

Our Vaginas, Not Ourselves: A Critical Analysis of the Vagina Monologues

Alyssa Reiser

“...There are problems with using the female body for feminist ends”¹

In January and February I participated in the 2006 V-Day College Campaign at Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio as an organizer, producer, and actress. In this essay I draw on my research and activist work surrounding the issues of domestic violence and rape culture, my own lived experience as a woman as well as the experiences of my female-identified friends and family, feminist theory, and a limited but representative amount of critical scholarship as a lens through which to address the efficacy of The Vagina Monologues as emancipatory feminist theater. Specifically, I am concerned about the ahistorical “culture of vaginas” that the play’s author, Eve Ensler, speaks to and about, and its universalizing effect on abstracted womanhood.

Adulation and Criticisms

At once scandalous and profoundly liberating, the Monologues have become a theatrical and cultural juggernaut, catapulting the word “vagina” into the American popular vernacular. Ensler’s vagina crusade has succeeded in this arena - demanding and achieving legitimacy for vagina discourse. Having accomplished this, the shock factor that made TVM so effective in the mid-90’s has eroded over time. That said, the experience of watching The Vagina Monologues has lost none of its appeal as an experience of validation for being a woman and/or equipped with a vagina. It has created a community among certain groups of women with similar experiences and perhaps similar fears and shame. Testimonials from participants in the V-Day College Campaign attests to this: “A friend who had told me that she didn’t understand why we were doing The Vagina Monologues and didn’t see the point in always talking about “those things” came to the performance, and the next day told me it had changed her life,” and; “Overall, I loved how I felt being part of a movement that empowers women...Every time I saw a cast member on campus, we would speak loudly and confidently about how excited we were to be part of The Vagina Monologues...Because of the College Campaign, I said VAGINA at least a dozen times a day for two months, and I was able to reclaim it as a word.”² Touching on everything from vagina behaviors to its links to identity and self-esteem, the play has simultaneously incited and capitalized upon a culture of vaginas that has moved far from the historical climate of silence. Ensler’s play has catalyzed a culture of vaginas with a canon of stories and a small vocabulary of its own. My question is: Whose vagina stories and voices?

Background

In the mid-1990s Eve Ensler, feminist playwright, traveled the world interviewing over 200 women, mostly in the United States, of all ages, races, creeds, and backgrounds, about relationships with their vaginas. She theatricalized this interview material and produced the Obie award-winning The Vagina Monologues (TVM), a significant text/performance in discussions of female sexuality. Of the writing process Ensler explains that, “some of the monologues are close to verbatim interviews, some are composite interview material, and with some I just began with the seed of an interview and had a good time”.³ The monologues are vignettes, glimpses into the secrets and pleasures of woman-types. Each one explores one specific aspect of the vagina; hair, scents, masturbation, sex, orgasms, birth, incest, and rape are examples. The monologues are broken up by disturbing “Vagina Facts” about issues like female “genital mutilation” in some African communities, as well as comic descriptions of what we call vaginas, such as what they would wear if they got dressed, and what they would say if they talked. “Feed me”, “Slow down” and “Is that you?” say interviewees who mentally dress their “damp moss”- and “wet garbage” smelling vaginas in everything from “mink” to “an electrical shock device to keep strangers away”.

Enslar created this play attempting to address women's self-hatred and fear of their bodies; and trying to break through U.S. culture's taboo about discussing vaginas. She was inspired by a conversation with a friend who was in menopause, and made self-loathing comments about her vagina. (Despite this much-publicized inspiration, Enslar never addresses menopause in her Monologues.) In her own New Age feminist style, she crusaded to erase the shame surrounding female genitals. As evidenced in her interviews and in mainstream American culture, the vagina is simultaneously objectified as a sexual object; condemned for being unclean and malodorous (advertisements for scented tampons, douches, and vaginal sprays endemic to U.S. culture encourage many women to spend unnecessary amounts of time and money trying to tame their natural, normal scent); abhorred as a symbol of the feminine and conflated with essentialist notions of 'female' weakness, irrationality, and close proximity to nature. From the myth of the vagina dentata to the gynocentric insults of 'pussy' and 'cunt', vaginas have a degraded status, most noticeably in comparison to the penis. Ubiquitous phallogocentric language and imagery, in contrast to the vagina, celebrate the phallus (and by extension, patriarchy) as a symbol of virility, power, and violence. The Vagina Monologues has been commended for carving out a symbolic place for the vagina, one of feminist embodiment and subjectivity. Enslar deserves credit for presenting female sexuality and the vagina in a more vocal way than has ever been done before, especially in mainstream theater performances.

The wide-ranging responses to TVM range from praising Enslar and her play as an emancipatory force for women against sexual oppression and violence; rejecting it as fundamentally anti-male and perpetuating the belief of women as victims; to censoring it and attempting to enact legislation against it for its 'vulgarity'. Right-wing Christians and other religious fundamentalists; the Intersex Society of North America; Betty Dodson; political conservatives; college administrations; mainstream theater critics; feminist scholars and activists; founders of the Boston Women's Health Collective; and women living in the Global South have all spoken out against the Monologues. Despite being surrounded by controversy (or perhaps because of it), the confessional and voyeuristic style of TVM has propelled it to the status of cultural phenomenon. Reclaiming a love of others' or one's own vagina is now vogue.

In 1998 Enslar created the V-Day Worldwide Campaign in collaboration with activists from a group called Feminist.com⁴, inviting communities and college campuses around the world to present productions of TVM every year around Valentine's Day, to raise awareness and money to fight violence against women globally. Enslar says of this experience:

When I first started performing The Vagina Monologues, everywhere I went in the world women would line up after the show...but the majority of the women who lined up were there to tell me about how they'd been raped or slapped or beaten or incested, and how that experience had forever changed them...I had known of course that there was violence against women. I was not naive. I had survived terrible sexual and physical violence myself at the hands of my own father. What I did not know until that tour was the epidemic proportions of this violence. This realization gave birth to V-Day, a worldwide movement that has spread in 8 years to 81 countries and raised over \$30 million dollars for local groups working to stop violence against women⁵

Issues of Race, Sexuality, Age, and Class

TVM has been translated into several languages and performed in Hungary, Bulgaria, China, several African countries, all over Europe, and even the Philippines, whose native language Tagalog has no equivalent for the word 'vagina'. In crossing borders, there was an attempt to open a vagina dialogue. But how present are the cultural voices of these countries in the actual text? Not very, if at all. However diverse in age and manifold in tone and subject, the Monologues are still written from an American perspective and for an American audience. Enslar's voice is unabashedly American with its use of slang and its experiential pool drawing from uniquely Western and specifically American cultural and social institutions like dating.

So possessive of her creation, and so ethnocentric is this playwright that Ensler is unwilling to allow revisions that will translate some very Western concepts (rape, incest, dating, S&M) into culturally relevant material for the foreign countries TVM is performed in. Korean scholar Sea Ling Chen, a Columbia University Post Doctorate Fellow, attempted to produce the play in Hong Kong. Anticipating the impossibility of communicating many of Ensler's ideas to a Korean audience and frustrated at her mandate against altering any of the content of the play, Chen conducted interviews, wrote, produced, and directed a culturally appropriate adaptation called Little Sisters. She explains that the way women in Korea view their bodies, especially their vaginas, and the way issues such as rape, consent, sex, virginity, are conceptualized, is not encapsulated in Ensler's writing.⁶ The provocative, confrontational style of TVM simply does not make sense for a Korean audience, whose cultural norms do not permit this type of interaction. Different political, social, and economic contexts for women result in differing relationships to their vaginas. How, Chen wonders, can The Vagina Monologues become a dialogue? She writes, "It is only when the core recognizes the possibility of learning from the periphery that there could be a more mutually beneficial partnership" (Chen 333.) Unable to alter the material of TVM, Chen was forced to abandon the project and create her own cultural adaptation. This has become a recent phenomenon in other cultures and communities: Saint Mary's College in the United States presented their adaptation of TVM in 2005, called SMC Monologues; in Holland The Veiled Monologues spoke to the experiences of Dutch Muslim women; and Chaing Rai the Thai Women and HIV Task Force (TWAT) produced another adaptation. The Vagina Monologues has also been performed in the U.S. with an all-transgender cast.⁷

TVM has been revamped, rewritten, and appropriated so many times because in its untouched form, it suffers from a lack of diversity. There are no monologues about celibate, abstinent, bisexual, or disabled women. Nor is there a monologue dealing with menopause, hysterectomies, birth control, forced sterilization, virginity, miscarriage, fertility treatments or abortion. There is one monologue representing the vaginal experiences of all older women, "The Flood", and it is stereotypical in its depiction of a frigid woman afraid of her 'down there'. I want to hear women talking about their increased sex drive and creative energy during and after menopause, what it is like to make love with a physical disability, the impact of reproductive technologies. I realize that it would be extremely difficult to be inclusive of the entire spectrum of sexual experiences in one play without marginalizing anyone's interests or identity. But TVM demonstrates an ignorance of issues that are of dire importance in today's political and sexual climate. With *Roe v. Wade* in jeopardy, Ensler could at the very least write a monologue about abortion. But that would be too controversial for her diluted and safe brand of Hollywood feminism, offending the Christian majority in a way that rape and incest would not. Addressing some of the more controversial issues, or unmasking the politics of inequality surrounding some of the more obvious issues- sex work and birth for example- could possibly divide the audience and decrease profits. Ensler cannot expect to truly liberate women from violence and self-hatred when she, a self-proclaimed feminist, shies away from divisive subjects and perpetuates the misleading belief that all women are equal in their oppression.

With only one monologue about a lesbian and one optionally performed monologue about transsexual women, the play is unapologetically heteronormative. And where Ensler does deviate from this hetero-hierarchy, she subtly degrades gender-variance and is unknowingly racist. For example, in the monologue about a lesbian woman remembering how she discovered her sexual orientation, "The Little Coochi Snorcher That Could", a black child from a broken home is raped by her father's friend. The content of piece draws from deeply racist stereotypes about the deterioration of the nuclear family, female-headed households, incest and sexual violence being African-American issues. Problematic for many reasons, the stereotypes Ensler relied upon in writing this monologue are especially culpable for masking the sinister history of interracial sexual violence between white men and black women. One would think from seeing this play that white American women are never raped, tortured, or survivors of incest. Nor would anyone in the audience learn that, overwhelmingly, men who rape are straight, white males.

The only other monologue in the 2006 script that addresses violence against women is based on the experiences of non-Western women. In "My Vagina Was My Village", Ensler graphically describes the rape and torture of a Bosnian woman. Thousands of people walk away from performances of TVM without having their sense of safety threatened or their stereotypes about sexual and racial minorities, or women living in Third World countries, questioned. It has been noted that most Western productions of The Vagina Monologues include performers and audiences that are young, straight, and white.⁸ This is probably because the play is tailored to their interests and identities.

The power of TVM lies in its promotion of a 'culture of vaginas', its attempt to establish feelings of sisterhood based on a common biology. This biological reductivism is the distorted rationale behind Ensler's belief that it is okay to speak for all women through her straight, white, American middle-class voice. The equation is simple: vagina=woman. But what is the broader definition of a woman? There are many ways to identify woman- chromosomes, breasts, uterus, clothing, pronouns, self-identification, a vagina. Yet, there is no consensus in the feminist and trans communities. The increased visibility of gender-variant subcultures has proved that having a vagina is not a prerequisite for being a woman. Intersexed women are born without vaginas, and women-born-men fight for their right to be identified as female. Not all cultures enact the Western gender binary. Sexual difference cannot always be reduced to anatomy. When viewing TVM, it is essential for audience members to keep in mind that a woman is not defined by her vagina, or vice versa. Both are culturally constructed and historically specific institutions.

70s Feminism Defanged⁹

What do we make of Ensler's declaration of the vagina as the universal site for women's solidarity regardless of age, race, ethnicity, class, and religion? Has she sacrificed authenticity and globality at the expense of making TVM and V-Day a moneymaking enterprise? The McMonologues franchises are performed in hundreds of cities annually, replete with cheesy merchandise, e.g. chocolate vaginas-on-a-stick, vagina t-shirts, vagina buttons, and vagina mugs. The 2001 V-Day benefit at Madison Square Garden, starring only celebrities like Whoopi Goldberg and Jane Fonda, brought in as much as \$250 a ticket and was sponsored by Tampax. It is ironic that The Vagina Monologues, a 'feminist' play, was sponsored by a corporation that oppresses women with its hygiene propaganda. Tampax, and other corporations that market feminine hygiene products, make billions of dollars every year off the myth that women's vaginas need to be shaved, plugged up, rinsed out, and sprayed because our vaginas, and by extension, we as women, are dirty.

Like so many things American- Nikes, Diet Coke, boy bands- TVM is incredibly marketable. Why? Because the concept of "universal women's experiences," while highly problematic, is palatable to people who want a feel-good, watered down feminism; who want to believe in a global sisterhood and are naïve enough to think that differences are erased by the label 'woman.' If a group of monologues and "vagina facts" represent half of the world's population, then Ensler has a huge audience who can relate to her material and buy tickets. To make TVM malleable, to allow people to put their stamp of individuality on it, would decrease the marketing power.

I mentioned earlier Ensler's mandate against altering any of her material. To quote the 2006 V-Day Organizer's Kit: "Do not use the book of the play or versions of the script from previous campaigns. The new script must be followed. You may not edit any introductions or monologues. And you may not exclude or change the order of any of the monologues". There are a ridiculous amount of strict rules and guidelines one must adhere to if planning to produce TVM, and harsh legal and financial penalties for violators. Another of Ensler's requirements is that only women are allowed to perform her play.¹⁰ This dictate is redolent of the archaic 1970s feminist concept of "woman-only space", which held that because the patriarchy has oppressed women for so long, women need their own space away from men in order to establish their own identities free from sexist domination. I am not suggesting that female-only spaces do not have their benefits. A support-group atmosphere can be very empowering. But in and of itself, a safe space does not

spark a cultural revolution. Patriarchy is not just about the physical presence of men but about the mind-sets and assumptions that denigrate femininities, marginalized masculinities and women.

Making sexual assault and domestic violence into a “women victims, men batterers/rapists” binary does not reflect the complexity of women’s experiences. Issues like domestic violence and sexual assault may disproportionately affect heterosexual women, but the existence of same-sex domestic violence in lesbian communities proves that “women-only space” is not always safe for women. And men, too, are also victims of sexual violence. If Ensler wants The Vagina Monologues to end sexual violence, she should address all communities and identity categories—including men.

The way that men are addressed in TVM is in general disturbing. Though purporting to encourage a discourse about female sexuality, the male perspective is silenced. The men that do appear in the monologues are ‘bad guys’. And if they are not, they are singularly obsessed with vaginas. This degrades the notion of loving, equal relationships between men and women. The only positive male interaction with a vagina in the entire play occurs in the monologue “Because He Liked to Look at It.” In this monologue a woman discovers how beautiful and erotic her vagina is because a man intensely appreciates it. But all he does is stare and analyze, seeing this woman as her vagina and defining his character by the desire to see vaginas- a very one-dimensional portrayal of a vagina-loving male. Underlying his voyeuristic vagina obsession is the implicit message that he has vagina envy. There do exist men who celebrate and admire female sexuality and anatomy without fetishizing it. Isolation and exclusion of men’s diverse voices exacerbate TVM’s failure to open a dialogue. Ensler could allow men into the discussion by inviting male playwrights to write monologues to be included in the play, or by creating more complex male characters that do not fit neatly into the hero/villain dichotomy.

Eve Ensler has colonized the vagina as her own personal space, and allows in the people that she feels meet the criteria for ‘woman’. Where does this leave men, as well as all the individuals who don’t fit neatly into the category ‘woman’? Janet Wolff wrote, “There are problems with using the female body for feminist ends.” This statement reflects the argument that even the assumption of a common biology is false, due to the different economic, social, and political contexts in which women live their lives. It also sheds light on my point that focusing solely on the female body leaves men out of the dialogue. If the goal were really to allow open discourse about the diversity of women’s experiences and women’s sexualities, then individual productions would be free to include a diversity of experiences that may be most relevant with their particular audience. Performers could draw on their own familiar experiences without facing ramifications, which might help dislodge the misleading presumption that the play speaks for everyone. If we use the female body to make a political statement, we must be aware that not all women’s experiences can be represented by the historical vagina. A neutral part of the anatomy until inscribed with ideological meanings, the conceptualization of the vagina reflects the gender roles available to and valuation of women in their respective cultures. The official V-Day website brags that Ensler’s play “has given a voice to women of all ages all over the world.” Where are our monologues?

Post-Production Reflections

My involvement with V-Day 2006 as a producer entailed breaking a few of Ensler’s rules: rearranging the order of the monologues and altering a few lines. I chose not to include the (mandatory) monologue “My Vagina Was My Village” and the (mandatory) “No-So-Happy Vagina Fact” for our performance (against Ensler’s rules.) Our cast was comprised of white American women; and to address systemized rape as a tactic of war in Bosnia and female “genital mutilation” in some communities in Africa would have reinforced, I feel, the othering of non-Western women and cast Western women as their advocates and protectors. I left these pieces out, as well as the optional monologues about comfort women and Afghan women, because I did not want to reproduce portrayals of non-Western women as one-dimensional victims of patriarchy

(and in the process vilify men of color, non-Western men, and non-Western cultures.) I worry whether this decision silenced the voices of non-Western women.

The lack of diversity in the cast brought to mind worrisome questions: did it reflect the lack of racial diversity at Antioch College, or does The Vagina Monologues simply not speak to women of color? I had one transwoman interested in participating, but she did not follow through. Did she not feel welcome in the production; should I have included the optional monologue “They Beat the Boy Out of My Girl...Or So They Tried” even though I had no transwomen in the cast? Choosing whose stories should be heard had to be balanced with an awareness that the actress speaking for the owners of the story changes the message and its effect on the audience. Many actresses in this particular production spontaneously altered their pieces by omitting any explicit acknowledgement of a character’s race. They uniformly cited fear of cultural insensitivity for de-racializing, or whitening, their monologues. I believe that this problem may not have existed were it not for the stereotypes that permeated the script.

For example, in the four-person piece about the beginning of menses “I Was 12, My Mother Slapped Me”, one of the lines is, “I became a good Vietnamese woman, virtuous, quiet, hard worker.” Ensler probably intended for lines such as these to make audiences question the performances of gender available to women, or to provoke empathy and understanding. But it is uncontextualized and vague, preceded by “I got hair” and followed by “I got horny.” This makes it probable that audience members not versed in feminist theories and ideologies will passively accept the stereotyped gender roles of Vietnamese women explicated here. It would have been made a more powerful impact to write this line in a way that disrupts ideologies of Asian femininity.

I took several other measures to present The Vagina Monologues in a way that was sensitive to the communities it addresses. One of my fundamental goals was to have the audience engage the material on an emotional and intellectual level. To this end I included ‘producer’s notes’ in the program for several of the more problematic monologues. I intended these to provoke a critical examination of the way the issues were presented in each piece. For example, I wrote the following for “I Was There in the Room”:

Ensler chose to include a monologue about birth, but ignores related issues such as the inability to conceive; the racial and class politics of fertility treatments and sterilization; the prevalence of miscarriage (up to 25% of women will experience one); and abortion (an increasingly endangered choice in the current political climate.) In a supposedly “feminist” play, it is extremely disappointing that these highly debated and controversial issues, that have so much emotional and political impact on so many women, are conveniently left out.

Additionally, I held a ‘talk-back’ after the performance with the audience, the members of the cast, and of Antioch’s women’s studies professors to discuss the production process and the issues that The Vagina Monologues raises. I would recommend that anyone considering staging this play include something similar in their own productions, as it provided both audience and cast a supportive atmosphere to debrief, debate, process, and share their thoughts and experiences.

Another issue I had was wondering whether I was ‘preaching to the choir.’ At an institution as politically vocal and critical of the dominant U.S. culture as Antioch, there is a possibility that TVM is not radical enough. Discounting the actual night of our performance, the cast did not experience the intense bonding, liberating epiphanies, and establishment of a mini-community of ‘vagina warriors’ to which many college students who participate in the V-Day College Campaign testify. These women found the experience of performing the Monologues empowering in more subtle ways, often translating into more fulfilling sex lives. One woman found herself able to speak about the pleasures of masturbation with friends, another began using the word ‘vagina’ in front of her family members for the first time. Some women were inspired to shock friends and family with their newfound lack of shame in conversing about a previously taboo subject, while others found the confidence to discuss insecurities and desires with their

sexual partners for the first time ever. Only one participant, the only woman in the cast that did not attend Antioch College, described her experience with TVM as transformative. She was raised in a conservative Christian home. Her mother, who was horrified that she was in the play, never talked with her about sex or said the word 'vagina' in her presence. During the course of the production process, this woman realized that she had subconsciously accepted the belief that sex is dirty. She confronted her fear of being labeled a whore and lost her virginity a week before the performance. She told me it was "thoroughly enjoyable research" for her role as a dominatrix.

The audience seemed more amused and entertained than enlightened. Not a single audience member approached me to comment on how the play changed their life or even made them think differently about women's lives (which supposedly happens often elsewhere, according to Ensler and other V-Day participants.) On one level, the lack of intense audience reactions disappointed me, but I had expected it. Most of the people in my community consider themselves as being already educated on the issue of sexual violence against women, and as having a respect for women's sexuality. We do not blush at hearing or saying the word 'cunt', and we are not shocked by the prevalence of rape either in the United States or anywhere else. It is easy for my peers and me to deconstruct and criticize Ensler's work for not going far enough, but we have the privilege of a liberal arts education at a prestigious academic institution. And we are atypically concerned here with the politics of race, sexuality, gender, and class at that. If I were to produce TVM again, I would have local women write their own monologues, concentrating on aspects of women's sexuality that are of particular relevance individually and to the larger community. I believe this would convey a deeper sense of empowerment and urgency for change to the participants and the audience because the content of the play would be less removed from their time and place in history. Nonetheless, it would be impossible to encompass all of the differences and contradictions inherent in any community. It is not difficult to forget that TVM is revolutionary in its own right; that it single handedly propelled the word 'vagina' and the existence of rape, incest, masturbation, S&M, etc. into the mainstream consciousness. A means to an end, but by no means an end, this play is a small step in introducing feminist ideology to the rest of society that exists outside the isolated ivy-covered towers of academia. It has established the opening of discourses with which to talk about women's sexuality and the ways in which it is a source of power and oppression.

I saw The Vagina Monologues for the first time when I was sixteen. It was a professional production in Chicago with only three actresses. I remember hearing an elderly woman in attendance with friends profess her disgust at being dragged to the performance; audience members laughing and crying together and needing to process after the show; the electricity in the theater and the awe of the presence and strength of the actresses. I left that performance completely stunned. I had no idea that other women felt and thought and experienced the subject matter of The Vagina Monologues. It was truly a freeing moment, and one that inspired me to explore women's studies literature (I went and read nearly every book in the women's studies section at Barnes and Noble.) That experience provided a segue for me to examine the construct of womanhood and to develop a conscious awareness of the oppression and agency of women. My own first experience with The Vagina Monologues, coupled with witnessing and reading about the relief and validation that women feel after seeing it, overshadow my problems with the play. Flawed as Ensler's script is, the conversations it sparks are crucial to raising awareness about violence against women; linking the isolated experiences of individual women and building solidarity; breaking the silence surrounding the vagina and women's sexuality; and dismantling the self-hatred that women learn to associate with their bodies.

Notes

1. Wolff, Janet (2003). "Reinstating Corporeality: Feminism and Body Politics," in Amelia Jones (Ed.), The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader. London: Routledge.

2. <http://www.vday.org/contents/vcampaigns/college/testimonials>

3. Ensler, Eve (2001). The Vagina Monologues. The V-Day Edition. New York: Villard. P. 7.

4. According to their Web site, "Feminist.com is a grassroots, interactive community by, for and about women. We aim to facilitate information-sharing among women and encourage mobilization around political issues." Feminist.com facilitates connections between individual women and feminist organizations, as well as providing support and resources for those committed to justice, equality, wellness, and freedom from violence for all women.

5. Eve Ensler's response to the World Health Organization's Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence Against Women, written November 24, 2005, posted on www.vday.org.

6. Chen, Sea Ling. "Vagina Dialogues?" International Feminist Journal of Politics. 6:2 June 2004, 326-334. www.tandf.co.uk/journals.

7. Beautiful Daughters is the original LOGO documentary that looks at the lives of four transgender women intertwined with the casting, rehearsal and opening of a V-Day benefit production of Eve Ensler's The Vagina Monologues. The women confront and discuss the issues they face as transgender women and how The Vagina Monologues is used as a vehicle to address these issues to a mass audience. For more information, visit <http://ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/TS/Beautiful%20Daughters/Beautiful%20Daughters.html>

8. See Bell, Susan E. and Susan M. Reverby. "Vaginal Politics: Tensions and Possibilities in The Vagina Monologues," in Women's Studies International Forum 28 (2005) p. 439-440. www.elsevier.com/locate/wsif. See also Scott, Shelly. "Been There, Done That: Paving the Way for The Vagina Monologues," in Modern Drama. 46:3 Fall 2003, p. 407-411.

9. This is a reference to Tania Modleski's criticism of The Vagina Monologues found in Shelly Scott's article "Paving the Way for The Vagina Monologues." Scott invokes the quote to argue that the play's status of a cultural phenomenon is possible due to a long history of feminist theater that was inspired by Second Wave consciousness-raising, but that it (TVM) does not extend CR into the realm of political activism and cultural change.

10. After an intense backlash from the trans community and pockets of the feminist community, Eve Ensler has allowed trans-women (male-to-female transsexuals) to perform her monologues.

Works Cited

Bell, Susan E. and Susan M. Reverby. "Vaginal Politics: Tensions and Possibilities in The Vagina Monologues," in Women's Studies International Forum 28 (2005) 430-444. www.elsevier.com/locate/wsif.

Braun, Virginia. "Virginia Braun in Conversation with Eve Ensler: Public Talk About Private Parts," in Feminism and Psychology. Vol. 9(4), 1999 SAGE (London, Thousand Oaks, and New Delhi), 515-522.

Chen, Linda, Ph.D. "Why Would a Professor Have You Read That Book: The Vagina Monologues as a Teaching Text?" in Radical Pedagogy 2004. www.radicalpedagogy.icaap.org/content/issue6_2/chen.html. p. 1-13.

- Chen, Sea Ling. "Vagina Dialogues?" International Feminist Journal of Politics. 6:2 June 2004, 326-334. www.tandf.co.uk/journals
- Dodson, Betty. "Give Sex a Chance: 'V-Day' and the Vagina Monologue Blues," at www.spectator.net/1173/pages/1173_dodson.html. p. 1-5.
- Ensler, Eve. The Vagina Monologue: The V-Day edition. New York: Villard. 2001.
- Friedenfels, Roxanne. "The Vagina Monologues: Not So Radical After All?" in off our backs. May-June 2004, 42-45.
- Hall, Kim Q. "Queerness, Disability, and The Vagina Monologues," in Hypatia vol. 20, no. 1 (Winter 2005), 99-119.
- Modleski, Tania. "Feminism and Cultural Backlash." Alice Berlin Kaplan Center for the Humanities Lecture Series. Northwestern University, Evanston, IL. 4 March 2002.
- Morrison, Callen & Singh, Tyrell & Tsai, Leeway. "The Vagina Monologues: A Theorised Understanding of Its Presents and Future Role in the EE Context." Received through personal correspondence.
- Renshaw, Sal. "Divine Gifts and Embodied Subjectivities in The Vagina Monologues," in International Feminist Journal of Politics, 6:2 June 2004, 318-325. www.tandf.co.uk/journals.
- Scott, Shelly. "Been There, Done That: Paving the Way for The Vagina Monologues," in Modern Drama. 46:3 Fall 2003, 404-423.
- Wolff, Janet (2003). "Reinstating Corporeality: Feminism and Body Politics," in Amelia Jones (Ed.), The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader. London: Routledge.

