

Introduction

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This book chapter was published as part of the volume *Representing Gender-Based Violence: Global Perspectives*, edited by Caroline Williamson Sinalo and Nicoletta Mandolini (Palgrave, 2023)

To cite this book chapter: Mandolini, Nicoletta, Williamson Sinalo, Caroline. 2023. "Introduction." In *Representing Gender-Based Violence: Global Perspectives*, edited by Caroline Williamson Sinalo and Nicoletta Mandolini. New York: Palgrave, 2023, pp. 1-21.

Naming practices

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a global social issue and so is its representation. Indeed, we open this volume with the assertion that the representation of GBV cannot be disentangled from its reality. The association between this sociological phenomenon and its representation begins with the very terms we employ to describe it; after all, what do we really mean by 'gender-based violence'; what does this term include and, as important, what does it omit?

According to the website of the European Commission (2021), GBV may be defined as violence 'directed against a person because of that person's gender or violence that affects persons of a particular gender disproportionately'. This violence, the Commission reports, can include physical harm (e.g. beating, strangling, pushing, use of weapons), sexual harm (e.g. forced sex acts, acts to traffic or other acts directed against a person's sexuality), or psychological harm (e.g. controlling, coercion, economic violence or blackmail). The European Commission's figures suggest that 31 per cent of women in the EU have experienced physical GBV, 5 per cent have experienced sexual GBV and 43 per cent have experienced psychological GBV. In recognition of the pervasiveness of the problem, in 2011, the Council of Europe opened for signature the Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, otherwise known as the Istanbul Convention, in the aim of protecting victims and ending impunity of perpetrators (see Gencel Bek, this volume). As can be seen, the figures provided by the European Commission refer exclusively to women and the Istanbul Convention chose to adopt the term 'violence against women' rather than 'gender-based violence' because, as it highlights, 'women and girls are exposed to a higher risk of gender-based violence than men' (Council of Europe, 2011: 2). So why not, like the Convention, employ 'violence against women'?

In a discussion of naming practices surrounding the interrelationships of violence and gender, Karen Boyle (2019: 21) underscores the fraught choices that feminists must make because any name can occult some victims, perpetrators and even forms of violence. Boyle (2019:32) analyses the terminology currently in use, beginning with a critique of the expression ‘gender-based violence’, which she considers ‘a worryingly gender-neutral term which flattens important differences in terms of who is doing what to whom, in which contexts, to which effects and to whose overall benefit’. However, she ultimately also acknowledges the limits of the phrasing ‘violence against women’ because it ‘problematically implies women’s vulnerability rather than men’s responsibility’ and suggests ‘that we accept that violence against women is an unchanging reality’ (Boyle, 2019: 20). Identifying the perpetrator in expressions such as ‘men’s violence towards women’, Boyle argues, also fails to capture all experiences because women, even if acting in male interest, can be the perpetrators such as is preponderantly the case with female genital mutilation (Boyle, 2019: 20).

Another reason for not employing ‘violence against women’ or ‘men’s violence towards women’ is that the terms convey an idea of relationships and identities that is overall heteronormative. There are ongoing debates (Pearce, Erikainen and Vincent, 2020) as to whether members of the LGBTQ+ community (especially trans and non-binary subjects) should be considered as allies of the feminist struggle against sexist violence (e.g. Heyes, 2003; Hines, 2017) or, on the contrary, as a threat to this struggle (e.g. Jensens, 2016; Bindel, 2019; Aguilar, 2020). As editors, we believe that feminism should aspire to inclusivity, solidarity and intersectionality, and therefore consider ourselves as allies of this community, recognizing that misogynist, gendered violence also affects their members. This is clearly displayed in two of the chapters included in the volume (Geraghty; Gencil Bek), where the denunciation of discrimination against transgender subjects is addressed as a form of gender violence. However, the central focus of these chapters remains on gender-based violence, rather than on the worrying issue of homophobic violence, which is based on sexual orientation, and is therefore conceptually distinct from the central question of this volume.

Beyond the imperative of inclusion, we believe that the term ‘gender-based violence’ better identifies the issue at stake as it clearly recognizes the cultural gender division as the source of abusive behaviours and structures. Considering the still dominant tendency of common (and sometimes even feminist) discourse on patriarchal violence to reproduce gender stereotyping and dichotomous thinking (Roiphe, 1993: 27; Sanyal, 2019: 4), the adoption of a phrase that, despite its generalizing outlook, openly addresses the dangers of gender constructions is a necessity that cannot be escaped.

When it comes to defining the specific types of violence that constitute GBV, we espouse Liz Kelly's (1987) continuum model, which identified the interconnection between different manifestations of sexist oppression. Unlike the majority of scholarly discussions of representation and GBV which focus exclusively on sexual violence, *Representing Gender-Based Violence: Global Perspectives* fully embraces continuum thinking and addresses a whole range of manifestations of GBV forms including rape and sexual violence, but also domestic violence, femicide, sexual harassment, voyeurism, trafficking, and acid attacks to name but a few. Some of the essays included in the volume contest dominant understandings of GBV, and many of them consider representational practices themselves a form of gendered violence. None of them, however, leaves the risky practice of portraying GBV unproblematized.

GBV and Representation

Similar to the difficulties encountered in naming, major theoretical approaches to GBV have also highlighted the interdependency of reality and its representation. This relationship was made first famous by second-wave cultural feminists from the United States (such as Susan Brownmiller, Robin Morgan, Catherine MacKinnon, Andrea Dworkin, and Susan Griffin). These early writers considered all men as potential rapists and some of them established a link between rape and pornography through the slogan: 'Pornography is the theory, rape the practice'. This idea was legally formulated in the Dworkin-MacKinnon Antipornography Civil Rights Ordinance of 1983, which defined pornography as 'the graphic sexually explicit subordination of women through pictures and/or words' (MacKinnon, 1987: 176). The pioneering work of these cultural theorists has been widely criticized by more recent feminists for its ethnocentricity, heteronormativity and for its promotion of binary thinking, as it tends to position men as absolute abusers and women as absolute victims (Burfoot and Lord, 2006; Mardorossian, 2014; Gunne and Brigley Thompson, 2010). Notwithstanding, the connection the second-wave feminists made between GBV and its representation has remained central in more recent feminist theories, although theoretical approaches to GBV have progressed significantly since then. This is the case of scholars who draw on poststructuralist approaches to highlight the discursive dynamics embedded in the reality of patriarchal abuse, such as Carine Mardorossian and Teresa de Lauretis. Mardorossian (2014: 3), for example, views GBV as neither a women's nor a men's issue but rather 'an issue pertaining to masculinity, an ideological construct'. In this regard, representation is crucial and inseparable from reality

because violence stems from the discursive ‘framing’ of masculinity (Mardorossian, 2014: 4; de Lauretis, 1985: 33).

Like poststructuralists, contemporary psychoanalytically-informed scholars are particularly concerned with what representations of GBV (specifically rape) reveal about society. Tanya Horeck’s (2003: 7) work, for example, is interested in ‘what sort of wishes or desires are being played out in and through’ public fantasies (representations) of rape designed for cultural consumption. Drawing on WJT Mitchell’s (1995) theories of aesthetic/semiotic vs. political modes of representation, Horeck (2003: 7) argues that ‘rape exposes the double meaning of representation in so far as it is often made to serve as a “sign” for other issues, and as it is also frequently used as a means of expressing ideological and political questions concerning the functioning of the body politic’. Agreeing with Mitchell, Horeck (2003: 7) suggests further that representation is also always a misrepresentation serving both as a ‘means of, and an obstacle to, communication’. Sabine Sielke (2002: 2) adopts a similar line of argument, specifying that ‘talk about rape does not necessarily denote rape, just as talk about love hardly ever hits its target. Instead, transposed into discourse, rape turns into a rhetorical device, an insistent figure for other social, political, and economic concerns and conflicts’ that are dimensions of our collective thinking and fantasies.

Decolonial feminists also place representational practices at the centre of their arguments, considering GBV as a product of patriarchal coloniality (Shalhoub-Kervokian and Daher-Nashif, 2013; Motta, 2021; Segato, 2014; Vergès, 2019). For example, decolonial feminists have identified how colonialism and neo-colonialism perform patriarchal violence on racialized, marginalized women, including the brutalization of their families, bodies and environments, all while representing them as invisible, deviant and suspicious (Motta, 2021: 125; Segato, 2014: 598-604; Vergès, 2019: 24-25). This approach to feminism has also deconstructed so called ‘civilizational feminism’, which it identifies as assimilating women’s rights into the neoliberal, capitalist, racial order (Vergès, 2019: 22). This includes the tendency to accentuate, spectacularize and, at the same time, normalize, the gender-based violence committed within marginalized cultures, which are depicted as ‘violent, misogynist, barbaric and backward’ (Shalhoub-Kervokian and Daher-Nashif, 2013: 297; see also Eriksson Baaz and Stern, 2013: 100; Hesford, 2011: 7; Vergès, 2019: 52, 69-70; Williamson Sinalo, this volume, Wylie, this volume). Within the logic of civilizational feminism—and similar concepts such as femonationalism (see Tenca Montini, this volume)—gender equality and feminism are presented as a civilizing mission which ultimately reproduce the logic of patriarchal colonialism and violence against non-white women (Lugones, 2007: 187; Vergès, 2019: 62;

Shalhoub-Kervokian and Daher-Nashif, 2013: 297; Eriksson Baaz and Stern, 2013: 25). Representation, for decolonial feminists, is also a means for combatting GBV. Françoise Vergès, for example, suggests the need for the depatriarchalization of revolutionary movements, a *feminisme de marronage*, which, in other words, means the inclusion of feminist perspectives in decolonial politics which affirm the right to existence for racialized, indigenous or other marginalized groups (Vergès, 2019: 19, 37). In Sara Motta's (2021: 129) view, this includes the imperative among indigenous, marginalized communities to 'decolonize the internal territories of knowledge and social life and create other decolonized and feminized ways of knowing-being' (for a discussion of the role of representation in such processes, see Geraghty, this volume).

In line with these recent feminist theories, we conceptualize the reality of GBV and its representation as inextricable. Without denying by any means the concreteness of the phenomenon and the materiality of victims' experiences of abuse (as well as their legitimate claims for truth), our editorial effort is shaped around the idea that patriarchal violence could not exist without the support of a symbolic order that naturalizes gender hierarchies and discriminations (Bourdieu, 2002: 7-11), that intersect and interact with other forms of control including imperialism, capitalism and neoliberalism.

Like many contemporary theorists (Horeck, 2003; Gunne and Brigley Thompson, 2010; Sielke, 2002; de Lauretis, 1985; Mardorossian, 2014; Shepherd, 2013; Shalhoub-Kervokian and Daher-Nashif, 2013), we are particularly concerned with the ethical questions raised by representing GBV. The aim of second-wave feminists was to bring the issue of rape and other forms of GBV to public attention in order to prevent them from occurring. Thanks in part to their efforts, GBV has become an established category and the feminist perspective has entered political discourse and has, in some cases, successfully managed to impact on legal measures as well as cultural change (Boyle 2004; Romito 2008). Responding to and, simultaneously contributing to, such change is a growing number of literary, audio and filmic narratives of gender violence, demonstrating in some cases a sensitive understanding of the theme and showcasing an explicit (if not unproblematic) feminist outlook. For example, *Gone Girl* by Gillian Flynn (2012), *The Lovely Bones* by Alice Sebold (2002) and *The Girl on the Train* by Paula Hawkins (2015) are all novels about gender abuse which have been adapted into successful movies. Similar themes are evoked in some popular television series (e.g. *Broadchurch* (Chibnall, 2013-17), *The People V O. J. Simpson* (Alexander and Karaszewski, 2016) and *YOU* (Berlanti and Gamble, 2018-21), to mention only a few), documentaries (e.g. *City of Joy* (Gavin, 2018), *L'Homme qui répare les Femmes* [The man who fixes women]

(Michel, 2015)) or on viral true crime podcasts (*Serial*, Koenig, 2014; *Up and Vanished*, Lindsey, 2016; *Trace*, Brown, 2017; *West Cork*, Bungey and Forde, 2018). The same propensity to include feminist insights on sexist abuse can also be observed in journalistic representations.

An example of the impact of such popular representations can be found in Italy, where the neologism *femminicidio* (femicide) was introduced by feminist activists to mainstream public discourse in 2012 (Laviosa, 2015; Mandolini, 2020). Through this term, the physical or psychological annihilation of women was identified as being based on their female gender. Until its introduction, there had been a failure to recognize any connection between the murder of women and societal sexism, as the crime was often depicted as one of passion (Gius and Lalli, 2014). Things started to change more dramatically following the introduction of the femicide concept as it provided the Italian media with a new discourse through which to portray the frequent episodes of gender-based murders (Giomi, 2015; Mandolini, 2020).

Similarly, worldwide media attention to the atrocities against women in the former Yugoslavia and in Rwanda made action unavoidable (Pankhurst, 2007). The legal processes that followed these tragedies had a hugely catalytic effect on advancing international gender justice, leading to the first international definitions of rape as well as to the recognition of sexual violence as a crime against humanity, a war crime and even a crime of genocide. Popular representations of sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) (documentaries, media narratives and official reports) have further solidified international understandings of rape as a strategy of war, a war crime, rather than the result of inevitable biological urges (Eriksson Baaz and Stern, 2013).

More recently still, the #MeToo campaign erupted onto the world stage in late 2017, an international movement against sexual harassment which swept across global social media and popular culture. #MeToo, a social media hashtag, became popularized following its use by high-profile alleged abuse victims of the famous film producer Harvey Weinstein but it soon started being used by millions of women to draw attention to the widespread nature of the problem. The hashtag was translated into dozens of other languages and had a major impact, particularly by drawing people's attention to the phenomenon of GBV, in some cases, affecting public opinion as well as leading to policy-based changes (Giomi, 2018). On 24 February 2020, Weinstein was found guilty of a criminal sex act in the first degree and rape in the third degree, and acquitted on three further charges. While it is not possible to draw a direct link between this conviction and the online media campaign, the abundance of accusations and change in

public perception undoubtedly played a role in this landmark victory for victims of sexual harassment.

Following the aims of radical feminists, victims and activists have successfully put the issue of GBV on the global agenda. Notwithstanding the laudable results achieved, many ethical issues persist in relation to the representation of GBV (Mandolini and Williamson, 2017). For example, in an analysis of contemporary coming-of-age television dramas, such as *The Hunger Games* (Ross, 2012), Kelly Oliver (2016: 20) argues that despite the increasing representation of strong young girls able to fight back, the girls in these stories ‘continue to face the dangers of assault, particularly sexual assault’. She concludes that ‘images of teenage girls being repeatedly beaten and battered on screen normalizes violence toward girls and women, including sexual violence’ (Oliver, 2016: 18). Other critics have highlighted a lingering tendency to silence the voice of GBV victims and reproduce gender stereotypes in portrayals (Mandolini, 2017), particularly when victims represent traits of otherness because they are working class or African American (Bourke, 2007). A number of scholars have noted the tendency to glamourize GBV as can be seen in critical analyses of popular TV series like *The Fall* by Alan Cubitt (2013) (Jermyn, 2017: 4) or *Twilight* by Catherine Hardwicke (2008) (Borgia, 2011). Meanwhile, depictions of sexual violence in postcolonial contexts have been widely criticized, often for their inherent racism. For example, the phenomenon of gender-based violence is often spectacularized, making victims hyper-visible yet voiceless, while other forms of violence and suffering go unreported (Finnegan, 2018; Eriksson Baaz and Stern, 2013; Shalhoub-Kervokian and Daher-Nashif, 2013; Williamson Sinalo, this volume).

Despite its success, #MeToo was also problematic. It has been criticized for, among other things, being ill-defined, over-relying on specific cases, and failing to represent minority women and the plight of women in the Global South (Onwuachi-Willig, 2018; Burke, 2017). Certain cases, such as that of the Italian actress Asia Argento, caused further confusion around the #MeToo message, after the woman, one of Weinstein’s accusers, was herself accused of sexual harassment by the young male actor, Jimmy Bennett.

Clearly representing GBV raises a range of ethical questions. As Sorche Gunne and Zoe Brigley Thompson (2010: 3) highlight, if the primary objective of second-wave feminism was to put GBV (particularly rape) on the agenda, ‘now what is at stake is not just whether we speak about rape or not, but how we speak about rape and to what end’. Challenging claims that have dominated contemporary scholarship on the issue, according to which sexual violence implies a process of annihilation and trauma that, as such, could not be represented but only evoked (Bal, 1990: 142; Pollock, 2013: 4-8), the essays included in this volume address the

representation of GBV as an always risky but necessary and urgent practice. As editors, we are aware of the processes of violence and betrayal that are inherent to every representative act (Noys, 2013) and we are particularly conscious of the potential dangers (spectacularization, glamourization, re-victimization, triggering, to name a few) of portraying a delicate phenomenon like GBV. However, the discursive terrain that the patriarchal symbolic order has occupied for centuries cannot be left untouched or unexplored and representation is, as Hillary Chute (2010: 3) astutely pointed out, a risk that feminists have the responsibility to take, both in the field of popular and experimental narratives.

Global Perspectives

As the title suggests, the aim of this volume is to provide global perspectives on representing GBV. With an awareness that the term ‘global’ could imply that the volume is exhaustive of all contexts, we emphasize our use of the term as a desirable, if impossible, endpoint. Following the start made by Gunne and Brigley Thompson (2010) to investigate this topic in other cultures, we also embrace the concept of ‘feminism without borders’ and the notion that Western narratives of GBV should not be privileged above those coming from other cultures. To date, the scholarship surrounding GBV has been heavily influenced by the North American context. Gunne and Brigley Thompson (2010) pioneer a cross-cultural approach to the study although their volume continues to rely on Anglophone narratives and, like many discussions, it centres on rape rather than considering the broad spectrum of gendered violence.

Representing Gender-Based Violence: Global Perspectives uniquely includes essays that cover every continent, including numerous Western/Global North (France, Spain, Italy and the USA), postcolonial/Global South contexts (the DRC, Zimbabwe, Cuba, and Mexico) as well as contexts which do not neatly fit within this North/South, colonial/postcolonial binary (such as Turkey, Japan, and the Balkans). As such, the volume is able to encourage a conversation about and between global feminisms, embracing what Vergès (2019: 34) refers to as *feminisme de la totalité* [feminism of the whole], to consider multidimensional experiences including those related to race, capital, neoliberalism, gender identity and sexual orientation.

We also adopt the term ‘global’ to allude to the inclusive approach we take to the concept of GBV. Overall, we aim to offer a comprehensive volume that is global in its geographical and cultural reach, but also in terms of the types of violence included in the term GBV (e.g. not just rape and sexual violence but other manifestations of GBV), the identity/ies

of its victims (women, men, LGBTQ+, and non-binary subjects), and the media through which we investigate representation (e.g. fiction, non-fiction, art, journalism, law, social media, transmedia). In summary, we embrace the concept of intersectionality in its fullest meaning to recognize specificity in relation to the subject, context and medium but also to create a cross-cutting solidarity between experiences of violence and gender.

Contemporality

A final feature of this volume is the contemporality of its focus. This choice raises a series of questions and concerns. Firstly, as the above discussion highlights, in contemporary culture, feminism and the category of GBV have become mainstreamed, resulting, in many cases, in genuine cultural change. However, as the discussion also demonstrates, new representations raise new ethical and theoretical questions.

Secondly, the focus on contemporary culture also confronts us with the cultural changes brought about by new technologies. Unfortunately, many of these technologies have facilitated old forms of GBV. Anastasia Powell and Nicola Henry (2017: 4) use the term ‘technology-facilitated sexual violence’ to describe perpetrators’ use of technology in a range of types of GBV including domestic violence, dating abuse, cyberstalking, and the sexual exploitation of children. Scholars have also noted the use of technology in creating new forms of GBV, particularly image based violence, such as the taking and sharing of ‘creepshots’ (a photo taken by a man of a woman or girl in public without her consent) (Oliver, 2016), ‘sextortion’ (coercion based on the threatened release of sexual images) and revenge pornography (the distribution of sexually explicit images or videos of individuals without their consent (Oliver, 2016; Powell and Henry, 2017, Hepworth, this volume).

New technologies and media have also given rise to new forms of resistance and activism in the field of GBV representation. The recent success of podcasting, which features a great number of podcasts tackling the issue of sexist abuse (see Mandolini, this volume), is maybe one of the most notable examples available here. The adaptation to contemporary media practices of the traditional format of radiophonic narrative has made stories of gendered violence accessible and palatable to younger and more global audiences. Moreover, feminist blogging and other social media practices have been identified by a growing number of scholars (e.g. Motter, 2011; Rantschler, 2014; Mandolini, 2017) as crucial to the national and transnational denunciation of patriarchal violence and as new powerful means to create virtual communities that operate with the aim of opposing the phenomenon. More generally, the

electronic format that technology facilitates has proved to be flexible and able to reach wide audiences, often allowing representations of GBV to overcome class, cultural and national boundaries. The Indian multimedia comic Priya's Shakti (<https://www.priyashakti.com/>) serves as an example in this sense. Explicitly created to raise awareness among women and girls after the event of a vicious gang rape in New Delhi in 2012, the producers make extensive use of the internet as a platform to disseminate online versions of their comics and also to enrich the same material with new features (trailers, descriptions, translations etc.). In addition, the comic books (both the hard-copy and online versions) avail of the technology of augmented reality, through which readers become users who interactively expand the boundaries of the narrated story.

Notwithstanding their growing popularity, the domains of the virtual, the online and the electronic have not eroded the space dedicated to more traditional, material and localized representative practices. Priya's Shakti is emblematic in this regard too, as demonstrated by the use of street art and exhibitions to complement the online dissemination of their work. This testifies to the impossibility, now recognized by scholars in the field of activism studies (Treré, 2018; Zamponi, 2020), to draw a clear line between digital and analogue forms of campaigning or between the use of new and traditional technologies of representation. Contemporality, in this sense, also refers to the holistic approach that, as editors, we have decided to adopt while dealing with a growing, and often interconnected, range of media platforms (see Hepworth, this volume; Mandolini, this volume; Gencil Bek, this volume).

The same principle applies to the relationship between art and activism that, as many contributions included in the volume illustrate, is constitutive of representative operations on the topic of GBV. Contemporary tendencies to combine artistic and political practices (Groys, 2014) lead to the production of new critical terms such as 'artivism', 'art activism' and 'activism art' that testify to the deeply interconnected aesthetics and politics of representing social issues such as sexist abuse. In light of this, the structure and the general outlook of the volume mirror our rejection of rigid distinctions between art and other representative practices such as campaigning or even journalism.

Last but not least, the concept of contemporality suits our decision to explore a different range of media (radio, theatre, film, music videos, podcasts, graphic novels, posters, television) and communicative forms (journalism, social media, literature, visual art, music) without restraining each medium/communicative form into limiting critical boundaries. Far from being a strategy to bypass examinations on medium-specific strategies adopted to discuss GBV, this choice comes from the awareness that gender violence representations often transgress media

perimeters and/or overflow into a broader narrative composed by different media responses around the same story or event (see, for example, Bonfiglioli, this volume; Tenca Montini, this volume).

The interdisciplinary outlook that characterizes the volume reflects the intrinsically interdisciplinarity of studies concerning GBV, a phenomenon that requires extensive knowledge in the areas of Social Sciences, Psychology, Political and Legal Sciences, Criminology and Philosophy in order to be fully understood. This is particularly true when it comes to the representation of GBV, a topic that can be analytically approached from the following different fields: Semiotics, Cultural Studies, Literary Studies, Film and Media Studies, Journalism Studies, Visual Studies, as well as from a hybrid position of interconnection between them, which may in fact be preferable.

Overall Aim and Structure of Book

Representing Gender-Based Violence: Global Perspectives will be the first scholarly book to focus exclusively on the politics, ethics and stereotypical pitfalls of representational practices surrounding GBV from a global perspective. The originality of the volume is linked to its cross-disciplinary perspective as the topic of representing GBV is analysed across the domains of philosophy/epistemology, fiction and the arts (including literature, theatre, film, television series and music) and non-fictional representations in the media (including broadcast media, online/print journalism, transmedia activism). In the recognition that ‘systems of representation bear directly on historical change by establishing habits of thought crucial to rationalizing particular actions’ (Gullace, 2002: 10), the overall aim of the volume will be to identify current representational practices and their theoretical and critical responses, examining various aspects of popular culture from around the world. In doing so, we put feminism in conversation with global representational trends to identify its cultural frontline.

The volume is divided into three broad thematic sections. The first, *Representations as Violence*, includes essays that investigate representations that re-affirm the patriarchal symbolic order from which GBV originates, thus characterizing themselves as violent. Many of these essays draw attention to the problematic forms of representation discussed above but bring new contexts, new voices, new media and new forms of GBV and its representation to the fore. Sadly, some of the representational pitfalls remain strikingly similar to those identified in the past such as the re-victimization of victims through representation, not to mention the reproduction of an ethnocentric, orientalist perspective.

For example, Caroline Williamson Sinalo focuses on journalistic representations of sexual violence in the DRC, a context known problematically as the ‘rape capital of the world’. Specifically, she analyses coverage of the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize won by Dr Denis Mukwege. Despite this being heralded as a victory both for international feminism and for the DRC, Williamson Sinalo’s analysis reveals the ways in which Congolese women are represented in the coverage through a phallogentric frame which sees them as objects or even currency to be possessed and exchanged by men. This phallogentrism is embedded within a broader narrative of ethnocentrism which sees Africa as a troubled, indescribable, unknowable place in which sexual violence is inevitable and can only be prevented by Western civilization.

In a similar vein, Federico Tenca Montini’s chapter in this section investigates femonationalist practices—the exploitation of feminist themes in xenophobic campaigns and the stigmatization of foreign men under the banner of gender equality—in the contemporary re-writing of Norma Cossetto’s story, the daughter of an Italian Fascist officer who was reportedly raped and killed by Yugoslav partisans during World War II. In the chapter, Tenca Montini shows how neonazi and populist political agents promote cultural artifacts in which tales of gender-based violence by communists are used to denigrate Eastern Europeans while silencing the widespread use of sexual violence made by the Nazis and their allies.

In her essay on human trafficking, Gillian Wylie analyses common tropes adopted in the media, literature, television and cinema as well as in anti-trafficking campaigns. She argues that such representations, while effective as advocacy tools, often adopt stereotyped narratives based on essentialized protagonists including the innocent female victim, the foreign male trafficker and the Western saviour. Such depictions reinforce orientalist stereotypes, silence the agency of those who experience exploitation in migration and mask the structural violence that causes such exploitation. Anna-Karin Eriksson’s chapter draws on Maria Eriksson Baaz and Maria Stern’s (2018) erasures of the sexual in sexual violence (2018) and Elizabeth Frazer and Kimberly Hutchings’ naming of political violence (2019) to investigate tensions and conflicts over the category of ‘comfort women’ in Japan. While the first part of the chapter sheds light on feminist attempts at gaining gender justice for comfort women through international law, the second and third parts show how, in response, historical revisionists framed these women’s victimhood as voluntary in an attempt to restore Japan’s dignity following its perceived humiliation following World War II.

The second section, *Representations Exposing GBV*, includes essays that analyse the use of representations by victims, activists and media content creators in an attempt to uncover

otherwise silent forms of gendered abuse, under-discussed different victim typologies and the hidden political, social or discursive dynamics linked to the practice of sexist violence.

Focussing on the particularly interesting case of Italy, Stefano Rossoni and Olga Campofreda author the first essay of this section, which provocatively considers acid attacks as a form of GBV used for revenge and to exercise coercive control by both men and women when heterosexual relationships fail. Through an analysis of media coverage of these attacks, Rossoni and Campofreda examine the different ways in which victims and perpetrators are depicted depending on their gender and in relation to the popular media discourse surrounding the phenomenon. Their chapter also considers the Italian legal framework around acid attacks which, they argue, constitutes a step forward in tackling a vicious practice that has emerged as a recurrent form of gender-based violence, yet ultimately responds to the media coverage of a selected number of cases whose victims fit into gendered constructions of ideal victimhood.

Nicoletta Mandolini focuses on representations of true crime via the podcast medium and considers the role played by this medium in representing and re-negotiating truth. In her study of *West Cork*, she analyses the rhetorical strategies that allow the podcast's authors to portray the reality of gender-based violence and its possible connections to unsolved cases of women killing without renouncing to the (inherently feminist) critique of linear narratives and judicial truth. *West Cork*'s successful attempt is compared to the pioneering true crime podcast *Serial*, where violence against women and its gendered dimension fail to be represented and exposed.

Turning to an under-researched minority in the African context, Charlotte Baker looks at fictional narratives by and about Zimbabwean women with albinism and considers the intersectionality of their experiences of violence and marginalisation on the basis of their gender and albino identity. Among these women's experiences of violence, Baker's chapter reveals, is the extreme objectification, commodification and dehumanization of their female bodies, whose parts are thought to possess supernatural powers. The chapter also highlights the narrative strategies adopted by these Zimbabwean women writers to expose, critique but also resist the realities that they confront.

In a discussion of representations of mass rapes during the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, Chiara Bonfiglioli highlights the common pitfalls including essentialist depictions of gender and ethnic relations in the region, as well as the discursive patterns of Orientalism and Balkanism, which contributed to the construction of mass rapes as the epitome of violent masculinity and victimized femininity. Bonfiglioli considers feminist artworks which have attempted to draw attention towards survivors, and point to the complexity of individual and

collective experiences of gender-based violence during the Bosnian conflict. Despite their overall successful ethical representation, these works, Bonfiglioli argues, nonetheless highlight the mediated and always partial character of such representations, which become entangled with different and competing political, media and expert discourses.

The third and final section, *Representative Re-Imaginings*, includes essays that contribute to our understanding of the GBV category by contesting given or assumed meanings, terms, categories and identities in representations of GBV and creatively re-imagining social and political realities.

Andrea Hepworth contributes to this section an analysis of the strategies adopted by women's rights activists in performance protests and social media in Spain. The author considers these protests, which eventually crossed international borders into Argentina, Columbia and Portugal, through the lens of Rancière's notion of 'dissensus' and Keck and Sikkink's scholarship on transnational activism networks. Hepworth shows how protesters creatively reappropriated the language used by GBV perpetrators into empowering discursive strategies that emphasize female solidarity and amplify women's voices.

Mine Gencil Bek examines representations of GBV on social media in the Turkish context, exposing the increasingly sexist, traditionalist and Islamist discourse of the ruling AKP party on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the response from feminists, LGBTQ+ groups, leftists and social democrats, who use social media to defend women's rights. Despite highlighting the resilience and creativity of these activists, Gencil Bek also argues for the need to increase these activities and to extend them beyond the boundaries of nation states, given the deteriorating situation that women and LGBTQ+ groups face in Erdoğan's Turkey.

Drawing on second-wave feminism, Elisa Cabrera García's chapter examines the feminist artwork of Mónica Mayer's and reveals how it made visible the invisible violence committed against the feminized body in Mexican culture. Mayer's artwork stands at the avant-garde of second-wave feminism and conceptual and performance art in Mexico, playing a touchstone role in transnational contemporary feminism and the global fight against gender-based violence through aesthetic performances of personal experiences.

The final essay in this section, by Clare Geraghty, considers the activism of Cuban queer feminist hip-hop group, Lxs Krudxs in order to (re-)consider the conversation around gender-based violence as bound up in questions of embodiment that must be inclusive of trans* narratives to be ethical. Geraghty emphasizes the specificity of the Cuban context as well as Lxs Krudxs' subjectivity as 'black and latin feminist queers, gender not conforming, woman, immigrants and intersectional beings' (Krudas Cubensi, cited in Geraghty, this volume).

Drawing on decolonial feminist approaches, her chapter highlights these artists' use of performance to change social realities and possibilities.

As opposed to dividing the chapters according to the cultural area in which the portrayal was produced, this structure allows us to identify the critical aspects as well as the potentials of representing GBV, while at the same time highlighting the global dimension of specific representative patterns. The group of chapters included in the first section testifies to the risks linked to the practice of discussing GBV, which might result in the adoption of discursive postures that reproduce, instead of confronting, the patriarchal rhetoric of gender segregation and hierarchy that legitimizes the actual phenomenon of sexist abuse. This practice, which we have labelled 'Representation as Violence', can be observed in portrayals originating from different areas of the Global North and the Global South, as well as from different discursive sectors (journalism; political advocacy and campaigns; museum configuration; film; literature; comics) and in relation to different types of sexual violence (rape; war rape; sexual slavery; the comfort women system). The second section, on the other hand, offers insights on the array of strategies that can be employed in media or representative practices such as podcasting, news coverage, film, theatre, visual art and literature, for making visible specific forms of GBV that, in various cultural contexts, are still neglected or continue to present issues of political, social and discursive recognition. With the aim of delineating an optimistic trajectory, we concluded with a section including examples of representative efforts that successfully manage to denounce GBV and, at the same time, challenge binaristic gender structures or destabilize the symbols of patriarchal order. These creative or mediatic products are, not by coincidence, mostly referable to the area of Latin America and, more broadly, to the hispanophone world, where the political discussion on GBV is particularly evolved (see, for example, the pioneering theoretical efforts made by Mexican feminists on the issue of femicide). However, even geographical and cultural areas characterized by a worrying turn towards conservative politics such as Turkey resonate with the (re)production of inventive techniques of media representation aimed at contrasting right-wing and patriarchal legitimizations of GBV. This, we believe, leaves space for an uplifting (as well as necessary) degree of hope.

As its overall structure suggests, *Representing Gender-Based Violence: Global Perspectives* engages with the analysis of GBV representations from a militant, yet scholarly, perspective. The category of militant criticism adequately reflects the general approach that editors and authors have unanimously adopted. The aim is to offer rigorous inquiries that, however, do not disguise their feminist ethos as well as their objective of providing the reader with a set of interpretative tools to be used whenever a critique of the ethical positioning of a

text or discourse concerning GBV is needed. Considering simplification as the root of every form of exclusion and discrimination, we firmly believe that enhancing critical thinking is the most important (and political) contribution that a collection of academic essays on sexist violence could possibly make.

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