

Sophie Robinson

An Introduction to *Pantoume*

Navigating *Pantoume* for the first time, I found myself almost afraid of the piece's confidence, and the new terrain it seemed to be stomping. Cycling through image, poetry and essay, implications that could be slipped over once haunt a reader on 'REPEAT'. The piece simultaneously addresses the inadequacy of language and stretches the possibilities of expression to breaking point. Cold, hard statistics are a sucker punch to the reader lost in trope, and the piece succeeds in grounding itself in the political, the everyday, without employing shock tactics or taking a position of authority. *Pantoume* thinks itself through; it binds you up in its cycles. It won't have itself skimmed or ignored. It is a testament to the possibilities of collaboration and cross-media works, and the role art can play in prompting action and change in social attitudes. What kinds of expression are there for violence, and why? What does a gender tag have in common with a 'tender gag'? What role does femininity play in society's attitude towards violence? Troubling questions addressed, readdressed and passed on to the reader.

These were my interests after exploring the piece, and a lot of this ground is covered in my interview with Fierle-Hedrick and Morris. What I took from our discussion and from the piece was a serious challenge: to find an appropriate form and expression for violence and its consequences. I wrote *Sugar* as a response to *Pantoume* and a response to my own experience of violence as an undergraduate. Looking over my journal in the days which directly followed the event, I was struck by the volume of writing I had produced in that time, and how little of it referenced the attack. I seemed to lack a language of my own to describe the experience. I had instead

written obsessively out of novels, poetry, films and songs, producing pages and pages of transcribed text. I tried to work between all of this, my account (written much later) of the actual attack, and language (or silence) which would form a kind of dialogue between *Sugar* and *Pantoume*. *Sugar* is included in this section as a working-through of the ideas discussed in the interview and in *Pantoume*.