

## Introduction: Text, History, Context

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This issue of *Gramma* began as an attempt to go beyond the simplistic and stereotypical sense of the term 'intertextuality' as a one-dimensional and a-historical relationship between texts. We proposed instead a multi-dimensional interpretation of the 'embeddedness' of texts in contexts, in cultures, in the multifarious processes and contradictions of history, and invited papers which would pursue the expanding circle of references, echoes and relationships of a text with other texts, discourses, institutions, cultural structures and social practices –to a historical context in the widest sense of the word.

We were surprised by the number and quality of the submissions we received. The task of selecting a necessarily limited group of papers that would present a varied yet coherent set of viewpoints on the topic of text/history/context was both a pleasure and a dilemma. We hope the final composition of the issue will prove as interesting to our readers as it has been to the editors.

The papers included in this volume deal with conceptions and relations of the self and the other, of nation and language, of literature and power, of writing and history, in texts and contexts which range from early modern England to the contemporary Middle East, from film and cartography to poetics and philosophical essays, using theoretical perspectives from the *habitus* of Pierre Bourdieu to Lacan, Derrida, and Homi Bhabha. Because of the very varied nature of the papers, no attempt has been made to place them in any order other than the arbitrary (though historical) one of the Latin alphabet. Any other organizing criterion –chronological, geographical, theoretical, generic– would, we felt, involve a classification which the papers themselves quite obviously rejected, with their deliberate ignoring of precisely such categories.

Yet this arbitrariness, juxtaposing the near and familiar with the remote and 'exotic', itself brings out the common ground of method and perspective which the papers share. For if there is one thing on which these very different authors agree, it is probably the ineluctable, indelible inscription of history in texts and of texts in history, even when –especially when– the text presents itself as selfsufficient, timeless and autonomous. It is this 'embeddedness' which they set out to unfold.