Jack a Dull Boy not only rebuilds Torrance's fictional text, it also channels Charles Bernstein's dense over-written poem Veil, dom sylvester houédard's concrete poetry, John Riddell's typewriter-based visual prose and Aram Saroyan's minimalist work.

The novel is presented as typed manuscript in a fixed-width typeface but strangely breaks this conceit for a 10-page section which—while cleanly aping Saroyan's minimalist poetry by including only a single word on each page—appears to be typeset, instead of typed, thus breaking the illusion of a reconstructed manuscript. Outside of this project, Beuhler's oeuvre concentrates on the documentation and exploration of urban ruins, the last vestiges of crumbling hotels, industrial sites and developments. Beuhler's All Work and No Play makes Jack a Dull Boy is an exploration of an urban ruin whereby the author maps the possibilities of potential text.

Ironically, Torrance's All Work and No Play makes Jack a Dull Boy manuscript is more indicative of contemporary poetic and prosaic output than one would first expect. The gall to call oneself a writer (and especially a poet), with all the inherent cultural baggage, causes even more pause during those times when one isn't writing, when life has other plans, when one is between projects, or during that most frightening period of "writer's block." What do we do with the moments when we aren't writing? Are you a writer if you're not writing at all; when your poetic output consists of obsessive baseball tossing and the obsessive retyping of a single phrase? Can not writing at all be a literary act? Can

we consider that an author is adding to her oeuvre by ceasing to write? All Work and No Play makes Jack a Dull Boy levels fictional authors with factual ones, undermines the reality of all authors.

- 1 This phrase is only used in the American release of *The Shining*. Kubrick—notorious for his exhaustive filmmaking—substituted different proverbs for international releases. In the Italian version of the film Kubrick uses the phrase "Il mattino ha l'oro in bocca" [He who wakes up early meets a golden day]; in the German version Torrance types "Was Du heute kannst besorgen, das verschiebe nicht auf Morgen" [Never put off 'til tomorrow what you can do today]. In the Spanish version of the film Kubrick uses the phrase "No por mucho madrugar amanece más temprano" [Rising early will not make dawn sooner]; in the French version Torrance types "Un 'Tiens' vaut mieux que deux 'Tu l'auras'" [A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush].
- 2 Rumour has it that both Michael Ondaatje's and Michael Redhill's archives contain similar attempts.
- 3 Torrance, Jack. *All Work and No Play Makes Jack a Dull Boy*. Phil Beuhler, ed.; Torrance, Jack. *All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy*. Gengotti Editore.; Keller, Jean. *The Overlook Manuscript*.

All other and on Jahr amen and a still by the still control and the jahr and an jahr an jahr and an jahr an jahr an jahr and an jahr a

All years and no years makes makes a stall bey all years and maybe years make a stall bey all years and maybe years and make years and the year and years an

Rabble, an imprint of Insert Blanc Press, is co-edited by Holly Myers and Mathew Timmons. Rabble prints single author issues of critical essays on a subject of the author's choosing. Rabble seeks to be a venue through which to interrogate the nature of criticism, a laboratory for prodding at the boundaries of criticism as a form. The idea is to begin with a framework that reduces criticism down to its two fundamental components—the thing that's been made and the person who responds to the thing that's been made (i.e., the art work and the critic)—and then to invite a lot of smart people to take up that framework as they see fit.

INSERT
PRESS







Rabble

derek beaulieu

All Work and No Play Makes Jack a Dull Boy

In Stanley Kubrick's 1980 film adaptation of Stephen King's The Shining, author Jack Torrance slowly loses his grip on sanity while ensconced in a winter-long residency as caretaker for the seasonally-closed Overlook Hotel, Over the season Jack, a struggling novelist, uses the solitude (interrupted only by his wife Wendy and son Danny) to attempt to construct his new novel. Only a few pages of Torrance's efforts are revealed in *The Shining*, but every page consists wholly and entirely of the phrase "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy" repeated ad infinitum over a presumably several-hundred-page manuscript.¹ In the filmic reveal of Torrance's creative masterpiece, Wendy emotionally collapses as she finally realizes the extent of her husband's crumbling rationality. Under the mental anguish of this Sisyphean task of nonlinearity, Jack Torrance's grip on reality is weakened, much as readers feel the strain of such a non-traditional manuscript. This key scene was added by Kubrick and is unique to the film version of The Shining; King's original novel contains no such reference.

Metatextually, Torrance's cinematic, recombinant text reflects the role of the author and the futility of the creation of original work. First appearing in James Howell's Proverbs in English, Italian, French and Spanish (1659), the proverb has a little-known second line:

All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy, All play and no work makes Jack a mere toy.

Extrapolating the first line of the proverb, All Work and No Play Makes Jack a Dull Boy suggests that novels formed entirely from the materiality of "work" without the "play" of narrative are inherently "dull" both to the reader and the author, refuting John Cage's ideas of repetition and reiteration. The second line, however, counters this position by arguing that texts that are inherently playful are, in fact, nothing more than poetic playthings—"mere toy[s]". The ideal text, however, if constructed well, will eschew the "dull" and the "boring" alike. A text should be written, as Craig Dworkin postulates, not in terms of "whether it could have been done better (the question of the workshop), but whether it could conceivably have been done otherwise." While Kubrick's The Shining (and King's novel) suggests that Torrance's insanity was the result of alcoholism and the influence of the Overlook Hotel itself, All Work presents an obsessive text that documents how the interplay between linearity and nonlinearity sends the author—and Wendy, his sole reader—into a mental tailspin.

Conceptually, recreating Torrance's manuscript playfully concretizes the fictional output of a fictional character. Unshackled from the plot of the film,

page-based representation Torrance's cinematic novel is a metatextual commentary on the interplay between text and page, between confessionalism and experimentalism, procedurality and intentionality. The cinematic manuscript has been recreated in differing editions by Phil Beuhler, Jean Keller and the anonymous author published by Gengotti Editore.² Each struggles with the poetic potentialities of Torrance's text,³ and each suffers from ungainly editorial and design decisions that hamper the text's ability to mimic Torrance's cinematic manuscript. This literary varia recast Torrance's film efforts in a different light, each displaying a series of decision by the editors and publishers that inform the poetics of the "original."

Of most interest in Gengotti Editore's 128page version is the inclusion of the standard legal copyright boilerplate:

[t]his book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents are products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events of locales or persons living or deadis [sic] entirely coincidental [2]

in which authorship and plot become a series of nested boxes. The only "name" or "character" in the novel is "Jack" and the only "incidents" which occur are the implied work and play in which he participates. The boilerplate also defines for the reader that this text does qualify as a "work of fiction" thus setting aside any question of its genredefying Beckettian minimalism.

Jean Keller's 120-page *The Overlook Manuscript* is hampered by an editorial

statement claiming that Keller found this version of Torrance's manuscript in the basement of an abandoned Swiss nursing home where Torrance supposedly worked in 1979. This back-story extrapolation is entirely Keller's, with no support found in King or Kubrick. Keller's own authorial participation is signaled by the inclusion of the French phrase *Un «Tiens» vaut mieux que deux «Tu l'auras»* and the replacement of "Jack" with "Jean" on four pages of Torrance's manuscript.

Phil Beuhler's version of the text is the most developed, faithful and widely publicized of the three recreations and his text is the best candidate for further discussion of the poetics of Torrance's manuscript. Beuhler's All Work and No Play Makes Jack a Dull Boy problematizes the interplay between text and author as the manuscript is no longer the fictional output of a fictional character; it has become as "real" as any other novel. Torrance achieves a corporeal presence which transcends his representation on film with the publication of his novel; he moves from a character in a novel to a novelist himself. Writers only occupy the role of writer when they publish. Writers are only



writers when they write; when they cease to write, they cease to exist.

The labour of writing defines a writer's existence, despite Torrance's dictum that "all work and no play" will denigrate the writer into a "dull boy." All Work consists entirely of the repetition of a single sentence without any explicit discussion of the traditional tropes of fiction: characterization, narrative, dialogue and conflict. All Work is a documentation of process; the evidence of an obsessive writing practice which reduces writing to the act of writing. The lack of narrative, character and dialogue (the "[n] ames, characters, places and incidents" of the legal boilerplate) makes All Work about material—the accumulation of text on a page. A novel is anything that takes the form of a novel regardless of the content.

Beuhler chooses to construct only the first few manuscript pages from *The Shining* with obsessive detail, retaining every typographic error and idiosyncratic variation but, sadly, he only maintains that neurotic level of detail for the first few pages. After the introduction of such an obsessive practice, Beuhler erratically recreates the cinematic pages of *The Shining* without indicators of Torrance's writing practice (errant capitalization, mistyped letters and erroneous indentation), thus turning his manuscript into less documentation than translation.

Beuhler's All Work and No Play makes Jack a Dull Boy succeeds despite this uneven execution as a manual of potential compositional structures—a 'pataphysical encyclopedia of textual manipulation in concrete poetry. All Work and No Play makes