

Performing Transnational Feminist Solidarity? *The Vagina Monologues* and One Billion Rising

Arguing that its approach to gender is “reductionist and exclusive,” in 2015 a student theatre group at Mount Holyoke College in the US announced that, after a decade of participation, they were cancelling their annual V-Day production of Eve Ensler’s 1996 play *The Vagina Monologues (TVM)*¹ The fact that this announcement, and Ensler’s response, made media headlines in the US, the UK, and several other countries indicates something of V-Day’s standing as international movement and this play’s status as a cultural phenomenon.

Co-founded by Ensler with a group of activists called Feminst.com in 1998, this campaign “to end violence against women and girls,” promotes stagings of *TVM* around Valentine’s Day in order to raise awareness and funds for anti-violence groups and projects. Launched via a New York production featuring (amongst others) Whoopi Goldberg, Susan Saradon, Glenn Close, Margaret Cho, and Gloria Steinman, this initiative has continued to enjoy the support of innumerable female “A-list” celebrities from all fields. Nevertheless, much of its success is due to its wide and enthusiastic uptake by colleges and women’s groups, initially in US but rapidly spreading elsewhere. As a result, by 2009 V-Day had a foothold in 120 other countries.² By 2013, 5,000 performances of *TVM* (translated into over 48 languages) were taking place worldwide, and V-Day had raised over 100 million dollars in support of an impressive array of programs and grass roots projects across the world.³

Some of *TVM*’s monologues recount somber and painful accounts of sexual violence against women, but overall it is a playful, taboo-breaking celebration of women’s sexuality and of the vagina. Reflecting recent controversies within feminism, one of Mount Holyoke’s students’ concerns was that this might be seen to exclude transgender women. Yet *TVM* has

always provoked heated debate and has received a high level of attention from scholars in the global North working within the social sciences and humanities, as well as theatre and performance studies.⁴ Since at least 2000, these scholars have been united in arguing that the representation of women in *TVM* is inherently reductionist and exclusive.

V-Day's most recent campaign, One Billion Rising (OBR) might be perceived as an attempt to address these limitations. Launched in 2013 in the wake of international outrage at the horrific gang rape and murder of Joyti Singh in Delhi in 2012, this initiative is said to respond to United Nations statistics indicating that one in three women worldwide (one billion) will be subject to rape or other forms of violent assault in their lifetime. Based around social media, the aim was to encourage one billion people across the world to "rise up" on February 14 to demand an end to this violence in the shape of a dance-based, global flash-mob. There was no direct fund-raising imperative but OBR13 was widely supported by celebrities and politicians across the world, and while the final number of participants is unverifiable, the V-Day annual report states that OBR13 achieved over a billion mainstream and social media "impressions" and thousands of live events took place in over 207 countries.⁵ Since then OBR has run annually alongside the *TVM* project, which remains popular. Like *TVM*, OBR sometimes has a "spotlight focus" on specific groups but also a broad "theme," so that in 2014 the subtitle was "Rising for Justice," in 2015 and 2016 "Rising for Revolution," and in 2017 and 2018 "Rising for Solidarity." While numbers of participants across the globe remain high, none of these later actions received the level of global media attention afforded to OBR13.

Aside from the yearly themes then, the two initiatives appear very different propositions but there are striking similarities in the criticism OBR has attracted from activists and academic appraisals of *TVM*. Accordingly, I want to consider these two campaigns side by side to argue

that OBR does not *necessarily* represent a “step forward” from the *TVM* project, politically or aesthetically. In regard to OBR, my focus on the 2013 iteration as the original blueprint for this initiative but I make some reference to OBR14. While I offer an examination of key material employed in OBR13, I do not intend to reiterate in detail the many existing analyses of the *TVM* playtext. In both cases my starting point is the criticism they have received and following the lead of seminal transnational feminist theorist Chandra Talpade Mohanty, in the course of my argument I also consider the political implications of the theoretical approaches and analytical strategies scholars have employed to evaluate V-Day’s political efficacy.

As performance scholar Shelly Scott observes, the *TVM* project has much in common with radical feminist theatre of the 1970s, rejected in later years for its reductive and exclusive essentialism.⁶ Consequently, scholarly appraisals of *TVM* often employ anti-essentialist “postmodern”, postcolonial and/or transnational approaches to characterize Ensler’s play as naturalizing the ideology of white, “Western” liberal feminism. In contrast, OBR might be seen as part of a wider generic shift from theatre to performance and notably, in 2014 Richard Schechner used it to exemplify his concept of a “Performance Third World” as an alternative model of political organization and identification.⁷ More broadly, OBR is clearly aligned with other contemporary modes of transnational popular feminist activism such as SlutWalk, FEMEN (and subsequently the international Women’s Marches of 2017 and 2018 protesting against Donald Trump), which in a 2016 article for *Feminist Media Studies*, Hester Baer describes as employing digital platforms in combination with live events “experienced in a local context”.⁸ Actually the *TVM* project might be seen as a *precursor* of this model but as Baer indicates this style of action as part of a “paradigm shift” signaled by the advent of digital feminisms.⁹ This shift has been accompanied by the popularization of intersectionality, inside and outside the

academy but Baer acknowledges the potential of social media for activism, she also considers whether the nature of this medium means these actions are “co-opted” by (“Western”) neo-liberalism from the start.¹⁰ Bearing all this in mind, in analyzing V-Day campaigns I explore if, in terms of transnational feminisms, rather than Mohanty’s ideal of “a non-colonizing feminist solidarity across borders” both OBR and *TVM* might be said to represent the Macdonaldization of Ensler’s particular brand of white, Euro-ethnic (neo) liberal feminism, as a mode of cultural imperialism.¹¹

My approach reflects the fact that Mohanty’s work is often cited in analyses of *TVM*. Yet as she repeatedly stresses from her celebrated essay “Under Western Eyes” (1988) onwards, the object of her critique is not feminist practices but feminist *theorising* within of the context of the white-dominated, “Western” liberal (and neo-liberal) academy.¹² One of her main concerns has always been the imperialist or colonizing effect of applying these theories to women’s practices across the globe but more recently her focus has been on the way theories of difference can play into neo-liberal relativism and individualism at the expense of solidarity and contestation. I pursue these issues in regard to scholarly analyses of V-Day and end with some attempts to address them by Kimberlé Crenshaw discussing OBR 2014 and by Judith Butler on mass public protests. In constructing my own argument however, I attempt to counter the potentially colonizing tendencies of academic feminist theorizing through an emphasis on the V-Day campaigns as embodied performance and by extension as transnational feminist *praxis*; defined by sociologist Nancy Naples as “foreground[ing] women’s agency in the context of oppressive conditions that shape their lives”.¹³ Ultimately, the longevity of V-Day as an organisation and the nature of its work renders it fertile terrain for exploring the ineluctably complex nature of the relationship between the local and the global, academic theories and embodied and situated

practices which remain key problematics for feminism and theatre and performance studies alike. On this point and in the framework of a discussion of colonization, it is important to acknowledge that if my argument is informed by my (inter)disciplinary location as a feminist theatre scholar, it is also inevitably informed by my socio-political and geographical positioning. Like Ensler's (and that of many of her most severe critics) this is that of a privileged white woman located in the global North. While I do not explicitly dwell on my own positioning, this essay might be understood as an attempt to interrogate why although I agree with much of the criticism, I remain ambivalent about V-Day's campaigns.

Critiques of *The Vagina Monologues*.

There is an overwhelming consensus amongst its scholarly critics that due to its emphasis on the female body, the vagina, sexuality and sexual violence the *TVM* campaign promotes an essentialist feminism that assumes universal commonalities between women founded in biology. As such, rather than contemporary transnational feminism which according to Breny Mendoza "depart and theorize from [...] differences" and draws on critiques of global capitalism, it is consistent with notions of *global sisterhood*.¹⁴ This notion was prevalent in 1970s and 1980s amongst "white, middle-class feminists" and tended to universalise and normalise this subject position through, as Mohanty put it, the discursive colonisation of "the material and historical heterogeneities of the lives of the lives of 'Third-World' women."¹⁵ The majority of *TVM*'s critics tend to concur with Christine M Cooper and Kerry Bystrom that this process of colonization is in operation within the *TVM* playtext.¹⁶

Originally performed as a solo show by Ensler, there are now numerous iterations of this script in circulation. Nevertheless, in all versions it consists of a series of first person monologues written in a realist style and framed overall by the statement (also in the first person)

that these are based on interviews with 200 US women. Subsequently, some monologues are introduced through reference to these interviews and/or by various “vagina facts” (for instance relating to the practice of female genital mutilation). The scope of the interviews means that the monologues demonstrate *some* “inclusivity” in regard to sexuality, age, and ethnicity. Further, as V-Day’s national and international reach expanded, Ensler added (optional) monologues to the playtext based on her encounters (in the course V-Day projects) with Indigenous American women, women from Bosnia and Afghanistan, and transgender women living in the US. In the 2001 “V-Day Edition” of the script Ensler states, “Some of the monologues are close to verbatim interviews, some are composite interviews, and with some I just began with the seed of an interview and had a good time.”¹⁷ In short, as a playwright Ensler has edited, synthesized, and creatively interpreted this material in a fashion, which for Cooper and Srimati Basu constitutes a form of “ventriloquism”, which reduces the interviewees heterogeneous identities to versions of Ensler’s same.¹⁸

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In principle *any* playtext that is not strictly autobiographical and performed by its author (even verbatim ones) could be described in this fashion. In this instance, however, the crux of the matter is that *TVM*’s authority and emotional impact as part of a *political* campaign depends on its framing as being based on documentary material. A claim to authenticity is furthered by Ensler’s frequent references in her various writings and in the media to her own experience of sexual and physical abuse, cited as the basis for an embodied, empathetic identification with other women survivors of violence worldwide. All of this can create the impression that *TVM*/Ensler speaks not just *about* but *as* and *for* the various women it portrays, while in fact normalizing her own attitudes, values and perspectives.

Ensler's approach raises issues for the representation of *all* the figures in the playtext but especially that of Bosnian, Afghan, African, and Indigenous American women. Unquestionably, these repeat many of the colonizing tropes woven around "Third-World" women Mohanty identified within white, Euro-ethnic, feminism discourse in the late 1980s. For instance, while monologues attributed to the (mostly white) US women allow for humor, pleasure, and agency, these "other" women are portrayed primarily through images of suffering, mutilation, or entrapment that construct them as passive victims in need of rescue.¹⁹ As a result, Cooper argues that *TVM* represents "missionary feminism" and with reference to the V-Day campaign as a whole, "marketplace activism" for the "feminist inclined" that "commodifies politics and difference."²⁰ In similar terms Bystrom concludes (drawing on Wendy Hesford's critique of Ensler's writing in general), that rather than transnational feminism, V-Day's global activism constitutes "feminist cosmopolitanism," explaining that;

[T]he former means an activist who spectacularises and sentimentalises the suffering of marginalised woman in such a way that their stories merely facilitate the "personal liberation" of western audiences and the latter means someone who creates real links by paying attention to the unequal conditions structuring the relationship between various female populations.²¹

Even *for* its "western" audiences, Bystrom and Cooper dismiss the effect of productions of *TVM* as "cathartic," understood as an indulgence of emotions that does not lead to the "next step" of political action.²² Significantly, as these remarks signal, in many other commentaries, although

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the theory employed is transnational there is a tendency to analyze *TVM* from the perspective of its production in the US or Europe.

Beyond the Playtext; Feminist Praxis?

Even putting aside the fact that the “the affective turn” across diverse fields of scholarship in the “West” has put in question the possibility of separating out the emotional from the political, as Stefan Meisiek observes, “there is no uncontroversial empirical study concerning the cathartic process”²³. Further, this concept has been variously interpreted. To cite two famous examples; Bertolt Brecht construed it in the terms outlined by Bystrom, while as Meisiek notes, Augusto Boal contended that some types of *participatory* performance could produce a catharsis that motivated political action.²⁴ In all cases however, it remains that the notion of catharsis was developed in relation to “Western” models of subjectivity assumed as a ‘universal’, an idea at odds with a transnational feminist discourse that departs from differences.

This is not to dismiss Cooper’s and Bystrom’s (and Hesford’s) core arguments, but noticeably, although they make reference to specific performances in the US reflecting their (inter)disciplinary backgrounds (partly) in literary and critical studies, they concentrate mostly on *textual* analysis and on aesthetics. As such, they tend to attribute the play’s meaning and affect (and by extension that of V-Day in general) to its form, and ultimately to Ensler as its “author.” This is understandable; due to her work with V-Day Ensler has become an award-winning celebrity and influential political figure, who works closely with governmental and non-governmental organizations and is often presented as the “sole author” of this organization.²⁵

Additionally, gaining the rights to stage *TVM* as part of V-Day depends on agreeing to strict rules that prohibit alteration to Ensler’s approved script (or its approved translation) and all related publicity material. This practice may (partly) be in accord with intellectual property rights

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but (again) as part of a *political*, rather than a purely artistic project, it can be perceived as an attempt to ensure the faithful reproduction of Ensler's own brand of feminism.

Yet, significantly, performance studies scholars such as Shelly Scott and (more recently) Anne Folino White, or those from other disciplines who have participated in productions of *TVM* in the US and the UK such as Tara Williamson and Susan Bell and Susan Reverby, or those who refer to productions *outside* the US such as Basu, make similar points to Cooper and Bystrom but overall are more ambivalent in their judgments.²⁶ This is because they tend to place less stress on form and on Ensler's authorship, and more on other factors which have transformed what many would agree with Scott is a "simplistic and conservative" (if not, as she asserts "*mediocre*") script into an international phenomenon.²⁷ Putting aside the fact that what may appear as simplistic and conservative to a theatre scholar may appear accessible to non-specialists, the emergence of V-Day in the US corresponded with the spread of a (white-dominated), neo-liberal postfeminism within popular culture in the global North. *TVM*'s stress on women's empowerment through an explicit celebration of female sexuality, corresponds to key tropes within this discourse. In this respect, like OBR nearly twenty years on, *TVM* can be seen as part of a historical paradigm shift within feminism in the global North. Yet, as already noted, Scott *also* points out its similarities to feminist plays of the 1970s aimed at consciousness-raising; that is, at encouraging a collective understanding of the relationship between the personal and the political, the individual and the structural.²⁸ The dominance of a postfeminism in the global North (that claimed feminism had "done its work") in the late twentieth and early twenty first century meant there were few forums where young women could engage in this activity. Crucially, V-Day's brief for participants in *TVM* places an emphasis on *process* over product, and as part of this specifies the collective sharing of personal experiences, especially in regard to

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violent and *disempowering* sexual encounters, as part of rehearsals. Scholars such as Basu, Bell, and Reverby (amongst others) agree that this aspect of the *TVM* campaign engenders a sense of solidarity between participants that can be “transformative.”²⁹ I would argue that the political as well as emotional possibilities of this practice is heightened because the process of staging a show provides a concrete experience of working collaboratively towards a shared goal, realized in a public forum and often followed by further sharing of experiences from spectators.³⁰

Consciousness might still be raised in the direction of Ensler’s brand of feminism and there is something distinctly colonizing in the way V-day refers to young women participants in its campaigns as “V-girls” or “Vagina Warriors. However, as Basu remarks, the high numbers who have participated in *TVM* means that to dismiss this campaign is to risk “attributions of false consciousness to these women all over the world”, an idea that in itself is colonizing³¹. It is of course, a given in contemporary theatre and performance studies that the meaning and the political efficacy of a production is not necessarily determined by the author or the form of the script. These are only two factors within a multifaceted and unpredictable process of interpretation, which in this case includes constant revisions of the script and its translation into other languages embracing local, colloquial terms and phrases. Equally, as an embodied and situated medium, more than other media, this process is recognizably subject to the effect of context in the terms of *both* production *and* reception.

Cooper overlooks these factors and ignores the agency of the participants when she asserts that in student productions of *TVM* “Casting (large or small, diverse or homogenous) makes little difference, for the players are subject to the script’s singular, monological vision and form [...]”³² Student performances in the global North usually *do* have large and inclusive casts and the monologues are often split up amongst several performers with no attempt to create or

maintain psychological realism. This not only provides a sense of multiple different voices but in Brechtian terms, identification with “character” is potentially displaced onto an identification with the performers (who are usually known to the audience) and their (usually passionate) engagement with the subject matter of the play. None of this necessarily guarantees that these productions do not promulgate Ensler’s “monological vision” but looking *beyond* college productions in the US, there are numerous accounts of performance which indicate the impact of combined effects of casting *and* context on *TVM*’s meaning and effect.

For example, Williamson (who is an Anishinaabekwe/Nehayowak from Swan Lake, Manitoba and works in Indigenous Studies) describes performing one of the monologues in *TVM* attributed to an (abused) Indigenous woman, in an overwhelmingly white college production in what she describes as a “notoriously” white town. In this instance, the rehearsal process was an alienating and oppressive experience, and overall she remarks that “I was startlingly aware of my identity as being constituted both for and by white women.”³³ Yet she also recalls the first time she saw the Monologues was with “an all-Indigenous cast and an almost all-Indigenous audience,” and with indigenous terms added to the script.³⁴ As a result, the Indigenous women on-stage appeared as heterogeneous figures in a variety of roles and situations, rather than simply as victims, and for Williamson this was “empowering”. Nevertheless, she makes it clear that ultimately she perceives the *playtext* to be reductive and exclusive in regard to its representation of gender and colonising in regard to that of Indigenous women.

In less ambivalent terms, the question of context is underlined by Monique Wilson writing from the Philippines in response to the Mount Holyoke announcement. Wilson is a member of Gabriela “a militant national alliance of 200 Philippine women’s grassroots groups,” established in 1984 and she remarks that in the Philippines many key rights for women are being

fought for and there is a “deeply entrenched silence around issues of violence against women.”³⁵

An actor and director for over 35 years, Wilson has directed productions of *TVM* in her own and several other countries in the global South and asserts that, “Students in higher learning institutions in the west who proclaim the play to be ‘irrelevant’ or ‘racist’ or problematic because of its lack of ‘inclusivity’, only have to look to the Philippines to see how we have used, and continue to use, the play for social transformation and liberation.”³⁶ She goes on to provide concrete examples of how Gabriela has employed productions or extracts from *TVM* “strategically” as part of their campaigns, including a performance in 2002 in the Philippine Congress and Senate during a review of domestic violence and sex trafficking bills that “had been lying dormant for close to 10 years. Shortly afterwards the bills were passed.”³⁷

Wilson also underlines the galvanizing power of emotional identification when parallels occur between the content of particular monologues and current local news stories. Significantly, her example is the monologue based on interviews with survivors of the “rape camps” in the 1990s Balkan conflicts, which is often picked out for special criticism by scholars based in the US.³⁸ Serbian activist Jelena Djordjevic does not mention this monologue (written a few years earlier) in her account of staging *TVM* in Belgrade in 2006.³⁹ However, she does discuss the wider significance of the production process as a collaboration between activists and performers from across “the ethnic divides that fueled the war in former Yugoslavia.”⁴⁰ She also describes the post-show presentation of the funds it raised to members of Kolo, an organization (partly) run by and dedicated to supporting survivors of rape camps in Bosnia and Herzogenia operated by Serbian paramilitary during the war. For Djordjevic, this presentation in front of a 700 strong cross-section of Serbian society was a powerful symbol of this country confronting its violent past.⁴¹ Like, Wilson, Djordjevic comments on the emotional impact of the production on the

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audience, men and women alike but rather than cathartic, this is seen as part of a broader process of political consciousness-raising and Djordjevic concludes by describing the process *and* the production in Belgrade as “a metaphor of the possibility of bringing peace and coexistence of different cultures and religions”.⁴²

Nevertheless, a recognition of the limitations of the *TVM* playtext and the cultural specificity of its perspective has often prompted activists in various parts of the world to write their own plays. Yet, in terms of aesthetics these are usually closely modelled on Ensler’s text mainly re-working and/or moderating its subject matter in accord with the particular cultural context.⁴³ In other instances, as Basu remarks, local activist can utilize the cultural “otherness” of the *TVM* playtext to “push up against local structures and precipitate[s] conversations about gendered norms”, even in locations where bans have prevented production.⁴⁴ This effect is very clearly demonstrated by Monica Arac de Nyeko’s report on debates provoked by the banning of a proposed production of *TVM* by the Ugandan Government in 2005.⁴⁵

Overall, then these accounts demonstrate how women in various countries use *TVM* strategically within local activism in ways that “foreground[ing] women’s agency in the context of oppressive conditions that shape their lives.”⁴⁶ Although these performances operate within the parameters of the V-Day/Ensler brand, the exercise of this agency, the effect of context and of translation and as importantly, of the processes of theatrical production, allow for a significant degree of localization not just in terms of meaning of the playtext but of the event of the production as a whole.

Local and Global, Theory and Practice?

It has to be acknowledged that a proportion of the positive reports of productions of *TVM* (including in the US) underline a sense of connection and empathic identification with the

figures in the play and by extension survivors of sexual violence worldwide that might be deemed “essentialist”. In some instances this might represent the “strategic essentialism” referred to by Folino White in her discussion of the use of *TVM* as part of a protest against the barring of two women Representatives from the Michigan House in the US in 2012.⁴⁷ Undoubtedly however, expressions of essentialism also reflect the heterogeneity of the diverse and contradictory understandings of *feminism* in circulation at any one time. Indeed, while the potentially colonizing effect of working with V-Day cannot be ignored, the missionary or colonizing nature of anti-essentialist theories of difference developed primarily within the “Western” academy remains a highly contentious issue amongst many transnational activists; especially since these ideas are often presented as part of a narrative of feminist progress/progressiveness. As a result, for some, Mendoza reports, “the real divisions between women are those that run between western feminist scholars and Third World feminist activists, and not class, race, sexuality or nationality.”⁴⁸ Wilson’s position is more nuanced but she does insist that college students in the “West” (and by implication their lecturers) need to learn from activists in the global South, a point which has been repeatedly made by Mohanty in her work on transnational feminisms.

Mohanty’s own thinking has always been based on an understanding of gender as socially constructed, an insistence of recognizing *both* differences *and* structural and systemic commonalities in women’s condition. In recent years she has decried the “hegemony” of certain strands of anti-essentialist, post-modern queer and feminist theories within the overwhelmingly white “Western” academy.⁴⁹ She characterises these theories as privileging the discursive over the material and differences between women to the exclusion of affording any commonalities. She argues that as a result, they work against both “examination of broader patterns and

structures of domination and exploitation” (such as those represented by global capitalism) and the possibility of creating coalitions to challenge them.⁵⁰ This is because they tend to foster a “proliferation” of new identity categories that she contends plays into “neo-liberal individualization and privatization of politics”.⁵¹ This process was exemplified by the rise of postfeminist where all too often queer and feminist theories of “difference” were appropriated to a discourse of individual (albeit multiply constituted) identity and of personal empowerment within existing systems. This appropriation is possible because subject or identity categories based on “differences” still imply a singular and stable white, Euro-ethnic, heterosexual “norm” (to differ from), and as a result the differences signaled by the new intersecting identity categories can be understood as signifying attributes (essentially) belonging to “other” groups or individuals.⁵²

I am not suggesting that the scholarly critiques of *TVM* project under discussion are subject to these problems and contradictions. Nevertheless, it does seem to me that many analyses do not always take full account of the *TVM* campaign as a whole, either through the lens of theatrical performance, or that of its status as a popular transnational feminist movement; even when their argument draws on transnational feminist theory. As a result, paradoxically, they do not necessarily engage with some of the issues of context and of local and *shifting* differences, which their own methodology asserts. Yet equally, accounts of productions by activists such as Wilson and Djordjevic tend to focus overwhelmingly on the local. As such it seems that while for participants in the *TVM* project, the *sense* or rather feeling of being part of a transnational movement may be important, in concrete terms any connection to participants in other countries is mediated through V-Day as an organization and through creating local identifications with the stories represented in Ensler’s script.

On several counts then, OBR might appear a step forward for V-Day. Its structuring as a global ‘flash-mob’ potentially avoids the issues identified with *TVM* script and Ensler’s authorship, while the use of social media offers the opportunity for more *direct* and active communication between diversely located participants. As Baer puts it in relation to digital feminist activism in general, this might enable OBR to “reveal the pervasive, structural nature of sexual violence” on a global scale.⁵³ However, it is widely acknowledged that in Jodie Dean’s terms, social media represents the “technological infrastructure of neo-liberalism”, begging the question as to whether OBR is co-opted from the start.⁵⁴

OBR13: The Media Campaign

Writing for the *Huffington Post* just before the live event, UK based activist Natalie Gyte certainly perceived OBR13’s media campaign as co-opted. Interestingly, Gyte compares OBR13 unfavorably to the *TVM* project on the basis of the material support its fund-raising provides for projects that benefit survivors and grass roots activists worldwide. In contrast, as she points out, OBR is primarily an awareness raising exercise.⁵⁵ Even in these terms, Gyte is scathing about the usefulness of “coordinated dance” for achieving this goal and dismisses the whole project as a “high profile, notoriety-gaining” publicity campaign with Ensler at its center.⁵⁶ In her “Open Letter to Eve Ensler,” Chief Lauren Elk of Save Wiyabi, an advocacy group concerned with violence against Indigenous women in Canada, expressed similar views. Responding to V-Day publicity announcing a focus on Indigenous women in Canada as part of OBR13, Chief Elk objected to the use of a photograph of Ashley Callingbull, an Indigenous woman, without gaining Callingbull’s permission. She argues that this publicity also represented this group as being in need of rescue, not least because it totally ignored the fact that February 14 is *already* an iconic day in Canada for protest events around violence against Indigenous women, organized

and carried out *by* Indigenous women.⁵⁷ Consequently, Chief Elk concludes that V-Day, or rather Ensler, embodies the “white savior industrial complex,”⁵⁸ and both Gyte and activist Gillian Schutte (in a blogpost explaining why she resigned as the coordinator for OBR13 in South Africa) concur with this assessment.⁵⁹

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Significantly, these responses once again identify Ensler as the “author” of this event, despite the apparently more democratic format of OBR, and that the V-Day’s website stressed that it was organized through the efforts of 40 coordinators in different countries working with existing local organizations and projects. Even so, Ensler was OBR13’s primary, if not sole, spokesperson in mainstream media interviews and in the video “Message from Eve” released the day before the flash-mob. Further, she is credited as co-producer for all the campaign videos circulated via social media. These include her own “message,” the official “Documentary” which premiered at the Sundance film festival in 2014, as well as a music video of the campaign’s anthem “Break the Chain” and its main promotional video “Trigger Warning.”

The song “Break the Chain” was created by leading commercial US music producer Tena Clark, with lyrics by Tim Heintz. The video was filmed in New York with a large (uncredited), ethnically diverse cast of young women and features choreography by Debbie Allen, a choreographer and director for US film and TV, best known for her role in the TV series *Fame* (1982-7). However, in commercial music and video production, a producer exercises a high degree of creative influence and it is noticeable that the appeals Heintz’s lyrics make to global sisterhood (“sister won’t you join me”), liberation, empowerment (“I feel my heart for the first time racing I feel alive, I feel so amazing”), and a rather reductive notion of femininity (“we are mothers and teachers” and “beautiful creatures”), strongly recall Ensler’s writing in *TVM* and elsewhere.⁶⁰ There is also a striking consistency between the ideas, images and aesthetics in the

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campaign videos and statements made by Ensler in interviews during her world tour promoting OBR13. These, in turn, repeat ideas and attitudes and values identified with the *TVM* playscript.

For example, although released before the “Break the Chain” music video, “Trigger Warning” is effectively a dramatized, visual realization of its lyrics. Filmed in nine different countries, without dialogue and through-composed in “world music” style, “Trigger Warning” opens with a staged scene of female genital mutilation taking place in what is highly coded as “an African village.” This is followed by social-realist style scenes of women in different countries being subject to various types of violence in their homes or work places. These scenes are intercut with shots of a woman alone in the desert, who is wearing a chador and who bears the scars of severe facial burns, against the trembling of the desert sand in an “earthquake” that provides the signal (in the words of “Break the Chain”) to “walk, dance, rise.” As these various women are shown removing themselves from the violent situations the music becomes upbeat and celebratory. A climax is provided by dynamically edited images of groups of women of various nationalities dancing in local styles and idioms and ending with the signature OBR one billion arm gesture, which also features in “Break the Chain.”

In contrast to *TVM*, the violence portrayed is not confined to sexual violence and none of the women are presented as passive victims. However, the aesthetics and the “gaze” of “Trigger Warning” are unquestionably those of US produced pop videos and advertisements. As with *TVM*, there is a significant degree of cultural stereotyping and exoticization with some images, such as those of traditional Indian dancers, or dancers in front of landmarks such as Egyptian pyramids and the Eiffel Tower, all clichés of commercials for global tourism. These factors might be attributed to the fact that, under three minutes long, this video *is* an advert, or rather what is now described on social media as “femvertising,” a format that inevitably “commodifies

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Commented [A13]: I had no idea this was a thing!

politics and difference.”⁶¹ In accord with Bystrom’s notion of feminist cosmopolitanism, spectacle and emotional appeal are unquestionably privileged over structural social and political realities. The women simply walk away from their oppressors without meeting any resistance, the implication being that the implication being that they are “saved” by participating in OBR13, which enables them to transcend their oppressive conditions.

Similar tropes around the transcendent power of dance are evident in “Break the Chain’s” lyrics (“Dance to stop the screams/Dance to break the rules/Dance to stop the pain”) and in comments made by Ensler in interviews for the campaign. For example, speaking to Marianne Schnall, Ensler remarks “Dance is such a profound thing. You take up space when you dance. It’s a communal experience. You are truly authentic. You are in your body. You are sexual. You break the rules. You’re alive.” Referring to the women in the City of Joy, a recovery center for women who have been sexually abused in the Democratic Republic of Congo founded by V-Day in 2009, she goes on: “It is so transformative in terms of turning pain to power. I’ve seen women who’ve suffered the worst, worst atrocities, but when they dance, they come into another energy.”⁶² Unquestionably, these remarks express an essentialist feminism based in biology and imply that the aim of OBR13 is to provide some sort of catharsis for survivors regardless of differences in their situations, an idea reinforced by a “new age” transcultural spirituality which pervades all the OBR representations. For example, “Break the Chain” opens with the phrase “I raise my arms to the sky, On my knees I pray,” an image realized visually in the opening of the later “One Billion Rising Documentary,” where shots of diverse women meditating or praying across the world in locations such as by the sea are edited together in a way that presents these actions, and by extension the women performing them, as part of the same “universal” phenomenon. In short, to again refer back to Cooper, these media representations package a

“Western” neo-liberal female identity and political epistemology, “branding them authentic or natural”.⁶³

In a very literal sense, branding was very much in evident in the “toolkit” for staging an event offered by V-Day website. This toolkit included templates for creating promotional material featuring the OBR logo in the V-Day colors of red and pink and the music video “Break the Chain”. A video tutorial of the dance moves created by Allen was circulated on-line, and although not *directly* stated, the implication was that rather than the diverse dance idioms shown in “Trigger Warning,” a performance of this choreography to the recorded song would be central to OBR13 live events. Musically “Break the Chain” makes occasional use of world music beats and vocal motifs such as ululation, and Allen’s choreography allows for a brief moment of free expression. Otherwise, the song’s music, its lyrics and the dance steps, like the aesthetics of the videos, are rooted in and reflect the ideas and values of US commercial pop culture. Rehearsing this piece might provide opportunities for collective consciousness raising but the space for interpretation and localization in delivering pre-determined moves to a pre-recorded song (sung in English) is much more limited than staging a playtext available in translation. Not surprisingly then, in an otherwise positive account of OBR13, Shivana Gupta observes that in India participants tended overwhelmingly to be middle class, due to the cultural and economic capital necessary to engage with this style of music and dance, and as importantly, with the social media through on which the campaign depended.⁶⁴

Tellingly, Schutte reports that as a local coordinator within what V-Day described as “free and democratic movement,” it had been her understanding that dancing at *all*, let alone performing “Break the Chain,” was optional. Yet, when she judged this option to be inappropriate to the immediate South African context, Schutte says she found herself criticized

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and subjected “to top-down instructions” from V-Day⁶⁵. She also reports pressure to include celebrities in events, to place young women in leadership roles and to describe the campaign in publicity as a “joyous revolution”, all of which worked against OBR13 usefulness as a tool in local activism. Overall then, this campaign’s structure and media output does seem to emerge as a form of Macdonaldization, disseminating the same model of feminism evident in the *TVM* playtext as a global brand.

OBR13: The live event

For those of us in the global economy who have access to digital technologies, on February 14, 2013 the stream of images posted by participants on the V-Day website and from mainstream media platforms from around the world showed that the V-Day toolkit *was* widely used. There were innumerable performances of “Break the Chain” and an awful lot of red and pink. Yet equally, in some locations, especially in countries in the global South, elements of this “toolkit” were either ignored or re-interpreted culturally and/or through the resources available. This was most striking in news footage from Kabul showing a hundred or so Afghan women and men marching rather than dancing, and while they made some use of the OBR logo, their banners were green.⁶⁶ They were accompanied by armed police and the emotional tone was somber and restrained rather than that of “joyous.” In many other locations instead of, or as well as “Break the Chain,” live events embraced a multiplicity of genres of dance, song, street art, drumming, and other modes of performance reflective of local circumstances. In practice then, on the day the event was not entirely “monological,” and despite her many caveats Schutte acknowledges that it was “a great success in many respects.”⁶⁷ V-Day’s annual report also claims OBR13 “galvanized and empowered legislation” but the examples offered are few, limited, and inconclusive.⁶⁸

Speaking as a spectator to live events in my own location and to the on-line video streams, while I found OBR13 moving and even empowering, I am *more* ambivalent about this campaign than *TVM*. Its script, in the shape of “Break the Chain,” seemed more limiting and, if joyous, aside from the numbers involved, it did it appear to be particularly revolutionary. Significantly, while as noted above, the *TVM* project has often been subject to censorship, OBR13 seems to have been warmly welcomed, or at least tolerated world-wide. This is not surprising; few politicians anywhere are likely to declare themselves *for* violence against women *as a general principle* and the same generality meant that the practical next steps arising from this action (locally *or* globally) remained unclear.

Coalitions Beyond “Identity Politics”?

In an online article for *The Huffington Post*, looking forward to OBR 2014 “Rising for Justice,” Kimberlé Crenshaw offers some perspectives on this later iteration of the campaign that could offer a more positive outlook on OBR13. Crenshaw, an African-American civil right activists and law professor, is celebrated for coining the term “intersectionality” in the early 1990s. Drawing on a long tradition of Black feminist thought, her project was to challenge the marginalization and exclusion of Black women within feminist *and* within anti-racist social movements. She has participated in various V-Day events since 2002 and been a member of its board of Directors since 2013. Describing the run up to OBR14 Crenshaw states:

As the energy and excitement continues to build, it becomes ever more clear that global movements are not, at the end of the day, top down affairs. No one can create, own, or direct a movement that spans 179+ countries and thousands of demonstrations. For an uprising of this magnitude to even be thinkable, the

situation has to be ripe and the key stakeholders already in motion to connect the local into the global.⁶⁹

These comments appear to respond to the objections to OBR13 made by Gyte, Schutte, and Chief Elk, who the day before had also published online a strongly-worded condemnation of OBR14. Crenshaw counters accusations of “white savior complex” by stressing the political agency of local activists (as I have done), and she asserts the diversity of the “thousands of unique actions” planned for 2014.⁷⁰ However, there were changes in V-Day’s rhetoric and approach between 2013-14 that suggest that, to some extent, the earlier criticisms were taken on board. For example, as well as “Trigger Warning,” videos using footage produced by local activists from across the world were circulated and although Ensler remained a dominant figure in mainstream media, she was a less central presence overall. Further, while the actions still revolved around dancing and “Break the Chain” was still heavily promoted, the V-Day website more actively encouraged local organizers to create their own performances, with the steer that ideally these should take place in public spaces where women front of “institutions that ought to be accountable for justice.”⁷¹ Crenshaw contends that this focus on justice embraces not only traditional forms of violence against women, but the ways “that gender overlaps with and is defined by other dynamics that shape vulnerability to violence and its consequences”. She argues that the 2014 dances will constitute a mapping of sites where “violence festers at the intersections of vulnerability”, while transforming them into sites of resistance and she concludes “It is coalitional politics on a global scale.”⁷²

Although not writing for a scholarly publication in these comments, Crenshaw can be seen as attempting to address some of the issues that have arisen around the rise of intersectionality as a “buzzword” within the academy and as part of the paradigm shift

represented by digital feminisms.⁷³ In her work on this concept in the 1990s, Crenshaw's *aim* was to promote a better acknowledgement and understanding of differences within feminist and anti-racist social movements. However, her *objective* was to promote coalitions between these and other marginalized groups based around a common interest in contesting structural inequalities within the US legal and social institutions.⁷⁴ Since then, her ideas have been widely interpreted, including, as Mohanty contends, in ways that convert them into an "an inert theory" of identity. Further, as Jasbir Puar remarks, Crenshaw's approach, like that of several other key figures in this field, emerged from social movements in the US and were formulated in relation to "Western" understanding of subjectivity and identity. Consequently, as Jasbir Puar observes, "the categories privileged by intersectional analysis do not necessarily traverse national and regional boundaries nor genealogical exigencies".⁷⁵ This is not always taken into account in applying or exporting this framework to other geopolitical locations. As a result, for some intersectionality is perceived as colonizing.⁷⁶

In leaving open the other dynamics or categories that may intersect, overlap with, and define gender in her remarks on OBR14, Crenshaw counters these problems in a manner very similar to that employed by Judith Butler in *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, (based on lectures given at Bryn Mawr in 2011), especially in regard to the usage of the term vulnerability. In this book Butler explores large scale political protests taking place around 2011 including those in Egypt's Tahrir Square, protests occurring transnationally under the aegis of the Occupy Movement, and (in passing) SlutWalks, as a means of re-conceptualizing the basis for non-colonizing, transnational, coalitional politics. Drawing on her previous writings on performativity and "precarity", she starts from the proposition that "identity politics fails to furnish a broader conception of what it means, politically, to live together, across differences".⁷⁷

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Much of her discussion focusses on embodiment while remaining staunchly anti-essentialist. Rather than being defined in *biological* terms, bodies are understood as being formed and sustained through relations of interdependency with other bodies (that are simultaneously material and discursive) and with networks and systems of infrastructural support (that are simultaneously local and global).⁷⁸

I am not implying that Crenshaw has been influenced by Butler since the reverse is just as likely true but her use of the term “vulnerabilities” suggests that, like Butler, she is approaching this notion not as a single type of vulnerability or a characteristic of any particular group or identity category but as an attribute “distributed unequally under certain regimes of power” that acts on and through bodies.⁷⁹ Like Butler, she appears to be proposing that rather than signifying victimhood or helplessness, these different but structurally and systemically related vulnerabilities can constitute the basis for coalition and collective resistance, that is not “*conditioned in advance by identity.*”⁸⁰ In short, both Crenshaw and Butler can be seen to be attempting to conceptualize a form of common or “plural” political agency that does not typify any group as victims in need of rescue because it is not based on pre-defined identity categories and which takes account of the fact that *all* such categories (intersecting or otherwise) are inherently reductive and exclusive.

Reading Crenshaw’s discussion of OBR14 in this fashion suggests she is proposing that if the actions reveal a global “map” of (differential) vulnerabilities to violence due to failures in systems of justice, they also constitute what Butler describes as a “a concerted bodily demand for a more livable set of conditions” that (performatively) enacts *and* produces a plural form of political agency.⁸¹ By the same token the transformation of the sites Crenshaw imagines corresponds to Butler’s description of the way protests inevitably have to “create political space

from existing infrastructural conditions”, which in turn may be reconfigured and re-functioned as part of the protests.⁸² Arguably, in regard to OBR this includes the infrastructural conditions represented by V-Day itself and by social media technologies.

I think there is a clear convergence in Crenshaw’s and Butler’s thinking but in regard to OBR14, it has to be acknowledged that at the time of writing the 2014 actions Crenshaw was discussing *had yet to occur*. This rather renders her (and my own Butlerian) analysis of their operation and effects strictly theoretical. Similarly, although Butler’s examples of protests had already taken place, as signaled by the book’s title, her argument is largely abstract and abstracted and rooted in Euro-ethnic tradition of ethics, political theory and philosophy that might be regarded as ‘colonizing’. Further, there is a contradiction between her theory and her own practice. She continually emphasizes the primacy of the contextual and states that public demonstrations “are neither intrinsically good nor intrinsically bad: they assume differing values depending on what they are assembled for, and how that assembly works”.⁸³ Yet she does not explore the cultural, social and historical specificity or the political aims or more importantly *outcomes* of the demonstrations she cites, all of which appear to be presented as “*good*”. This includes SlutWalks, a movement that has been severely criticized by intersectional feminists for being reductive and exclusive.⁸⁴ These factors mean that it is easy to conceive how, taken out outside of the specificity of Butler’s discussion, her ideas might applied in a relativist fashion whereby almost *any* example of protest might emerge as performatively producing a plural agency that does not depend on pre-existing identity categories and equal in the extent to which they reconfigure and refunction systems of infrastructural support.

Indeed, I could easily resolve my concerns about OBR13 by applying exactly the same reading I have constructed around Crenshaw’s (advance) reading of OBR14- except that

Crenshaw stresses this latter's focus on justice. This meant that (in principle), the "bodily demand" signified by its actions was directly addressed to *specific* infrastructures and institutions and the *particular* (local) differential vulnerabilities produced by their failures. Importantly, this makes it possible to conceive of practical ways and means, at least locally, *beyond* the flash-mob performances, by which these systems might be materially as well as symbolically transformed. By contrast, in 2013 (and in some later iterations of this campaign) exactly to whom, or rather to which structures or systems the demand was addressed remained obscure, and as a consequence so did both the differential nature of vulnerability to violence (local and global) and material ways of taking the protests forward. As such, I would argue that OBR13 remained a participatory political performance event as opposed to "performative" one, maintaining (as a theatre scholar) that such events have value (as part of a wider political program) because of, not despite, their emotional nature. In short, if the OBR13 actions were transformative, this was a *theatrical* transformation, in similar terms to Djordjevic description of the Belgrade production of *TVM* as functioning as a metaphor of a possibility.

This understanding is allowed for by some of Crenshaw's remarks in her 2014 article, which presumably draw on her witnessing of OBR2013. She describes the actions "as moments of moving AS IF the everyday nature of gender violence were truly exceptional," asserting that "All politics may be local but when aggregated into a global symphony of actions and demands, our sense the way life has been ceases to limit what we can see, feel and believe to be possible."⁸⁵ While a performative works through "let it be so" (in certain, strictly limited contexts *making* it so), "as if" is one of the core propositions that defines theatrical performance. "As if" signals an action contiguous to but marked as apart from "what is," in which both disbelief and everyday identities are temporarily suspended and in which "transformations" are

metaphoric and affective. In short, through a combination of the local live events and the global flow of video and news streams, OBR13 constituted a multi-media performance which enacted a collective, utopian moment of imagining the world “as if.” By this I mean it functioned as embodied theatrical symbol of the *will* for non-colonizing solidarity and coalition across difference and distance and for rendering gender violence truly exceptional, as a future possibility. Such symbolic utopian moments are vital for energizing political movements but should not be mistaken for the “thing itself.”

Even so, it remains that in 2013, on the level of the local, the OBR format left far less scope for reconfiguring and refunctioning the infrastructural support in the shape of that offered by V-Day than the *TVM* project, and on the level of the global its actions were just as, if not more strongly conditioned by Ensler’s mode of white “Western” neo-liberal subjectivity. Despite the changes made in the interim, for some, such as Chief Elk, the same applied to OBR14. Having problematized aspects of this campaign in the US, she asserts “it is [*Ensler’s*] brand of anti-violence which ends up guiding the conversation and having the power and platform to decide ‘solutions’... solutions which end up being destructive and harmful,” especially, she contends, to women of color.⁸⁶ While it is crucial to acknowledge the effects of local, political agency and to keep imagining ‘as if’ within feminist theories and theatre and performance studies, it is just as crucial not to gloss over the concrete material effects of unequal power relations in everyday reality.

The 2018 announcement of “One Billion Rising Revolution” describes the risings as being “against all forms of violence against women” including “the systems that cause other forms of violence: imperialism, fascism, racism, capitalism and neo-liberalism.”⁸⁷ This is a weighty agenda for a series of dance based flash-mobs and although there have been further

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changes to this campaign format since 2014, including the appointment of Monique Wilson as its Director, there appears to be little recognition of the ways in which V-Day's *own* structures remain embroiled with capitalism, neo-liberalism and imperialism. This organization is a global charity registered and operating from the US, which works closely with government(s) and has a board of Directors which until recently was overwhelmingly white and consisted of media celebrities, CEO's of media companies, and US based philanthropists foundations. Further alongside this announcement, the V-Day website was strongly promoting the New York premiere of a new play by Ensler entitled *In the Body of the World*. This is based on her memoir of the same title which created a storm of protest at the time of publication for reflecting the same "brand" of essentialist, neo-liberal, colonizing feminism identified in this essay.⁸⁸

In the global North it would be foolish to imagine that *any* organization can operate "outside" the infrastructures of imperialism, capitalism, neo-liberalism and institutionalized racism and this applies to the academy as much, if not more, than V-Day. Hence, from within that academy, I am reluctant to dismiss an organisation that continues to attract enthusiastic participation from large numbers of women all over the world and which has provided material support for numerous grass roots initiatives. Ultimately, however I have to question this organization's ability to contribute to the material *production* as well as the *enactment* of a non-colonizing solidarity across borders. At the same time, it remains that within the enormity and complexity of this challenge means that in scholarly theory as well as in practice, it is currently exists only as a sometimes contradictory metaphor of possibility.

¹ See Olivia Laughland, "Vagina Monologues Playwright: "It Never Said a Woman is Someone with a Vagina,"", *The Guardian*, 16 January, 2015.

² *V-Day Annual Report, 2009*, available at <https://www.vday.org/~assets/images/press/vday-annual-report-web-cropped.pdf> VDat 2009 report ?9.

³ *V-Day Annual Report, 2013*, available at <https://www.vday.org/annual-reports/documents/VDAY2013AR.pdf> .

⁴ Debates amongst feminists about what terms to use when referring to global socio-economic, geographical and cultural distinctions are various and long-running. I have chosen to use “global North” and “global South” when mainly referring to geography and/ or Euro-ethnic when mainly referring to culture. However, many of those I cite in this article use the terms “Western,” “non-Western” or “Third World” and when discussing their ideas, I follow suit.

⁵ *V-Day Annual Report 2013*, 23.

⁶ Shelly Scott, “Been There, Done That: Paving the Way for *The Vagina Monologues*”, *Modern Drama* 46, no. 3 (2003): 404-423.

⁷ Schechner Richard, “Can We be the (New) Third World”, in *Performed Imaginaries* (London and New York, Routledge, 2014), 1-15.

⁸ Hester Baer, “Redoing Feminism: Digital Activism, Body Politics, and Neoliberalism”, *Feminist Media Studies* 16, no.1 (2006): 17-34, quote on 18

⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹¹ Chandra Talpade Mohanty, ““Under Western Eyes” Revisited: Feminist Solidarity Through Anticapitalist Struggles”, *Signs* 28, no. 2 (2003): 499-535, quote on 503.

¹² Mohanty, Chandra Talpade, “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial discourses.”, *Feminist review*, 30 (1988): 61-88.

¹³ Nancy Naples, “The Challenges and Possibilities of Transnational Feminist Praxis,” in *Women's Activism and Globalization: Linking Local Struggles and Global Politics*, ed. Nancy Naples and Manisha Desai (London: Routledge, 2002), 267-28, quote on 263.

¹⁴Breny Mendoza, "Transnational Feminisms in Question", *Feminist Theory* 3, no. 3 (2002): 295-314, quote on 302.

¹⁵ Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes," 296.

¹⁶ See Christine M Cooper, "Worrying about Vaginas: Feminism and Eve Ensler's *The Vagina Monologues*", *Signs* 32: 3 (2007) pp. 727-758 and Kerry Bystrom, "Broadway Without Borders: Eve Ensler, Lynn Nottage, and the Campaign to End Violence Against women in the Democratic Republic of Congo", in Florian Becker, Paola Hernández, and Brenda Werth eds., *Imagining Human Rights in Twenty-first-century Theater: Global Perspectives*. (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 227-248.

¹⁷ Eve Ensler, *The Vagina Monologues: The V-Day Edition*, (New York: Villard Books, 2001)

¹⁸ Cooper, "Worrying About Vaginas", 729 and Srimati Basu, "V is for Veil, V is for Ventriloquism: Global Feminisms in the Vagina Monologues," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 31.no. 1 (2010): 31-62.

¹⁹ See Bystrom, "Broadway Without Borders," 231, Cooper, "Worrying About Vaginas," 745-7 and Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes," 88.

²⁰ Cooper, "Worrying About Vaginas," 745, 755.

²¹ Bystrom, "Broadway Without Borders," 235. See also Wendy S. Hesford, "Cosmopolitanism and the Geopolitics of Feminist Rhetoric," in *Rhetorica in Motion: Feminist Rhetorical Methods & Methodologies*, ed. Eileen E. Schell and K.J. Rawson (Pittsburgh, Pa: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010).

²² *Ibid.*, 228.

²³ Stefan Meisiek "Which Catharsis Do They Mean? Aristotle, Moreno, Boal and Organization Theatre", *Organization Studies* 25, no. 5 (2004): 797-816, quote on 813.

²⁴ Ibid., 809-11.

²⁵ See Bystrom, "Broadway Without Borders."

²⁶ See Ann Folino White, "(In)Decorous Abortion Debate: Michigan Legislators' Protest Performance of *The Vagina Monologues*," *Theatre Topics*, 28 no. 2 (2018) 125-138, Tara Williamson, "I'm All of Everything That I Am: Constituting the Indigenous Woman, the White Woman, and the Audience in Eve Ensler's *The Vagina Monologues*," *Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture & Social Justice* 34, no. 1 (2009): 68-77 and Susan E. Bell and Susan M. Reverby, "Vaginal Politics: Tensions and Possibilities in *The Vagina Monologues*," *Women's Studies International Forum* 28, no. 5 (2005): 430-444.

²⁷ Scott, "Been There, Done That", 420.

²⁸ Ibid., 404

²⁹ Basu, "V is for Veil", 35.

³⁰ See for example Ibid., 39.

³² Cooper, "Worrying About Vaginas", 753.

³³ Williamson, "I'm All of Everything That I Am", 75.

³⁴ Ibid, 75, emphasis in the original.

³⁵ Wilson M, "Critics of the Vagina Monologues Must Acknowledge its Transformative Powers", *Guardian*, 27 January 2015.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ See for example, Cooper, "Worrying About Vaginas", 745-7.

³⁹ Jelena Djordjevic, "Vagina Sisters, Crying Men, Soap Opera Stars and Sushi: the Story of the Vagina Monologues in Belgrade", *IDS Bulletin* 37, no. 5, (2006): 7-133.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 131

⁴¹ Ibid., 131.

⁴² Ibid., 131.

⁴³ See for example Auza, Daphne, “Cairo’s Version of the Vagina Monologues Addresses Egypt’s Gender Issues”, *The Culture-ist*, 6 January 2014

<https://www.thecultureist.com/2014/01/06/bussy-cairo-vagina-monologues-egypts-gender-issues>.

⁴⁴ Basu, “V is for Veil”, 39.

⁴⁵ Monica Arac de Nyeko, “Ugandan Monologues”, *Agenda* 19, no. 63 (2005): 100-103.

⁴⁶ Nancy Naples, “Transnational Feminist Praxis”, 263.

⁴⁷ White, “(In) Decorous Abortion Debate, 132.

⁴⁸ Mendoza, ‘Transnational feminisms in question’, p. 305

⁴⁹ Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “‘Transnational Feminist Crossings’: On Neoliberalism and Radical Critique”, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 38, no. 4, (2013): 967-991

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 976.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 971.

⁵² See Jasbir K. Puar, “‘I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess’: Becoming-Intersectional in Assemblage Theory”, *PhiloSOPHIA* 2, no. 1 (2012): 49-66, 53

⁵³ Baer, “Redoing Feminism”, 18.

⁵⁴ Jodie Dean, *Democracy and Other Neoliberal Fantasies: Communicative Capitalism and Left Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), quote on 23.

⁵⁵ Natalie Gyte, “Why I Won’t Support One Billion Rising”, *Huffington Post*, 14 February, 2013, available at http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/natalie-gyte/one-billion-rising-why-i-wont-support_b_2684595.html?utm_hp_ref=uk&ncid=edlinkusaolp00000008

⁵⁶ *Ibid*.

⁵⁷ Lauren Chief Elk “Open Letter to Eve Ensler”, 3 May, 2013, available at <http://chiefelk.tumblr.com/post/49527456060/an-open-letter-to-eve-ensler>- chief Elk

⁵⁸ *Ibid*.

⁵⁹ Gillian Schutte “Why I Stepped out of My One Billion Rising South Africa Coordinator Role” May 3, 2013, available at <http://nowavefeminism.tumblr.com/page/7>

⁶⁰ See for example the title poem in Ensler's collection of poetry *I am an emotional creature: the secret life of girls around the world* (New York: Villard Books, 2011).

⁶¹ Cooper, "Worrying about Vaginas", 755.

⁶² Marianne Schnall (2013) "Strike, Dance! Eve Ensler's One Billion Rising," *Women's Media Centre*, February 1, 2013, available at <http://www.womensmediacenter.com/feature/entry/strike-dance-eve-enslers-one-billion-rising>

⁶³ Cooper, "Worrying About Vaginas", 755.

⁶⁴ Shivana Gupta, "Of This Technology and Ideology: One Billion Rising (India)",

The Gender and Citizenship in the Information Society, July 1. 2013, available at

http://www.gender-is-citizenship.net/Of_this_technology_and_ideology-

[One_Billion_Rising_%28India%29](http://www.gender-is-citizenship.net/Of_this_technology_and_ideology-)

⁶⁵ Schutte "Why I Stepped Out"

⁶⁶ For video footage see <https://www.theguardian.com/society/video/2013/feb/14/one-billion-rising-afghan-march-video>

⁶⁷ Schutte "Why I Stepped Out".

⁶⁸. See *V-Day Annual Report, 2013*.

⁶⁹ Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Justice Rising", *Huffington Post*, 5 February, 2014, available at

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kimberle-crenshaw/justice-rising_b_4733601.html

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Kathy Davis, "Intersectionality as Buzzword: A Sociology of Science Perspective On What Makes a Feminist Theory Successful", *Feminist theory* 9.no. 1 (2008): 67-85.

⁷⁴ See Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color”, *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991):1241-99.

⁷⁵ Puar, “I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess”, 55.

⁷⁶ See for example Nivedita Menon, “Is Feminism about “Women”? A Critical View on Intersectionality from India”, *International Viewpoint*, 18 May, 2015, available at <http://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article4038>

⁷⁷ Judith Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (Harvard University Press, 2015), Kindle Edition.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 27 .

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 142.

⁸⁰ Italics added, *Ibid.*, 145.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 127 and 72.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 124.

⁸⁴ See Baer, “Redoing Feminism”, 25.

⁸⁵ Crenshaw, “Justice Rising”.

⁸⁶ Lauren Chief Elk, “There, is No We: V-day, Indigenous Women and the Myth of Shared Gender Oppression”, *Model View Culture*, February 4, 2014, available at <https://modelviewculture.com/pieces/there-is-no-we-v-day-indigenous-women-and-the-myth-of-shared-gender-oppression>

⁸⁷ V-Day website January 2018, available at <https://www.onebillionrising.org/about/campaign/one-billion-rising/>

⁸⁸ See for example “Eve Ensler and ‘Congo Stigmata’”, *EverydayVictim Blaming*, December 12, 2013, available at <https://everydayvictimblaming.com/evb-analysis/eve-ensler-and-congo-stigmata/>