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Preface

In the contemporary world, notions of the viral are infused, as was impossible in a pre-globalised time, with connotations both positive and negative. Even as the AIDS pandemic, caused by the Human Immunodeficiency Virus, continues to rage worldwide, marketers use the same terminology of infection when they speak of their success; they have “gone viral”. Meanwhile, on the software front, a campaign of “biological/viral warfare” has reached the next stage of its analogy with (allegedly) state-sponsored malware, such as the Stuxnet worm, attacking industrial and nuclear facilities with hitherto unprecedented levels of sophistication. From this slim set of examples, a host of possibilities arise. Where does the virus sit in the realm of aesthetics? What could be the political side of the viral? Is such a terminological analogy ethically appropriate? It was with these in mind that the *Excursions* board called for papers addressing the topic of the Virus. This issue is the culmination of that call.

We received a large number of submissions, many of which, sadly, didn't make it through our peer review procedures. The end result is a small issue that goes, nevertheless, to the core of the matter. While the pieces speak for themselves and therefore require little introduction, the editorial board would like to thank Peter Boxall, Tracy Egbert, Luke Jerram, Vicky Lebeau, Graeme Pedlingham and Sarah Robins-Hobden for their assistance.

Martin Paul Eve

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