

Law and critique: Twentieth Anniversary

A Note from the Editor

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This is the first issue of the twentieth volume of *Law and Critique*, the prime international critical legal theory journal. When we started in the dark late Eighties, law meant exclusively positive law, legal scholarship was committed to the writing of footnotes to judicial decisions and jurisprudence veered between sterile positivism and the celebratory moralism of rights. Legal theory generated a feeling of terminal boredom for student and academic alike. In the intervening period, *Law and Critique* helped change the landscape of legal scholarship and pedagogy. Articles on semiotics, rhetoric, literature, aesthetics and psychoanalysis have introduced a much wider conception of legality of which state law is only one part. A variety of critical schools, such as postmodernism, phenomenology, postcolonialism, critical race, queer theory, the ethics of otherness, the ontology of plural singularity, the critique of biopolitics and post-politics have been pioneered in these pages and created a new and stronger link between theory and practice. Nowadays even established learned journals carry articles on the ‘deconstruction’ of doctrine or the ‘legal aesthetics’ of drama, poetry or the Constitution. It was *Law and Critique*, as well as a few other radical and theoretical journals, which brought legal scholarship back to the centre of intellectual debate from the outer periphery to which it had been consigned by apologetic jurisprudence.

Throughout the last 20 years, *Law and Critique* retained a strong connection with the Critical Legal Conference. Since 1984, every first weekend in September, the CLC brings together critical and radical legal scholars from all over the world. It has been a phenomenal success despite its modesty. The Critical Legal Conference is exactly that: a conference without organisation, presidents and secretaries, members and subscriptions. The Critical Legal Conference is a transient community; a ‘coming’ or ‘inoperative’ community that just lasts for 3 days every year, without orthodoxies, exclusions or stars, which gets down to the business of thinking and

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being together. New and exciting thinking premieres at the CLC and soon finds its way into *Law and Critique*.

This issue does precisely that: as a tribute to the twentieth anniversary of the journal, we publish the *Law and Critique* sponsored keynote lectures from the 2007 Birkbeck and the 2008 Glasgow conferences. Emiliios Christodoulidis and Joseph Singer exemplify the trajectories of critical legal thought in Britain and the United States and perhaps explain their different history and status. In between these two lectures is another extraordinary talk: Drucilla Cornell's inaugural address at the University of Cape Town, where she moved to in 2007. Their political commitment, radical imagination and elegance of style prove that the critical legal community and *Law and Critique*, its prime journal, can look forward to another 20 years of challenging orthodoxy and imagining and working for justice.