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Editors' Note: Truffle Fries and Trouble

Danine Farquharson, Andraea Callanan, and Mariana Ramírez

Introduction

Sunday, 3 December 2023: Andraea Callanan, Mariana Ramírez, and I meet at a hotel bar for a late lunch and drinks and a conversation about feminist resistance.

Danine: We should have started recording a few seconds ago because we started with fuck the patriarchy.

Mariana: Yeah, we always start with that.

Danine: Oh wait, here comes our fries. That's awesome. [pause for fries]. So, this issue of the journal is way bigger than I ever anticipated. [To Andraea]: do you have any thoughts about the poetry contributions?

Andraea: What was interesting was, the last time we had four published poems was the first issue [of *Janus Unbound*] and those were poems I went out and solicited from people I knew I wanted to hear from; we were just starting. This time they came to us, which was very exciting for me because it meant I got an array of poems to choose from representing different voices and, weirdly, kinda representing the voices that I dreamed of having. There were people who I was going to reach out to who ended up submitting anyway. And I was, like, "thank you!" So I'm happy with the diversity of voices. It's interesting how they tie in to each other but also how differently that theme of feminist resistance works with each of them. Resisting different notions of what femininity is, resistance around gender-based violence. But the way the voices come together was really exciting to see.

Danine: The thing that I've been thinking about is what is so clear about this collection is that it's all about voice. It's not just about allowing space for diverse voices to have their moments, but it's about voices being heard *and believed*, and not doubted, and voices being able to speak or write in whatever way they want to. I think the big difference with this issue compared to other issues

of *Janus Unbound*—and to be honest most other academic journals, with a few exceptions—is there is also a resistance to “traditional” academic discourse, which is patriarchal. What I love most with this issue is the diversity of voices and how differently they speak.

Mariana: I really enjoyed reading the contributions progressively through the last months and every time I read one of them, they stay in my head. It is about voices but it’s also about how we perform our voices; how we open a space for ourselves without conforming entirely to the system. With the piece about social media, for example, I started noticing the posts on my own social media and how they conformed to systems that I didn’t agree to and I enjoyed altering my algorithm to exclude those things and to bring in those feminist pieces of resistance that we’re not used to receiving. It’s really cool.

Danine: It’s also interesting to learn from these people different strategies; different types of places and situations and what can work (or not) in terms of resistance. Sometimes I feel like there’s not much I can do to resist being silenced in a particular way and then I read something about just keeping on keeping on talking and speaking and doing. It’s energizing to me.

[Woman walks by table and exclaims: “Truffle fries! I can smell them over here. They’re awesome!”]

Mariana: It’s hard to speak when we’re eating! [laughter]

Danine: In my mind, when we came up with this issue theme, I was thinking “Oh, wouldn’t it be great if we had something like this, or something like that.” And, just like with the poetry, we got those submissions. Something happened when our CFP came out that someone in Sweden shared it with everyone they knew and we got a lot of great work from Sweden. To our Swedish contributors: thank you!

Andreae: I’ve been thinking a lot about the theme too, what does feminist resistance mean in my life right now? What are we resisting? I think, for me, given everything that is in my field of concerns at this moment, part of that resistance is resisting false narratives. One of those false narratives is that our struggles are individual and that fights for liberation are distinct from each other and not tied together. There’s certainly something to be said for “staying in your lane” and not making statements about things you don’t know about, but there’s also something to be said about learning what is going on in the world and recognizing how all these things thread together. Not just about anti-imperialist struggles, and I consider feminist resistance to be an anti-imperialist struggle, but also looking at how the tools of oppression happen again and again.

One of the things I’ve been thinking about a lot lately is the similarities between rhetoric that is being used in mainstream Western media—we’re

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recording this on 3 December, we are 50-however many days into the latest siege of Gaza and to new levels of violence throughout Palestine—and the ways that genuine trauma is manipulated and exploited. An example is how the West is spinning the Israel-Palestine situation. We have a group of people, the Jews, who have every reason to fear antisemitism. Antisemitism didn't begin in World War II, it didn't end in World War II, the Holocaust is within living memory, antisemitism is rising throughout Europe and North America. We've seen, in our own recent social media memories, people marching and chanting antisemitic slogans in the streets in the US. These are real things. It is rational for people to be afraid of that. And then we see this imperialist spin on it, where the thing you're supposed to be afraid of is not the rise of fascism in Europe or increasing antisemitism in the US, but the existence of the Palestinian people. That's what we're supposed to be afraid of: a child throwing a rock that is actually rubble from their home that was bombed.

The spin is that the people who are the most vulnerable become the people to be feared.

Danine: The most villainized ...

Andreae: and the most dehumanized. If we shift over to a more gendered example of that, the rhetoric around trans liberation in the US especially, but we see it in Canada as well, women have every reason to be afraid of sexual violence. We have every reason to be afraid that our children will be abused. We have every reason to believe that because it's rational. We live with that violence; we experience that violence in one form or another. It is reasonable for us to fear that. And yet, no matter how much evidence you look at to suggest that perpetrators of these acts of violence are usually cis-gendered men in positions of power (pastors, teachers, sports coaches) we are meant to believe that the "real" threat to our safety is a trans woman in the bathroom, or a queer elementary schoolteacher, or a librarian.

Mariana: Or drag queens.

Andreae: It would be funny and absurd except people are dying. I think part of feminist resistance is finding and seeing those patterns of rhetoric, of spin, and manipulation of legitimate fears and exposing them for the absurdity that sustains them.

Danine: What happens with that kind of narrative manipulation, that you so beautifully illustrated, is that there are so many types of people being violated and oppressed who are being silenced at the same time. That's what drives me bonkers – how that false narrative is able to expansively shut down legitimate fears and concerns. It's remarkable and it's why we can't stop.

Andreae: It also pits marginalized groups against each other.

Danine: It villainizes resistance. It makes those people who stand up and speak out for change the ones to fear.

Mariana: It makes me so mad I might burst into tears.

Andreae: I'm on the verge of tears 24/7 right now.

Mariana: In Mexico, people are starting to wake up to the severe, dangerous gendered violence—to the point where Mexico is on the verge of being the place with the most feminicides in the world.¹ A couple of years ago, because of the murdered women and the disappeared women, the women of Mexico started going into the streets. The protests never got violent, we never attacked anyone, but we did intervene with public monuments and public offices. It was shocking to see how the narrative changed. How the media changed what should have been “these women are doing this because they are being raped and killed on a daily basis” into “these crazy feminists are destroying patrimony. They don't respect the country. They don't respect you. They are burning things down.”

It was dividing. I erased people from my Facebook. My feminist journey has changed a lot. Angry, then it's ok, then it's angry again. Right now I am fuming. It's very hard to negotiate surviving this system and at the same time standing fast in my convictions. It's hard to find that balance. It breaks you.

Danine: No one person can do it all, we have to choose our battles in terms of when we have the resources to bring to the fight. In terms of year three of the pandemic, our energies are low, but I have felt—even before the pandemic—that we are at a tipping point. And I'm not even talking about climate change. I'm talking about social revolution and what is fascinating and terrifying at the same moment is that I have no way of knowing which way it's going to go. That's why it's a tipping point. I do believe in the cumulative effect.

I tormented myself a bit about suggesting the theme of feminist resistance for this issue. I thought, oh, we're just going to have one issue on feminism and then it's ghettoized. But right now, I'm: NO. We need to gather the voice as we want to. And the one great thing about *Janus Unbound* is that it's online and hopefully has a longer life than the paper copies gathering dust. There is power in numbers.

Mariana: I was thinking about this while watching a True Crime documentary, and this female psychologist was speaking about how many survivors [of sexual violence] do not want to report it. And she was arguing, and I think she's right, that silence is also a way of resisting. Not going into the system because it does not work for you. Saying no to a system that does not fight for you. Saying I will not rely on this colonial, misogynistic, patriarchal system that says it's going to save me, because it's not doing that. The system does not protect victims or allow them to thrive. Not participating is also resistance – especially with

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dominant structures like law and academia. Both loud voices and cold silence are weapons of resistance.

But we must take into account that not every woman has the privilege of saying “I don’t want to speak about it.” For many women there is no choice: they cannot speak about it. At least this issue has intersectionality. The one good thing about the patriarchy –

Danine: Is there one? [laughter]

Mariana: The patriarchy is so broad that we have enough fighters to fight it from every single angle. There are enough of us.

Andreae: If there were subtitles to this, we’d need: “Mariana smiles, ironically.”

Danine: I’ll add that in for sure.

Andreae: I do feel helpless so often. We are always struggling with the question of what is doing the work. What, practically, is the solution. I can’t kick down the door of someone’s office and say: everyone stop, go to your corners and think about what you’ve done. Can’t do that. So what does the work look like? It’s reading and it’s talking but those things feel like – what can I do? It’s a huge frustration. So this issue is kind of doing the work but it’s not.

We need to mobilize all the fronts we can. We can do all of the things and it’s still not enough.

The reason why it doesn’t feel like enough is because we’ve never seen what the world can be like without patriarchy. We don’t know what we’re working toward.

Mariana: It’s been frustrating for me too, moving here as an International student and building up a new group of friends. Because in Mexico, all of my friends think the same way. They would never say anything sexist by accident. But here, the amount of things I’ve heard! And I don’t know what to do: should I say something, should I start a conversation. What’s the best way to correct the narratives? It depends on my mood. If I’m in a good mood, then I will I sit down and say “hey, let me explain why what you said is problematic.” If I’m in a bad mood then I just fight. And that doesn’t feel like I’m advancing the solution.

Andreae: One of the things that keeps hitting me is that I’m going to these weekly protests, right? And there are people protesting alongside who I’ve seen at protests for every cause since I was 15 years old. They were the “old lefties” then and now I’m the middle-aged lefty and they’re the retired lefties. I look at them and it makes me so sad that they’re still at this.

Danine: I do believe, very strongly, there are a lot of people feeling similarly around situations that are not identical but are close and things will come

together. Or there will be a flashpoint – which is scary because flashpoint is always violent. I thought COVID-19 would be it, but I was totally wrong.

Mariana: One thing that I've noticed, since the pandemic, is sorority. It's more of a thing now. I've noticed more girl support has increased.

Danine: Do you mean a kind of sisterhood?

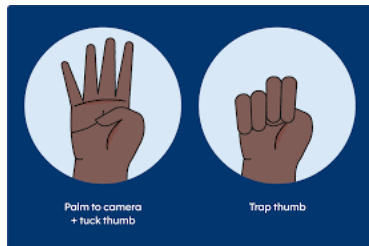
Mariana: Ya, just keeping an eye out for danger. I remember walking home and it was getting dark out. This group of girls were “hey, we're walking in the same direction. Walk along. Join us.” Those little things, I didn't notice before.

Danine: That never would have happened when I was in my twenties. It might have been unspoken but never out loud.

Mariana: I was in a bar and this girl approached me and said: “this guy is not leaving me alone. Please pretend you're my best friend and we're going to another bar.” And I did it without even thinking.

Andreae: I'm thinking of some of the ham-fisted attempts by white women, particularly in the wake of the Trump presidency, to show women that I'm a safe person. And I know people were online and asking: what do you do when you're on the subway and see someone snatch a hijab. And answers came in like: I carry extra scarves with me because people need them. We had this short, failed, moment where white women were wearing “safety pins”—it didn't work. But I know there was a lot of conversation online about how to intervene. What are the specific things I can do to let women know that they can be safe with me?

Mariana: Back home things are so bad. It is urgent how dangerous it is for women in Mexico. In school this was taught to me in school [makes hand gesture of fist with thumb tucked under four other fingers]. A woman from the UN came to our school and taught us that if you see a woman doing this:



Then she needs help. Call someone. Help them.

Danine: I've never seen that before.

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Andreae: Me either.

Mariana: Since I was very young, we were taught by other women to react quickly. We were taught how to ask certain questions. It is good that we know this but it is also traumatic.

Danine: Absolutely. We have to move through the world with learned defence mechanisms.

Andreae: I remember when my daughter was born, I was living in the Northwest Territories. So a lot of my friends there were Indigenous, Dene nation, and were having kids at the same time. They were my friend group. A friend's daughters, they were probably 10 or 11 or 12, and they had won an award at school for a presentation they did on missing, murdered, and Indigenous women and girls (MMIWG) and they're both Indigenous girls. And they had to showcase their trauma. I teach my kids about gender-based trauma but it's not a thing my kids have to fear in the way that Indigenous kids have to fear. Not in the same way. My sons do not fear violence the same way that Black youth fear violence. It's not the same level of constant threat. My kids could go to the police for help in a way that my friends' kids cannot. To have to live with that and to have to exist with the level of violence that they and their cultural community has to survive. I think about how limiting that is for me.

Mariana: As an International student you talked to other International students. We all face racism. For the male students, they say "meh" it's ok. But for the women? The racism is directly related to the oversexualization of coloured women. It's another level of paranoia for me. I was walking down the street and two guys were walking behind me and talking very loudly about how they hated immigrants, and how they want to kill all of them, and "rape all those bitches."

Andreae: And this is how the patriarchy works. I think Kate Manne writes about this. Have you read *Down Girl*?² She talks about how patriarchy persists by punishing some women but not all of them. Look at me: I'm sorta grey, I'm a bit pudgy, I'm not a target of sexualization the way that I was 20 years ago. I think nothing of walking home alone in the dark, because no one sees me. I'm invisible and so I'm safe.

Danine: I think there is almost more power in women doubting other women than men doubting women. Because if a woman has been silenced or misheard or misbelieved, if she goes to her female community and someone replies with "Oh, don't be so silly, I've the best experience with that person" then that kind of diminishing of value of the lived experience is far more powerful than coming from a man who we don't trust anyway. Let's trust our sisters.

All three [with glasses]: Trust our sisters. Feminist Resistance.

Notes

1. “In 2022, it was estimated that the national femicide rate in Mexico stood at 1.43 cases per 100,000 women. Three years earlier, the number of Mexican women murdered on account of their gender reached the highest rate at least since 2017, exceeding 1.5 victims per 100,000 female inhabitants. Ranked as the second-highest nation for femicides in Latin America, just below Brazil, Mexico’s cases show a sustained rise, recording over 920 in 2022. A disconcerting pattern emerges, with many perpetrators having familial or communal affiliations. The government’s lack of interest and effectiveness has spurred social activism, advocating for justice and enhanced safety measures for the female population.” (<https://www.statista.com/statistics/979065/mexico-number-femicides/>.)
2. Manne, Kate. 2019. *Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.