







YST Publications  
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IX

Compiled and edited: Terrence Arjoon, Amelia Walsh, Johanna Costigan, Mack Kristofco

November 2016

Cover photograph: Liam Wrubel

Insert: Nicholas Chiarella

Online Catalogue: [ystpublications.com](http://ystpublications.com)

Printed at Bard Central Services

YST Publications Annandale-on-Hudson, NY  
[ystpublications@gmail.com](mailto:ystpublications@gmail.com)

With thanks to all  
past, present and future agents of the YST Collective

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## Editor's note

Dear Reader,

Thank you for picking up the ninth issue of YST. We are an experimental poetry collective at Bard that is currently entering into its fourth year, and its last year with me as managing editor. This issue provides more of what we have offered in previous issues: the best experimental poetry that students at Bard are writing. As an introduction, what do these words mean? Experimental? Poetry? In her essay "Use This Word In a Sentence," Ann Lauterbach breaks the word experimental down as following: from the latin root *experiri*, meaning to try, and sharing a root with experiment, expense, experience. To be experimental is to try to break from conventions, conventions of language, society, communication, etc. In his book *ABC of Reading*, Ezra Pound elucidates his opinions on poetry using an aprocyphal story about Basil Bunting. Flipping through a German-Italian dictionary, Bunting noticed that the German verb *Dichten*, from which we derive the German word *Dichtung*, meaning poetry, was translated into Italian as *Condensare*, to condense. So poetry is language in its most condensed and charged form, delivering meaning as clearly and efficiently as possible. AtYST we believe that poetry must make an attempt to be NEW, in any way possible: By avoiding staid conventions of poetry, by avoiding cliches, by exciting the reader. To sum it up, literature, as Pound writes, is NEWS that stays NEWS. YST will continue changing and adapting because that is what people do, and what poetry does, and we hope to continue to provide a space where this can happen, on the pages ofYST, in houses of friends who host our readings, and in the minds of our readers.

Terrence Arjoon

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# Johanna Costigan

## *I Kill Dogs For This City*

Lasagna with burnt edges, solstice surrender further, towards Route 12, avoid the thruway, the tolls. Someone with half a beard took her diving, deep end Maoism bubbling the pool red, a lullaby depicting electricity turned off, set in Cambodian killing fields. Art by number, love by hummer, Chicago sheepskin asleep on top of moist asphalt, rain or snow, or your mother as your surrogate, the forecast isn't out yet. We all know your opinions on this Jeremy, pro-voice as you repair so many sewers, your feet are floaters, thanks for sharing. When you take the garbage out, all that's left—the Giants game, the bee stuck in your car, it's incredible what passes for alcoholism here. Orange County, playing cards, Chardonnay, dreams implanted into poor eyes through TV and T-shirts. I got a boyfriend in Lithuania, Sri Lanka, Milwaukee, and a stuck toilet in the living room, renovate now, my plumbing, my rugs, my woodwork, my window treatments. Anyone who tells you she's happy for you, isn't. Your girl is pregnant and clingy. Rat poison on your plans. She's on the phone with a realtor, isn't every apartment prewar if we're not specifying which war?

# Maddie Hopfield

## *TWIN LAKES I*

water tongues lap the gaping ravenous shore

beneath the dock fishes  
mouth an 'O' — the pathway of the spine  
a sparkling 'S.'

grass, herons, sinking mud,  
the silent reflection, who waits  
without initiation —

I cannot distance myself from breath.  
upon the surface are cold patches.  
eyes penetrate and impose

upon the water the notion of blue.

thinking as much of light pouring in as  
a dragonfly hovering above considers the image of hovering.

in this moment I am  
without an 'S' in my possession —  
watching a sliver bounce from the water  
an altered reproduction  
a separation looping:  
that me-like thing and me,  
watching one another.

## *TWIN LAKES II*

To impose the eye, to impose the I  
Never to witness the unaltered

The heron feeds at sunset.

# Charlotte Foreman

*“july the shade of apple cider”*

i biked past the snake  
shrouded in maggots and flies  
this morning. i don't know whether a car  
stripped the movement from his  
skin, or whether he just  
decided to die. i am not sure  
i want to know. but i've been good  
at following scars. she sat in the backyard  
honey-sweet in melancholy. clutter of amaretto  
and talk of trailer parks. do i say  
goodnight or good morning? it is 2 a.m.  
and you have fallen like toast crumbs.  
we are navigating the definition of  
“reasonable” and deciding not to shower.  
we went to walmart and bought parchment  
paper instead of doing lines in the parking lot  
like last time. is this what it means to grow up?  
i still sweep inefficiently. yet you say i take care  
of you.

# Jack Pagliante

(0000000)

frosted window pane walled me in, killing time never felt so new.

broken clock,                boat's strung hollow, docked along the silvered meadow  
"god" (0000000) made with locusts twining through time.

home died in house,  
house died in home.  
put down the phone                (your)  
dull drone is all i can hear..  
reeds gone silent like a broken child- cracked smile,  
(waiting)

## Wire-Worn

hand cooled hard into the glass case,  
it's night on your moon, had to pass the time,  
spinning.

fevered waterwheel came crashing down,  
helped me reach the ground  
moored in two separate eyes, (one)  
twice learned from the father you never knew, (two)

the mother hurried away.

shaking, now, hand's frozen yellow, bells  
telling you i don't know— crashing like the car you broke under,  
rushed in, can't get out,  
deeper.

i want you, anything's right,  
hold me in the mirror,  
look at me in you,  
as i asked in return:

what do you want that i can't give?  
isn't that enough to let you still live

concealed?                    opened whole to you,  
    please, please, please,  
    you say, tease,

laughed about it,        pricked my cheek,  
lip pink,  
refrain to leave the interval,  
the function's graphed and gone,  
the wire's worn and found,  
always was where it needed to be,  
   terror-bound,  
behind the house we built,  
forked scission gone soft blue,  
(it might not last)

# Mandy Beckley

*[visceralities]*

still, maybe rest produces.  
there, maybe.  
a blurb left in the pond,  
kids pokin' it.  
time speaks a lot to space-  
and gets if and yes and maybe.  
let me set this straight.

okay, again, tracking categories.  
there are these meaty theories using  
untrustworthy methods.  
everyone rejects answers  
knowledge, knowables,  
packages, synopses.  
instead collecting kindas,  
trinkets, singularities,  
bumpy reflections,  
nestled strange and ugly.

The sky is a bully.

[Pink]

my hat's dried up,  
sloughing down past  
my coat that swishes.  
soft pad beginningness  
does not stop the sad starting  
even if sadness is your bones  
non-consensual architecture  
pro bono.

# Ben Alter

## 2 Poems

1

twin magnificent beams  
at each other  
under hoist  
hurling dunes at each other  
being uncovered  
others, inscriptions  
need only a peek of your limestone  
under arrow amber  
virtue design creases  
a dry drowning dune  
for peoples to recover  
we've erected nothing  
but crusades weaving  
makes us out to be ancient  
and burden, former  
pillars that nodded  
still when the roof caved  
we may have been one

2

choose to go into labor  
the side sleeper, predictably,  
discriminates labeling  
its Rio Grande fixed  
with its snake stencils and arches  
'spires misty chores  
learned viscosity  
with a vocoder  
that can choose to go into labor

## **Wilberforce Strand**

*When Alice Saw Her High School Bully On the Subway, Then While Eating  
a Subway Sandwich On Fogle Avenue*

Whether or not his entrance  
was planned, he needled, stayed  
under her skin, again and again.  
It ended in careless humility:  
his bowl of porridge, thick as hell,  
thundering around her church.  
Their eyes collide, and,  
slick with grease, slide like eels. His friendless electricity  
too loud, his fists cannot be forgotten.  
But now she is the emperor of meatball marinara,  
and his army of submarines is propelled into oblivion  
when confronted with the red stains forming on her shirt

*Literotica 1*

Raw eggs in a pan,  
Half-eaten apple,  
Basting a turkey in grease,  
Swallowing meat without chewing,  
She's getting fucked

*Literotica 2*

Canned meat,  
Can of worms,  
Can-do attitude,  
Trash can,  
He's fucking

## Lila Dunlap

*from a longer poem*

4.

“All books are sacred,” she said. Not these.  
And none of them today. The sky is plastic.  
Wiping its skin on us. Every part of our bodies equally desecrated.  
Old women in sweatshirts were standing on the sidewalk making weather.  
I realized I had everything.  
Was I dreaming? Or are we dreaming now?  
Eating envelopes in the diner.  
Inexpensive stationery rolled over in the street.  
Every bird turned into a letter.  
Every letter turned into a bird. And left.  
Us with our sudden lack of stories.  
Loops of ringing. Cell phones and your voice.  
The only forest has been robbed of its animals.  
Taken to somewhere behind the sky.  
Us by the brick warehouses on the river.  
While the new stratosphere seals us in.

but it was not a problem  
it was a flower  
or a circuit  
that sparked a cycle  
the transmigration of birds  
who die away from the house

who respond  
across the sky  
it all runs together  
like it wants to

when it rains  
we are back  
to a thing  
that has left.

# Collin Pritchard

## *retrieval*

she, like a lasting solace, supposed all ease and smiles,  
and just the pagan semblance of those summers stirs  
and is always settling still behind me, like the unstilled  
surface of the ever-settling sea, not how my stone brother slept  
beside me in that basement, his shifting without shimmer,  
his youth, where it lay clod in dull sheets, limp in the souring  
of the elderly's material lingerings, him sleeping this while  
well and away, just knowing our sun had set, his eyes closed  
round the gravity, that globe come to deprive sky, and of it,  
to be deprived, the circumference of those seams stressed  
but unbroken, the thread pinched just where the sea may  
have released some remembrance, but instead, gave just release,  
the rushing, heady sense of absence, of only absent consequence,  
as where the scents align, is where my memory sells cheap,  
but at least sells, and sells as the smells and colored, structured plastics,  
peddles as parent's offerings and my buy-in entertainments, there,  
at the buzzing locus, in the hollow sense at the core,  
all that can be reformed is the child wrapt in the chiding inflections  
of splitting certainties, divergent voices, all responding to a single need,  
to an obscure cry, that I once found figured but left unfulfilled,  
my mouth empty, and stilled, knew just silence's opposite:  
the single, loud call for silence, form found on the tongue  
to decry all speech, which, for me, that is what  
this silent acquisition must merely be: a release

Two older ladies from a local horticulture organ engage in shoptalk.  
I look at the screen.

Common rural sadness now reflected in JavaScript.

I leave the shop and come upon a rain condenser in the shape in Richard.

He pressures me to publish my safe-word. My safe-word is:

“Someday someone will love you and it will feel much different than this.”

You should invest in a safe-word.

Mine was good but a little obvious.

The surgeon general called,  
she’s worried about you.

## *Panphobia*

I've got a disease where the letters are making rude gestures at me.  
I've also got 44 lbs of squid meat and paraffin in the trunk  
that I've just gotta unload right now.  
My phone and I are on silent mode today.  
That's why my dog and I physically maneuvered all your baked goods.  
Sorry about that.  
My niece, Guava, is paying me by the pound  
I can't mess up again.

## *Drive*

I shed a vial of Lancôme and a busted speaker,  
but the truth of the matter is  
you really have a misshapen conception of  
what I'm trying to say, which is mainly this:  
every time you reach for the glovebox  
I feel a pang of jealousy and rage,  
and I wish you would stop.

# François Villon

## *Texture*

There was the sense of layering, as in  
a stack of negative photographs.

Texture held prestige-  
a food pyramid sprouting wheat-

a green dress, plaid with a collar.  
People said I looked good in the color  
but the compliment splashed around me

Like saying I looked good in milk, or a bathtub  
of green jelly beans.

In the dress I felt like a dollar.  
Papery softness, falling in value.  
The negatives fade with time

and adulthood enters, like coffee dropped  
into milk. The coffee is coffee-colored.  
The color can't be described.

Nouns proliferate; adjectives burrow.  
Try to remember a color- it scampers.

I chase it.  
I drive myself ten miles insane.

The windshield wipers dance,  
I stare with ancient discipline  
or perhaps the street is a thread of time  
and I am moving too fast.

# Amelia Walsh

*ash coast*

air is salt when  
there's the vivacious thesaurusless cattail palm weeds  
when a water wall sits in motion  
always  
pushing too rough  
hurting the very life the dry parts breathe  
and pores cling too unified inside the  
careless modes of being stone  
here an emerald of sand  
the first and final wet fruit one always higher  
than the first you last peaked  
summits of tar glaze on unwelcomed crunch  
here surrender, though such language should not apply  
done well with thumbs tucked, violent under  
irises, hair above  
softness casting forever into that known

*this poem is composed entirely of found phrases*

okay

i cannot believe i found the words

i cannot believe i found these words

a big truck drives by my house,

shrink wrapped with the word "SOLITUDE™"

i scroll through the web and come across an article:

"perhaps hydrangeas are the largest flower"

not due to size, but because dumb names often rule

# Justin Gomez

*untitled*

I know that  
in my gut's mucous lining  
a series of chemical reactions  
whisper around membrane.  
solemn nuns foretelling  
my descent.  
I'm on my way to expiration.  
it feels like an eye  
rotating limitedly within its socket when a convulsion pushes it forward; it pulses.  
Once very tensely and then  
several times  
similar to a hiccup.  
Nearby sonic guns pointed at my approximate latitude  
discern a muffled shifting underneath  
plastic, trembling like a broth.  
Steam and body heat  
amass to  
a stagnance.  
Swollen and Bulbous veins by vain strands of  
kelp greenish bruises blue  
foreign  
transport me  
within my own quilt- lined vacuole.

I come to establish myself under  
a Luxury.

how thickest foliage luster and limber lends ray of golden sunlight sweet like a  
rhombus on the earth's crust. will it continue to decompose it.

He said the most intense orgasm would split me right from the core into tiny  
shards  
of myself. my big Head weighs heavy on my own neck—  
My crown tilts backwards gums now gills to masses of stale air.  
inhaling an evaporation sweet like warm waters against my tongue  
it goes  
down my throat pervading my bone mold.  
this infusion yields  
marrow:  
succulent nectar warming my core.  
Lazy of sight,  
my glass eye, emperor of voyage, turns inward facing a carnivorous, pink darkness.

## Jada Smiley

### *Low Country Funeral*

A willow flute of a woman,  
A moth kind of a lady,  
Came down to big pappy and asked  
“Can I borrow your time baby?”

Bad as black with a double a,  
a child with a tiger mouth  
She said “Can’t you see all this sugar  
In this lil landscape of drought?”

I tell you, she lit a candle.  
The plum hoe rocks the crate;  
And she rolled out a proposition  
right out flat in his face.  
Before day ran out to tell it.  
daddy was a casket case.  
Don’t you go on regrettin and raninin,  
A bastard could bear a better bake.

Yes that sure is an ugly baby,  
with a face like a chess cake

And de momma ain't nothing but bad sloe gin  
teased from saloon drapes.

He'll haunt us low as barrels  
ifn he heard me tell his loans,  
spreading his business like that chap seed  
he cast on breasts and bones.

# Nicholas Chiarella

## BAKELITE

i began to think about foods as abstracted materialities. protein, carbohydrate, lipid, flattery. i began to calculate caloric efficiencies of various grains and legumes per gram and made spreadsheets that balanced these against daily and monthly economies of cash and energy. my diet could be calibrated to a range of masses that would satisfy essential health requirements. i forgot i loved oranges. i took pleasure in early american stoneware. i told everyone i knew or met that i ground my own flour with a machine that i bought on amazon. i drove a black, signature model fuel-efficient v8 luxury sedan 40 miles to a biodynamic farm on freshly-laid asphalt striped with glittery white. i bought biodynamic wheat berries from the farm store and drove home and baked and cried for how incredible it would taste throughout the week.

*Speaking to Me B. Measured the Distance Between Tarsal Glands  
and Doe Love Calls*

*A first formulation, in which silence widens the distance between speakers :*

Speaking to me B. wondered: Would you understand me better if I snorted like the beast you are? Brayings, like: I \_\_ you, I \_\_ you, I \_\_ you, you. If her words still sounded similar to bird calls, mimicked threshing foliage, would they land on patterned wings? Would they patch the silences in the tapestry tied between our tongues? I replied, if your name “B.” is for boulder, when did your words start tumbling out more rockfall and less the breath of heaving forms in a frozen meadow? On my swollen tongue dripped icicles.

The layer of snow that abrades your ankles is the sun crust. Postholing: punching past the crust to fragile depth-hoar, is the difference between hunting and limping. The collapse of depth-hoar triggers persistent slab avalanches and the space between postholing and an avalanche is thunder and red cracks in a bluebird sky.

*A second formulation, in which the sameness of language unifies the speakers :*

I spoke to her: if we found the right sounds, the same sounds, we could find ourselves together camouflaged, in breath the same. As I lay limp fingertips across hers, swathed in blankets and furs, I noted how damp her breath was; curled in my lap, injured animal and lover became indistinguishable. I know what the words are now, I told her. They were clear and liquid and I lapped them from her lips: I love you, I hate you, I fear you, I hunt you. Language was open to me wet and warm. She traced a finger down my chest and whispered; but what if "B." is for bullet?

Snowshoe hares turn white in the winter, soft absences in a greater nothing. Still, lynx pry them from their burrows, ripping snow and hare into separate shapes. Red wounds in a white field.

As the blizzard set in around, I found the space between our bodies indistinguishable. As she set in around me I found the difference between us indistinguishable. The arch of our back and the arch of the sky indistinguishable. The mud camouflaging our damp bodies reminded me of bow season, how artificial musks and pine greenery conceal ultimately fatal differences. The blankets clung to my skin, fur, and the bed became dead grass beneath my feet. Panicked, I thrashed.

*A third formulation, in which the revelation of a predator betrays the falsity of sameness:*

Between laugh and breath she asked if I thought myself a hunter, if in becoming obscured with her I sought to skin her, mount her on a wall. Clutching to my socks, I remembered, how we still hunt with mimicry, the hollow sound of beating antlers seducing elk bulls. She formed the words and I showed my teeth: maybe “B.” should be for bugle? I’m like you, I’m in heat, I’m one of you, I’m just like you.

Hunters will burry last years antlers and legs to create natural signs, nests. The glands above the severed hooves drip mating scents, to a passing bull blur sex and amputative carnage. These nests look like lovers beds, and should be decorated lavishly, complete with candles, crimson throw pillows, the appropriate smells.

As I bleated mad elk cries at her I realized too slowly, who was closer to nature. My question breath in the mist; how many points are on the rack that grows from my head? The words of therianthropy fell softly from her mouth; they lost their form on my velvet ears and four kicking legs. Inversion makes it warmer atop peaks than in valleys and ice forming around a firing pin will jam a perfect shot.





