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Lire et narrer le post-esclavage

Editorial

Myriam Cottias and Céline Flory

Translator: Nicholas Mann



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Editorial

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- 1 This fourth number of our journal is being published at a moment of some significance for all those working on the multiple forms of the slave-trade and slavery, those for whom such memories are a key point in reclaiming their identity or their origins, or those who simply recognize the importance of this history. May 10 2021 is effectively the 20th anniversary of what has become known as the Taubira Law, which not only declared that the Transatlantic and Indian Ocean slave-trade and slavery were a ‘crime against humanity’, but also recommended that teaching in schools, research and heritage sites should all take account of, and give proper weight to, this history.
- 2 This law created a symbolic framework of legitimacy for a field of enquiry hitherto regarded as marginal by historians, and one whose links with contemporary inequalities such as racism and social, political and statutory imbalances (with regard to the French overseas departments and territories) had not previously been investigated. Recognition of these questions in France has been gradually growing, though it still has some way to go.
- 3 One thing is clear. Although it was scarcely noticed at the time when it was voted through the French Parliament in 2001, this law has had effects which have developed over time. In our area – that of scientific enquiry and artistic and literary creation – its impact had been wide-ranging and innovative.
- 4 The present number bears witness to this. At the same time, it shows how the frontiers of research have been pushed back to include areas such as Africa which had been marginalised. A dialogue has begun to open out between different historiographies and settings of slavery, and the resulting connections make it possible to refine the issues encountered in research. Rather than analysing the original narratives of the enslaved, or the neo-slave narratives, to see what they can tell us of the system of slavery, the aim now is to consider what they achieve by means of their circulation on an international scale. When do they emerge or re-emerge? In what media (book, plays, films...)? What shape do they take, given the political context in which they appear (written, oral, visual, even migratory movements)? How do they create memory? And

when can the extreme violence of a system of coercion and oppression which lives on in the contemporary world be voiced, and be heard? *A fortiori* when it affects women, as Djâïli Amadou shows in her novel , *Les impatientes*¹.

NOTES

1. Paris, Emmanuelle Colas, 2020 [1st ed. : *Munyal, les larmes de la patience*, Yaoundé, éditions Proximité, 2017].

AUTHORS

MYRIAM COTTIAS

CNRS (LC2S, CIRESC), France

CÉLINE FLORY

CNRS (Mondes Américains, CIRESC), France