphasize the role of the aleatory in furthering understandings of the *dispositif*. Also reconciling it with Foucault’s notion of discursive formations, the article ends with a more rigorous view of the *dispositif* by identifying a series of thresholds that it must cross in order to hold sway.

TRANSLATION. We are delighted to bring in this issue for the first time in English Foucault’s 1963 essay “Standing Vigil for the Day to Come” translated by Elise Woodard (Reed College, USA) and Robert Harvey (Stony Brook University, USA). First published in *La Nouvelle Revue française* as a book review of Roger Laporte’s *La Vielle*, the essay is part of the series of literary reviews from the first half of the sixties in which Foucault explored the relationship between language and thought. 1963 was a highly eventful year for Foucault, with the publication of both *Naissance de la clinique* and *Raymond Roussel*, and his controversy with Derrida. Published in October 1963, we think that “Standing Vigil for the Day to Come” is an important document

for the understanding of Foucault's early scholarship and we are very pleased to make it available for English readership.

REVIEW SECTION AND AN INVITATION. The present issue also includes ten book reviews of recent books concerned with Foucault's work, as well as the work of related thinkers. In addition, with a view to extending the scope of books reviewed in the future, we invite readers to submit reviews and review essays on previously seldom noticed books from the last 20-30 years which have a particularly original and rich relation to Foucault, but which have not received widespread academic attention and recognition. In line with this, we also invite readers to submit for consideration reviews of past PhD dissertations on or related to Foucault. Concurrently with the translations of more and more of Foucault's work into English, we wish to ensure an accompanying contextual and academic depth by bringing to light coeval scholarly work that might reflect on Foucault's thought and its heritage. We thank Colin Gordon of the Editorial Advisory Board of *Foucault Studies* for this idea.

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