

editorial ii

The Self-internment of the Living

*First we had a couple of feelers down at Tom's place,
There was old Tom, boiled to the eyes, blind,
(Don't you remember that time after a dance...)*¹

From its inception, rattle has been highly invested in the issue of two. Our editorial board is a two-headed beast, and conversations between Tom and myself often return to questions of how we might remain two, that is, how we might keep our different predilections and the dialogic processes of editorial on the surface and never contritely subordinate to a singular outcome. Similarly, we ask the same of what our subtitle calls 'Art and Writing'. Possible convergences are vertiginously innumerable when neither is asked to dominate the other. But paramount is the content of the journal itself being always multiple. Practically, we must encourage ourselves to be surprised by the work submitted to us, to strive for insight and acuity whilst dampening any urge to recognise only that which we already believe to be 'good' qualities - that path would lead only to kindly shepherding or bogus coronation. What I believe we strive for, against the dissipation of multiplication of tolerance, is a certain disappearance.

Thinking through this problem of a set which is not pre- or over-determined (neither monocratically nor neoliberally) has caused me to reflect that the history of collaboration has frequently been a history of poor arithmetic: William Burroughs and Brion Gysin wrote of a 'third mind' emerging from their joint efforts ($1+1=3$); Gilbert and George as a single entity seems to precede and preclude any ancestral individuation, such that I cannot imagine a time when there was a Gilbert yet to meet a George ($1=1+1$); Bob and Roberta Smith (nominally and arithmetically)

¹ p5 Eliot, T.S. *The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts Including the Annotations of Ezra Pound* Faber and Faber, London 2011

conflates these two equations; Nicolas Bourriaud writes of an imminent utopia of conviviality; Chantal Mouffe refuses it. Whether sustained by a messianic coming together or groundless originary dissensus, whether producing excess or contraction, being together does strange things.

Perhaps concomitantly, being alone can require equally strange machineries. To determine what it takes for an artwork to stand alone, we need only arrive at an exhibition an hour before opening: While curators coiffe and file themselves ready for smooth networking, witness scribbles of technicians and handlers smoothing filler onto curved projection walls and raising canvases by imperceptible measures. And it is these that are our best models as editors - those who labour themselves out of the way, out of the work, not as an act of camouflage, nor yet as a retreat, but as a self-burial, a disappearance that remains as the very condition of the art work appearing. A strange, transparent residue-support.

On rare, privileged occasions we may dig up these processes, as Mary Conroy, niece of the great John Quinn did among her late uncle's effects. From a three decade abyss came the typed pages on which Ezra Pound had made the brilliant, brutal marks which made Eliot's *The Waste Land* the work we now know. Glib marginalia and the famous recurring strike through the poem's first fifty-four lines, cleaving the opening back from 'First we had a couple of feelers...' to line fifty-five, 'April is the cruelest month...'?

Certainly, at least since Robert Rauschenberg's *Erased de Kooning*, there has been little trouble in thinking of removal as an authorial act. But this is by no means what is at stake in editing, nor indeed any other real (non-authoritarian) engagement with a work. These latter require a kind of removal which allows what was already there to become what *is* there, a species of indiscernibility, a becoming-imperceptible, to borrow a phrase. Pound does not usurp Eliot's position as author of *The Waste Land* any more than the gallery technician usurps the artist whose work they are installing. To return to the mathematics analogy, this is not the equilibrium of one replacing another one, but a formula: $x+y=1$, where as y tends toward 0, x tends towards 1. A working *out* of the equation.

It is the technicians and handlers to whom we must aspire when working on our own capacity to engage with work as viewers, readers or editors. Surely, we are none so brilliant and relentless as Pound, but those technicians are equally seminal and as beautifully buried in their unmarked graves.

~ Jon K. Shaw
London, June 2011



editorial ii

Following a Lead

Self-lubricating plastic, polycaprolactone thermoplastic, shrimp shells, sea shells, cement, wood, steel, stainless steel, expanded polystyrene, vivac, pigment, acrylic paint, acrylic medium, sand, aquaplast, and PVC.

Above is the list of materials from which Matthew Barney's 'Holographic Entrypoint' sculpture was made. Installed at the Serpentine gallery several years ago as part of his 'Drawing Restraint' exhibition, this work was, like most in the show, unable to live up to the Barney mythology. More an exercise in brand stretching than genuine investigation, a lazy kinkiness pervaded, except for this single instance in which the indulgent list of materials yielded a moment of potency. At one end of the huge sculpture (approximately whale-sized, and representational of a shell-encrusted ramp) a slab of the **pristine, medically white plastic material** had cleaved from the larger bulk, resting below the sheer surface from whence it had apparently slipped. Drama and motion are, of course, not the only ambitions of sculpture, but they did in this instance tease the great bulk of the object, and the great bulk of Barney hype, out to a point from which a strangeness could begin to fester. The unworldly character of the plastic, its celestially glowing whiteness and its wholly improbable name and alleged function (self-lubricating), had suffered an utterly earthly incident of a base geological nature.

Cleave to, cleave from, the excitement is in the ambivalence. Opposite actions are somehow given to share an equivalence, even an identity, in this single term. How else may we maintain a sense of surprise at the work to be found in these pages, than by enacting a schism of cleaving? As editors we cling to the work even as we carve at it, and all this violence precisely so that the work may rest singly, and coyly entice each reader into its self-lubricating folds. And yet we feel, as editors,

that too much demure reticence is disingenuous, that if we cover ourselves too completely from view we risk contriving a reality that does not acknowledge our privileged position. And so we embark on a game of cat and mouse.

Have you seen me, am I following too closely? Trudging too dutifully in trodden footsteps? Following well involves following ahead. You've seen the movies and the TV programs, read the books, you know how it works – the team tracking together, the old man in the tatty coat with the bottle in a crumpled brown paper bag takes the lead from the young business woman, who turns the corner out of sight while the street sweeper bends into his work so the passing target cannot see the neat white wire curling up behind his ear from inside the collar of his orange jacket... And you, where are you watching from? Have we managed to evade you?

So we are two, us editors, and sometimes we move together (even in our assurances that we do not always do so), but sometimes we do not. Yet what of the group? The majority of these pages belong to others, so what strange mathematics binds this mass? The progress of a group is perhaps more easily evident than just one or two. Such movements, sometimes identified in their approach, but more often as they pass, are (from without or within) ascribed monikers, like weather systems, so their trails can be identified and verified, their characteristic patterns appreciated and matched approvingly against the debris. But we are no group. To be sure, this is not a survey, not a random collection, and nor does it move in concert – it is no violent vortex and if its sound were to be heard it would be less the *bang* of a blast rending than the *sssttt* of Velcro cleaving.

~ Tom Robinson
London, July 2011