

Editorial

Estelle Noonan

...which texts would I consent to write (to re-write), to desire, to put forth as a force in this world of mine?

Roland Barthes, *S/Z*

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the closing edition of *Philament* for 2007. The theme of this issue – ‘Bound’ – may invite ironic comparison given our journal’s exclusive presentation in an online format. And yet, whilst *Philament* may eschew the material lure of the ‘hardcopy’ text for many reasons, I dare to speak for those thinkers who contribute and manage the content of this publication when I state that our continuing choice of the virtual medium *insists* upon the boundlessness of the written word. By deploying the accessible (and emendable) online medium *Philament* has, for four years now, maintained its core passion for rendering postgraduate scholarship in a manner consistent with the spirit of Barthes’ comment that ‘nothing’, indeed, ‘exists outside of the text’.

The diversity of contributions to this issue suggests a creative and ‘writerly’ engagement with our stimulus term (‘bound’) that defies its traditional function as a signifier of delimitation. Julian Pinder’s paper on the ‘(Failed?) Promise of the Hypertext Novel,’ engages explicitly with the notion of the codex, potentially ‘unbound’ by its transition from the hardcopy to the interactive hypertext novel. In this piece he notes, with an apt and scholarly cynicism, that the promise of the hypertext fiction has in many senses disappointed, citing the lack of narrative ‘closure’ in these texts as a source, not of sustenance, but of listlessness or disorientation that highlights the ongoing appeal of the printed word.

Kate Leader attends to the performative and ideological implications of the phrase ‘bound and gagged’ in her paper on the adversarial criminal jury trial, where she elaborates on the types of disadvantages that have become embedded, via tradition, within the juridical process. In considering the more coercive elements of the courtroom performance she offers cogent insights into the particular material and psychological impact of juridical formality on defendants. Her methodological focus on ‘performance’, moreover, is a promising inflection of existing approaches to the question of how one might limit the exacerbation of inequality where defendants are called upon to participate in legal process.

Hamish McDougall’s paper, entitled ‘The Signifying Bind,’ takes hold of the psychical, epistemic implications of our theme in what is an incisive and original

investigation of the Freudian Unconscious. Wading into the mire of exegesis that surrounds Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*, McDougall highlights a vital and pervasive tension that subsists in the hermeneutic discordance of the (Unknown) Unconscious, in psychoanalysis, with the operation of resistance and representation. In so doing he gestures at an interpretative 'double bind' that inheres in the resistance, yet concurrent necessity of the Unknown: a tension which he bravely posits as the locus of the limit of representation itself.

There is one potential application of 'bound' that is not taken up in the current issue, which has to do with its role as a temporal term (i.e. 'it is bound to happen'), denoting 'destiny' or 'determination' and suggesting an implicit, historical connection with the past. If you allow me to briefly turn this temporal lens back on the publication at hand, it is pleasing to note that *Philament* has now reached a position of stable continuity – marked by its particular ability to reflect, explicitly, on prior content. For the first time, in this issue, we have included a response to a previous article, countered by an authorial answer to this criticism (see Shane Denson's response to Meredith Nash's "From 'Bump' to 'Baby'" and Nash's rejoinder in *Conversations*). I invite current and future readers to add their own opinions to the postgraduate mix by submitting responses to *Philament* whenever their reading inspires an urge to do so.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge the contribution of the current team of editors, whose ties to this publication, we must acknowledge, can sometimes compromise their connections with their own theses. At a recent social gathering of *Philament*-ers a series of editors were asked to describe their 'relationships' with their dissertations, and did so by deploying a lexicon of fraught romance. Some spoke of 'honeymoon periods' followed by long lapses of conversation, succeeded by total abandonment of intimacy and, finally, 'estrangement'. Others levelled the blame at the theses (far healthier), which were alternately described as imperious yet recalcitrant children; others, again, spoke of the dangers of 'making assumptions' in relationships, and expressed feelings of inadequacy ('it may, at some stage, realise that I'm just not very interesting and dump me'). Overwhelmingly, our editors articulated the centrality of the thesis-writer relationship, evinced in that old Ph.D. acknowledgments adage: "to X who was there at the beginning...and Y who was there at the end". Let it be known that the stalwart group who comprise the *Philament* collective are not commitment-phobic. To our editors who were there at the beginning, to the current team, and to those who will take our places in future, *Philament* thanks you. Merry Christmas everyone, and best wishes for a lively and productive 2008.