

ON VAGINA MONOLOGUES

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About the Author

Delia D. Aguilar teaches Women's Studies and Comparative American Cultures. She has had a long-standing interest in the development of women's movements and feminism, particularly in peripheral formations, and their interaction with feminist theoretical production in the metropolis. She firmly believes with Deniz Kandiyoti that feminism is not autonomous, but always bound to the national context that produces it.

Although I'd heard from students and read about "The Vagina Monologues" (I've taught women's studies for more years than I'd like to count), I only actually saw it the other day at the University of Connecticut where it was roundly applauded by kids in a packed theater.

The issues of academic and artistic freedoms that have been raised in discussions here vis-à-vis the *Monologues* are of tremendous importance, as is the need to demystify and celebrate women's bodies. But the presentation that I saw the other night was very clearly class-bound and, worse for us colonials, reeking of imperial hubris. "What would your vagina wear?" The recommended apparel—Louis Vuitton boots and a matching bag, cashmere and Lolita Lempicka perfume, Birkin bag, etc.—is hardly within the reach of US white, working-class women who, by these standards, would be reduced to sporting vaginas au naturel. So where does this put those of us, members of the non-elite, living in the "Third World?" The references to "saving" Afghan women and those poor benighted African "sisters" whose clitorises are cut up, labias infibulated, and who in all other ways are subordinated and repressed by their men, well, we've got to rescue them too! Who's the "we" here? VM is curiously devoid of social context, except when Bosnia and other such places are cited. More precisely, the context is merely implied and has to be unmasked, as I'm trying to do.

As someone on this site remarked, VM has worldwide circulation. And why not? Who's to prevent the US from going anywhere these days? Moreover, VM also has liberal appeal as a fundraiser for "eliminating violence against women." But it's violence of an interpersonal sort, never institutional or systemic. It's men who are the problem. I don't know how much license is given local presenters to innovate and revise. But I must say that

as it stands, *Vagina Monologues* is just one more conduit of cultural imperialism. With those Green Berets and Navy Seals already in Basilan, do we really need more of the same?

WORKS CITED

Ensler, Eve. *The Vagina Monologues*. London: Virago, 2001.