

Found feminine aesthetics and writing across waves: A poetic experiment

CIAN DENNAN

Abstract

In this article, Cian Dennon conducts a language experiment to explore how the divisive narrative of feminist 'waves' fails to enact the experimental feminine aesthetic. Using found poetry as her creative methodology, she demonstrates how revisioning the wave metaphor as radio waves rather than oceanic waves can help to develop a new understanding of the feminist literary canon. With this new metaphorical understanding of feminist waves, the canon becomes a concurrent event instead of individually occurring moments of impact that happen by random chance. Dennon's experiment leads to her creation of ten found poems, which are shared at the end of the article.

Key words

Found poetry, feminist waves, feminine aesthetic, literary canon, poetics

First: Rationalising [verb {gendered; masculine}] with my/our (?) poetic [adjective {gendered; feminine}] purpose.

She becomes the outside
Alien and critical, always altering,
bring the world perspectives – some
of these seem spontaneously less comfortable than others [...]

When I sit down to write, on my back in stacks are the women who have written before me. Their mirrored words, loud and expecting, pushing me forward up the phallogocentric mountain of language, demanding that I write the way I speak (DuPlessis, 1990). To usher in a poetic dialogue between my tepid tide and their tidal waves. I wonder if I am going to do them proud.

This article takes the form of a language experiment in which I examine how the divisive narrative of feminist 'waves' (first, second, third, and fourth) fails to enact the experimental feminine aesthetic (Retallac, 2004). Using found poetry, I examine how revisioning the wave metaphor as radio waves rather than oceanic waves allows us to better understand the feminist literary canon as a concurrent event rather than individually occurring moments of impact that happen by random chance (Hewitt, 2012). I call this project a language experiment because the very nature of women in literary spaces is unusual, experimental, and dangerous.

When those of us who identify as women enter the literary arena, we do so as Other. I say this (unspoken but still said) because literature is and has always been the phallogocentric ground zero, carrying with it an encoded male privilege, from determining who gets to write to what gets to be written. More so, the masculine is the authority of what becomes audible, or intelligible. Women are spoken of in the literary canon, but are not speakers (DuPlessis, 2006). As muse, our feminine aesthetic is inscribed by forces outside our own narratives, forming a perpetual gendered bind which leaves any opposition to the canon as unfamiliar, unable to be

understood, and unintelligible. That which is not masculine (and therefore, feminine) becomes unintelligible (or unheard) in the literary canon, which is privileged in so far as it is masculine and public. Literature exists for publication; therefore, it enters public discourse and encodes gendered hegemony. Those who produce the masculine canon become watchmen, storming along the oppressive watchtower of literature, masking the hegemonic *agenda* by creating *a-gendered* dichotomy where women can write so long as it happens inside the private sphere (Retallac, 2004). Journals, diaries, poetry, and autobiography, genres which typically have less public impact, are determined as female writing spaces.

These self-defining narratives are seen as feminine forms of language, as they have no direct impact on the literary canon. They occur inside the private space vacuum and resonate no sound loud enough to penetrate the overarching patriarchal control of women's representation in writing. This has created an overtly loud silencing of women writers in literature's proverbial gender divide. Our canonical silence becomes more and more audible with every publication, blog post, and tweet that crosses that invisible line from the female unintelligible/silenced to the masculine intelligible/audible. As Joan Retallack says so potently in her essay on rethinking literary feminism, silence 'itself is nothing more or less than what lies outside the radius of interest and comprehension at any given time' (2004, p. 111). As the arena of comprehension lies at the feet of the masculine, what is silenced and outside the popular consensus is also feminine. But we are writing. And we have been writing into publication in droves. Our (m)others wrote, and are writing, and will be read. Therefore, silence is not empty, but rather so unintelligibly full to the point of spilling over.

And spill it did, and thrash and burst and bubble and burn.

When we as women decide to write, we wage war on the literary canon, we wreak havoc on the intelligible, and to go forward we must make the intelligible feminine. It is not enough to mirror masculine intelligibilities, integrating our silence with their presumed audibility by mimicking and rebranding the modes from which they have and will always benefit (Retallac, 2004). It is not enough to bring forth our othered voices simply by writing our stories in these modes and then calling it feminine language because it is done by women. The experimental female actor inside the masculine language matrix must create new modes, grammars, and syntaxes that are entirely feminine. Using found poetry, poetry which you must look for to find, I hope to evoke these new intelligibilities through an experiment. Found poetry arises from the principle that 'all creative work builds on what came before, every new idea is just a remix of one or two previous ideas' (TED, 2012). And despite poetry being a masculine canon, found poetry allows for a spoken silence which is embedded inside the hegemonic writing practice. We read through a page in order to speak what is not said. In doing so, the poetry that is created builds on and springs forth from the original text. We bring forth women's inaudible and unintelligible readings into the public sphere. We write them down, we iconise them, immortalise them, until (an)other comes along and reads through them again. The cycle is never ending, 'the page is never blank' (DuPlessis, 1990, p. 151). As found poets, we continue to condense language until the very deafening silence is left in all its essence, audible.

This experiment, then, will take from the literary canon of (ambiguous/non-hegemonic) feminist texts and read through the lattice of gendered literary practices in order to reveal a poetic core, a feminine core. This core may lie either in the poetic meaning of the originating text or in the way that the found poem connects this text's particular feminist wave to the greater feminist ocean. Each feminist cohort associated with each wave has its writers who wage war on the gender frontier of language and literature, and who fight for a (m)other tongue – a feminine language by way of critique (think Virginia Woolf, Simone de Beauvoir, Judith Butler, Roxane Gay). These women who write, and their written texts, shape the feminist

canon and inform its categorisation into four literary and theoretical waves. Feminists across generations have argued for and against the existence of a division or gap between each wave, and through this experiment I hope to bridge these gaps and revisit our understanding of feminist waves within this literary canon. As part of my experiment, I look at the 99th page (see Mangan, 2010) of ten published feminist texts, one from the first wave of feminism, two from the second, three from the third, and four from the fourth. Using each page as my lexicon, I form a poem from it. The first feminist wave will thus receive one poem, the second-wave will get two, the third-wave will have three, and the fourth will receive four poems. These ten poems will be shared at the end of the article.

Second: King tides and foundling waves

The women
 In devoted number
 as several romanticised biographies,
 'My father was not a feminist'
 ended up sacrificing her career in the home
 translator, novelist, poet, and journalist
 in circles under
 memoirs of a dutiful daughter.

I mentioned earlier that found poetry is based on the principle that creative works always build on previous works, remixing and recycling their themes and ideas (TED, 2012). This principle is not exclusive to found poetry, and presents a new way to look at the feminist literary canon more broadly. As noted above, this feminist canon, alongside the feminist movement, has been divided into four not-so-neat waves of theory. These waves are typically visualised as though they were individually occurring moments in theory that smashed up against the shores of societal hegemonies before slinking back from whence they came once the wave's velocity had all but run out (Hewitt, 2012). This metaphor, however, does a disservice to the feminist canon as it pits feminist generations against one another in a perpetual battle for recognition (Byers & Crocker, 2011). Moreover, what becomes increasingly problematic with the wave metaphor is that feminism is a constant which does not crash against the shore only during times of gender trouble, or disappear completely when the patriarchal undertow decides it is time for a tidal shift. Feminism does not come and go in neatly defined increments, it is always lapping at the societal shore, whether in the realm of the intelligible – the audible – or not.

To illustrate, the growing critique of second-wave feminism's predominantly white, middle-class voices exposes the failure of the wave metaphor, as it undermines the continuous work done by women of colour and working-class women which exists outside any neatly allotted chronology accorded to the second-wave. Feminist theory, when considered through the lens of the wave metaphor, is envisioned as a one-size-fits-all model in which the dominating purpose of the canon during each wave appears to be one or two particular societal hegemonies which consume the focus of the movement. Meanwhile, however, all other injustices or landscapes of oppression during this period are ignored. Once these intelligible (audible with masculine approval) oppressions are acknowledged, the feminist wave seems to taper off, as though the feminist job is done; the literature is written up and published in the intelligible space of the feminist literary canon. Rejoice. The wave narrative thus presumes singular waves, a singular ocean, and a singular purpose (Hewitt, 2012).

This critique is particularly potent in light of the second wave because feminism in the mid-twentieth century did not occur in an activist vacuum (Vickery & Henderson, 2016). There

were numerous counter-cultural waves on the societal shoreline, but second-wave feminism, in so far as the feminist canon acknowledges, divided its water supply between women's equal rights to work and their reproductive rights (e.g. *Roe v. Wade*, 1973). Recent critiques from the mainstream feminist movement have at last acknowledged what feminists of colour and working-class feminists were trying to make audible at the time: second-wave feminism largely omitted from the feminist canon the experiences of non-white and non-middle-class women. Thus, third-wave feminism, adopting and applying an intersectional modality, writes a new canon to distinguish itself from its privileged, second-wave predecessors (Byers & Crocker, 2011). A perpetual divide is thus established between these canonical waves; however, this neglects the reality that for third-wave feminists to run, second-wave feminists had first to walk (Byers & Crocker, 2011).

Through my experiment in this article, reviewing and reworking texts from each wave's literary catalogue through the process of found poetry, I reveal that each wave is not establishing a new feminist frontier. Rather, feminist waves storm ruthlessly along the same shorelines of societal hegemony, time and time again, self-actualising, building on, and remixing the agendas which have come before. Perhaps, then, feminism is found theory. The found is often the silent; rendered unintelligible (feminine) as it is masked under the intelligible/audible (masculine) voices which dominate the literary canon. Therefore, found feminist theory enacts the experimental feminine and produces a found feminine aesthetic. Rachel DuPlessis defines the feminine aesthetic as:

the production of formal, epistemological and thematic strategies by members of the group of Women, strategies born in struggle with much of already existing culture and overdetermined by two elements of sexual difference – by women's psychosocial experiences of gender asymmetry and by women's historical status in an (ambiguously) nonhegemonic group. (1990, p. 5)

Every woman who writes, no matter what generation, cohort, or wave she is cornered into, has a different experience to share and a unique asymmetry to the intelligible; her writing thus sheds light on what it means to be othered. She uses her experience as Other to find her theory, to actualise her feminine aesthetic, and begins practicing her (m)other tongue through writing her silence (Retallack, 2004). Thus, there isn't *one* 'feminine aesthetic' for each feminist wave that is monolithic in design and evoked by every woman born between the supposed timeline of that wave. Rather, the feminine aesthetic in the feminist canon is a collective device, which is uniquely constructed, renegotiated, and reorganised by all women who decide to write (DuPlessis, 1990). And, while the literary canon remains phallogocentric in nature, feminist literature is feminine aesthetic in practice.

What this means in the tidal pool of generating new feminine writing practices is that we as feminist writers, developing a (m)other tongue, are influenced by our ability to contort ourselves – to fold in on (and through) ourselves, producing textual realities which resonate with our *shared* asymmetrical experience through our *individual* experience. Whether or not we experience asymmetry vis-à-vis the uniform masculine in the same way, we do experience that asymmetry nonetheless, and this becomes the undercurrent of our feminist literary canon. This asymmetry in its historical context is the linking narrative used by all feminist cohorts to frame their silences and to interject and become audible whenever possible.

Problems arise, though, when some waves hit the shoreline harder than others, and become seen as the 'founding theory' of a particular feminist cohort. The feminist literary canon is still largely burdened by the masculine literary canon. In this respect, the masculine produces and polices feminist theory by dictating what is least disruptive to the intelligible; it regulates and censors what unintelligible voices can enter the canon. The intelligible once again remains dominated by the masculine, despite women writing into this canon(/canyon). The wave

narrative thus becomes an essentialist narrative, as it restricts all feminist experiences inside the literary and historical canon to what is least disruptive to the masculine intelligible during a wave's particular chronology.

Take Sojourner Truth as an example of the failure of this essentialist model. As a black first-wave feminist, Truth fought for the right to vote but also rallied for basic human rights along the intersection of her gendered and racial identities (Hewitt, 2012). As intersectionality had not yet entered intelligible, let alone unintelligible, female vocabularies, Sojourner Truth became subject to the masculine-shaped narrative of first-wave feminism (Hewitt, 2012). Therefore, Truth was only granted access into intelligible spaces when her voice aligned with what mainstream feminism was understood to be solely promoting (women's right to vote), while her other work in the space of intersectional inequalities remained unintelligible.

First-wave feminists did not call themselves first-wave feminists (Henry, 2004). There was no end in sight, the wave was never going to taper off, even if the goal of the vote was achieved. The masculine master-narrative which asserts a wave metaphor is therefore a way for the literary canon at large to take control of feminist discourse, an unspoken king tide which floods the societal shoreline, and breaks apart the feminist movement's collective nature in order to limit its reach. The wave narrative, therefore, is not found by feminists, but constructed *for* feminists. Along with the literary canon, it fails to evoke the feminine aesthetic, and fails to produce a (m)other tongue.

We know how to write about ourselves, we know how to speak loudly, have our silence become audible, yet we are confined once again by the masculine language aesthetic. If we step back though, and read through the masculine matrix, if we look at what is allowed to slip past the watchtower and enter the intelligible, and if we remix the silences that are not allowed to be read, we can contort the masculine into the feminine. The outcome may not be a (m)other language, but the found poetry I create in this experiment is a foundling current that bridges the essentialist nature of the wave narrative, in the hope of illuminating the larger undertow of feminist movements as a cohesive and evolving ideology.

Third: Broadcasting to you live from radio silence.

But when you heard me, already made up	
I wasn't going to know courage or bravery unless	I'm vulnerable
I'm not going to put weapons of silence	in enemies' hands.

As the experimental feminine reclaims language, perhaps it's time for feminism to put the ocean wave metaphor aside and reclaim and rewrite a more fitting metaphor for ourselves. The feminist canon is one of the only literary canons to be afforded a metaphor, albeit a constricting metaphor when viewed in oceanic terms. There are, however, other types of waves. Radio waves, rather than ocean waves, allow for a more dynamic understanding of how feminism is a continuous, ever-evolving movement.

If we are to embrace an ocean wave metaphor, then we have to acknowledge and accept that first-wave feminism rallied for almost a century as 'one, long, powerful surge' (Hewitt, 2012, p. 659). This first body of feminist activism was supposedly cohesive in its agenda and advocated for betterment of the whole of womankind through suffrage. If this was truly the first 'wave' (lasting almost a century) that all subsequent waves were modelled after, then the waters get muddied with the sudden onslaught of three shorter waves coming ashore at higher frequency from the middle of the twentieth century until now. Perhaps, instead of drowning

our own agendas with wave after divisive, competitive wave, the feminist metaphor should look to embrace a different sort of wave, a cohesive wave, such as radio waves.

Radio waves travel through space at varying frequencies and wavelengths in order to become audible. Nancy Hewitt (2012), in her essay on rethinking feminist waves, explains that shorter radio waves which transmit at a higher frequency cover longer distances, while longer waves at lower frequencies are more effective within smaller distances. If we apply this understanding of radio frequencies to our feminist canon, the first long-wave feminist movement of women's suffrage was able to bring about effective change with a smaller collective focus by broadcasting at a low frequency. Later waves entering the literary canon at higher frequencies are travelling further distances, in the sense that they allow for a multitude of issues to be broadcast into the air. These waves do not surpass each other but coexist by broadcasting on many stations. This allows those who tune into the feminist radio to have the autonomy to flick between stations and engage with a multitude of feminist discourses at the same time (Hewitt, 2012). Therefore, the radio wave metaphor allows for an intersectional understanding of the feminist movement by returning the agency of the metaphor to the producer and the listener. This is possible because radio waves 'coexist, overlap, and intersect with each other across the societal airways' (Hewitt, 2012, p. 669); waves do not thus have to come to a cumulative end in order for the next wave to begin broadcasting. The radio is always on, there is always someone listening.

Using the radio wave metaphor to return to the first wave movement, we now create room for varying experiences to illuminate the feminist canon. Inside this longer wave exists short wave concepts existing at higher frequencies. In the oceanic wave metaphor of first wave feminism, Sojourner Truth is drowned out by the 'mainstream' suffragettes (Hewitt, 2012, p. 666). However, in the radio wave metaphor, there is space to surf between stations, to tune into women's suffrage but also to turn down its volume, allowing other first-wave unintelligibilities to become audible, such as feminism's fight for equality, including 'racial justice, labour rights, divorce, religious authority, domestic abuse, the plight of prostitutes, sexual freedom and intersectionality' (Hewitt, 2012, p. 665).

The radio wave metaphor also helps bring forth new silences from second-wave feminism. If we as listeners turn down the mainstream station of white, middle-class college graduates fighting for their own enfranchisement, and tune our collective radios to all the different counter-culture radio frequencies broadcasting in the 1960s and 1970s, we gain insight into all the experimental feminine actors waging war against inequality, who are otherwise lost in the oceanic wave metaphor. The oceanic wave has swept the shore of feminism, leaving a narrative floating on the surface that is relatively white-washed. There is only room for one wave in the oceanic wave metaphor, which must taper off before the next wave is allowed to rise from the depths. Radio waves allow for multiple frequencies to be broadcasting at the same time, collectively forming a narrative which is ultimately more inclusive, but also driven by the experimental feminine actors who choose to broadcast, and in the case of this experiment, broadcast by writing.

The experimental feminine of this found poetry language scape also evokes a radio wave metaphor. Inside any published feminist text are low and high frequencies – intelligible and unintelligible aesthetics and ideas. In looking for the high frequencies (the unintelligible) we have to surf the page – to listen through the page's long wave to illuminate the hidden, unintelligible, feminine tongue, which has disguised itself within the intelligible masculinity of the published text. Found poetry looks to tune into the unintelligible by locating these frequencies, remixing and reorienting them into cohesive silences that we can hear. I have indented stanzas from my poetry experiment at the beginning of each section of this essay as

impactful, short punches of the high frequencies which are broadcasting through my found texts, and which exist at lower frequencies within the original text itself. We can consider these shorter poems which exist inside the larger found poem as moments of potency within feminist movements which are otherwise lost inside the larger mainstream feminist framework. We illuminate them when we find them, we keep channel surfing until something comes through loud and clear. The larger poem is equally as important as a vehicle; it transmits a larger body of theory, inside of which is embedded multiple, varying agendas.

Nevertheless, radio waves are not free of the masculine constrictions to which oceanic waves have been subjected and are likewise exposed to hierarchies of censorship. There are fundamental controlling agents to radio waves (wattage, volume, geographical reach; Hewitt, 2012). While there remains no feminine (m)other tongue ruling outside the literary canon, the intelligible masculine still constricts the air-time that any feminist wave receives. The masculine canon in a historical context will still frame the legacy of feminist waves in retrospect, turning the volume down on any element of a movement which causes too much dis-ease (Retallac, 2004). Feminist found poetry, therefore, must evoke the feminine aesthetic as pirate radio. We must hijack masculine intelligibilities of language and appropriate the language we are allowed to produce until there is no longer radio silence on the feminist front, but an untouchable unintelligible which recasts our understanding of feminism as cohesive and continuing. The frequencies have always been there; we just have to find them.

Fourth: Fourword

(supposed) feminist
(hard to accept)
/be/irritated/:
women
is somehow
several?

Where does our new understanding of the wave narrative leave the ambiguous fourth-wave?

If we consider feminism as found theory, every young feminist thus enters into the feminist canon as found theorists, or found poets. It becomes our job to upheave the underlying oceanic current or turn the volume up on the radio frequencies within our certain feminist range.

Something distinctly new about fourth-wave feminists is the ready acceptance that the waves before us laid the groundwork for our work to come (Byers & Crocker, 2011). Fourth-wave feminists would not have been able to advocate as allies to transgender people if the third and second-wave hadn't paved the way for new understandings of gender as existing outside a binary (Butler, 1990). Just as there can be no found poetry without an already existing lexicon, there can be no fourth-wave without an existing feminist canon. This is unique to previous feminist cohorts, who have been divisive in their usage of the feminist wave narrative by subscribing to the oceanic wave metaphor (Byers & Crocker, 2011). Fourth-wave feminist inherit a large literary canon from which to draw, and new technologies such as this experimental feminine language-scape that allow for smaller frequencies from the previous waves to be amplified.

This experiment has approached the feminist literary canon as muse, reclaiming the object(ified) position into which women are so often enclosed inside the intelligible masculine canon. The poetry itself is working to rewrite our understanding of the wave narrative, just as rethinking the waves as radio frequencies hopes to do. As DuPlessis states, 'The labour concealed in poetry is not only the labour of the poet (unmarked everywhere in a text) but also the labour and social situation of the muse' (2006, p. 97). Through our found poetry, we are revealing, engaging, and

raising up our literary feminist foremothers and speaking our silence through their language.

This is not to say that found poetry is a means to a (m)other tongue. Our new unintelligible still relies on masculine langue and intelligibility to illuminate silences which have historically been (m)othered by the feminist movement itself. Can we escape the masculine intelligible by appropriating it? That remains unclear. I believe the found poetry experiment played out at the end of this article performs as a pirate radio, so to speak. Up to the late-twentieth century, the feminist literary canon was primarily shaped by the masculine intelligible because publication and distribution were controlled by men (Vickery & Henderson, 2016). We have to thank our second-wave foremothers for entering the censored space of publication, allowing us, decades on, to broadcast their embedded frequencies. The publication space for fourth-wave feminists has outgrown the masculine publication to allow for (m)other tongues to self-publish in the digital age. If I was to take this experimental feminine poetry collection and enter a self-publishing space, utilising the fourth-wave tool of the virtual market place, or was radical enough to publish these texts in hard copy and distribute them for free, the feminist literary canon becomes accessible outside the academic confines of feminist theory. In this respect, fourth-wave theory can surpass previous waves because it does not solely belong to the academic body.

We must amplify feminist frequencies so loudly that all we can do is hear the silence. My hypothesis (/hopeothesis) for this experiment is that the poetry produced will be reflective of the core principles, issues, and agendas of the feminist collective, regardless of what wave the original text belonged to. The truly feminist aspect of the collection itself is that the experiment is not complete, and we can continue to find new poems, new theories hidden within this collection, and within every feminist text. Because until we have discovered a (m)other tongue, women will always be thieves of language (Ostriker, 1982). The experiment(al feminine) will never come to a close.

Ten poems: The results of the found poetry experiment

Being natural (from Virginia Woolf, *A room of one's own*)

She becomes the outside
 Alien and critical, always altering,
 bring the world perspectives - some of these seem spontaneously less comfortable than others
 [...]

To keep oneself, one is unconsciously holding back
 There may be some state of continue without effort = nothing is required?
 Perhaps I thought, [when I saw the couple
 get into the taxi cab, after being divided together
 In the obvious irrational instinct of woman
 (makes for complete happiness)]

to ask where the two sexes require;
 order
 satisfaction
 and soul.

Power preside,
 One male, one female
 Man predominates over woman
 Woman predominates over man
 Normal state of harmony

If one is woman, the effect also must course in her.
Perhaps when great androgynous fusion takes place the mind is fertilised
Perhaps a mind purely masculine cannot anymore be what one meant by looking special
It takes cause or interpretation.
Perhaps, less apt, the androgynous
mind transmits emotion naturally,
incandescent
and undivided.

The independent woman (from Simone De Beauvoir, *The second sex*)

/1/'The First Found Fight For Feminists'
independent granted women
run in,
sex is topical
lesbian sex = dutiful sex
biological married women
FEAR PREGNANCY ALWAYS
Present contraception rather rudimentary
and strictly prohibited.
Sex first
Featuring an adolescent
Came out in confession

/2/Fell in love,
His hostess in two very happy years before
the human condition came
and won

/3/ The women
In devoted number
As several romanticised biographies
'My father was not a feminist'
ended up sacrificing her career in the home
translator, novelist, poet and journalist
in circles under
memoirs of a dutiful daughter.

Corner my story (from Sylvia Plath, *The bell jar*)

A long time ago, I'd find acceptance waiting on the table at home.
Under a pseudonym, fiction would come in
and plop down and say something usual:

'honestly, this one'll be different'

on my bed in dirty cotton and laddered nylons,
ten minutes trying to persuade me to dance with somebody

but I felt dim,
I walked New York myself all night
The city's mystery gave up and
I was becoming more and more difficult.

Non-allegorical materials (from Rachel DuPlessis, *The pink guitar*)

The unconscious deplored the tendency to fix too firmly
She says that in offering her theory
She has lost [might have been, would rather be]

Impressions to recall no longer sentimental but bridging
Between a hushed chronology

From active to memory
Does seem to shift

‘stable ego’ reformulated
a ‘subject-in-process’

like a duckling enjoys fragmenting herself if she can.
Multi-cultural so her stable sense of self can gather together (and disappear)
into a story with many combinations.

Back against the wall (from Audre Lorde, *Sister outsider*)

The idea of lesbianism moved miles in a very short time.
Didn’t understand love
Are you supposed to be a man? A poet! A loving women?

Don’t tell me, the idea that a sensitive man was a poem first time around?

But when you heard me, already made up
I wasn’t going to know courage or bravery unless I’m vulnerable
I’m not going to put weapons of silence in enemies’ hands.

In black community being closeted is even harder.
People share a common oppression, joint defences are developed

If you survive you survive because: vulnerability is desperate and very deep.

New daughter America = black and from two negatives (from Cherrie Moraga & Gloria Anzaldúa, *This bridge called my back*)

What lies between women of colour? Not our silences.
Between mother and daughter: barriers
Between;
sexual identity: educational opportunity
missed cultural history: our race
physical bodies: our labour

As raw and powerful, our personal power is critical now.
Third world feminists begin to speak

‘we cannot throw ourselves haphazardly under
serious differences which collapse rather than
fuse women’.

understand: our total experience,
Culture subsumed when we speak – an isolated sister in this country.
The community alone cannot define her.

– rejection of consensus is criticized
as disloyal – interfering with the group

‘the wrong cult behaviour in American society’.

How to not care (from Durga Chew-Bose, *Too much and not the mood*)

Impulsive Monday night
I remember;
White girls,
Marine biologists
And Janet Jackson.
 = Love in unison.
(Bump bump bump)

Older girls’
Big and loud
Too limited
With wet hair
In comparison to
The rest of us.

we didn’t matter –
in coaxed fatigue –
we observe place in the periphery,
 vaulted off
 rarely speaking
a seemingly empty look.

An older girl intent on holding hands now.

Untitled 4:D (from Roxanne Gay, *Hunger: A memoir of my body*)

1. I went, I tried
—did success on weekends
I played strange men, taking their money
 Often I didn’t sleep much
I kept trying to find peace.

2. And then, I had gone to buy care
A man calling me ‘Casino girl’
Made me want to run.
He was going to make me accustomed to most cruelties
Letting me know my body.

3. I quickly – reluctantly
– tried to like every white guy I saw
wearing flannel,
talk shit.

4. you point to distance,
absolutely wanting to go away,
persistent,
 sure he wanted me
 to hurt.

CIAN DENNAN is a BA Honours English student at the University of Auckland, whose work is being supervised by Selina Tusitala Marsh. Cian's area of interest explores the intersection between the poetic and the political from a fourth-wave perspective. Cian continues the long line of feminist fascination with the power of the personal in her poetry and academic work.

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