50 years of writing and art

EDITOR'S NOTE

Last year, in anticipation of our 50th anniversary, we invited over a hundred of the magazine's contributors to submit a term of their choosing to our special anniversary issues, the first of which you now hold in your hands. These terms would be collected, we said, alongside notable selections from our archive into an experimental glossary—a form we hoped would index the creative practices that make up our literary and arts community while elucidating, as our invitation explained, "some of the questions, shifts, antagonisms, and continuities that have marked five decades of publishing." Returning to our prompt now, I can't help but also consider the term "experimental," itself a point of ongoing discussion at the magazine and one that has generated lively debate: What are our criteria for "experimental" writing? What does it look like on the page, and how does it sound? Who does it include? What kinds of risks does it take, and how does it take them?

Throughout *TCR*'s remarkable five decades of existence different words have at various times been proposed. "Playful," "edgy," "unconventional," "challenging," "dissident," and even "dream-caked" have all entered our organizational discourse to describe the kind of work we intended to platform. "Innovative" becomes the dominant descriptor by the early 2000's, and while we still use it, its all-too-ready adoption by the corporate tech world (where, as we know, everything is constantly being innovated) is a source of increasing discomfort. And of course, there's no overlooking that troubled term "the avant-garde," used most frequently in our first few decades of operation and rightly criticized[1] over the years for its history of racial exclusions and appropriations as well as for its masculinist and militaristic associations. These terms and the polemics they raise with regards to art history, Western European aesthetic standards, and the

institutionalization of literary culture remind us that definitions, particularly as applied to creative or artistic practices, should be continually rethought and reimagined. As Liz Howard wrote to me with regards to her piece "Archaeology": "The idea is to resist definition, in the accepted way, because why would I follow so strictly the linguistic part of a system that wants to erase me?"

Instead, why not consider Wayde Compton's "Afrocentripetalism & Afroperipheralism," where he upends what we typically accept as margin and centre, or Bhanu Kapil's "Detritus," a word she describes as "[having] no identity…no presence." While Jónína Kirton pulls apart the word "Equity" in ways we don't see "posted on websites filled with promises of inclusion," the poems "Ease" by Jen Currin and "Colour" by Rhoda Rosenfeld show how much can be done in fewer words. Jin-me Yoon confronts the very desire to categorize and classify in her brilliant "Dare (to stare)" and the section dedicated to ecstatic punctuation featuring Aisha Sasha John, Danielle LaFrance, and CAConrad holds nothing back. We try on words to see how they fit–what they define or fail to define. We invite you to explore the extraordinary range of this expansive glossary, generated by the responses of our contributors to a single term.

—**Matea Kulić**

1.
See, as a recent example, Cathy Park Hong, "Delusions of Whiteness in the Avant-Garde," *Lana Turner: A Journal of Poetry and Opinion 7* (Fall 2014), http://www.lanaturnerjournal.com/7/delusions-of-whiteness-in-the-avant-garde.