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Memories of Violence Against Women and Girls across borders: transformative gender justice through the arts among Brazilian women migrants in London

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Introduction

“It’s difficult to know what to say. I want to applaud the bravery, but that feels trite. This needs to be seen, to be heard, to be felt. Because, in a way, everyone needs to know this hurt, to feel this pain, until nobody does. I count my blessings that I have never suffered this much, and desperately hope for the day that no one will.”

This is the response from an audience member to the verbatim theatre play, *Efêmera*, after a performance in Brighton in the United Kingdom in May 2018. *Efêmera* was written and performed by Gaël le Cornec (with Rosie McPherson) as part of a collaboration with CASA, a Latin American theatre organisation, based on the testimonies of Brazilian migrant women living in London who had experienced gender-based violence. *Efêmera* formed part of a larger research project on Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) in London and in Rio de Janeiro in Brazil, and this reaction to it from a member of the audience was in many ways what Gaël and I were aiming for with the play and with the research more broadly. At its most basic, the research in London was focused on exploring the meanings of Violence Against Women and Girls among Brazilian migrants, understanding their experiences and raising awareness of the issue (McIlwaine and Evans, 2018). The research in London was also conducted in close collaboration with the Latin American Women’s Rights Service (LAWRS) which is a feminist and human rights organisation working with and led by Latin American women to address their needs through service provision and advocacy and with

People's Palace Projects, an arts organisation based in London working mainly but not exclusively in Brazil using participatory art as performance to address a range of social justice issues.

More broadly, this collaborative project and the discussion here is embedded within a wider body of feminist thinking around transformative social change (Cornwall and Rivas, 2015; Moser, 2016) and specifically in relation to gender-based violence (UN Women, 2015). It also makes some direct links with the emerging agenda on transformative gender justice that focuses primarily on gendered violence in conflict situations but is not limited to this (Boesten and Wilding, 2015). It reiterates the case for making fruitful connections between research on gender-based violence in conflict and conflict transition contexts with that on everyday gendered violence in low-intensity conflict situations (ibid; Wilding, 2012). Yet it suggests this be extended to encompass violence against women within a different type of transition over space as well as time through international migration that can be a response to, disruption of and potential facilitating force for everyday gender-based violence. While migration has long been identified as a reaction to armed conflict or crisis migration (Lindley, 2014), there has been much less attention paid to the ways in which everyday violence has prompted mobility across borders (McIlwaine, 2014) especially in terms of gender. Furthermore, only recently have there been calls to acknowledge migration as a core concern within transitional justice processes (Hovil, 2019). It is therefore essential to recognise that gender-based violence is often a core dimension of mobility processes not least because migration destabilises, reinforces and re-makes gender norms and the structural gendered power inequalities that underpin violence against women (Dominguez and Menjivar, 2014; McIlwaine, 2010). The unsettling of gender norms linked with international migration therefore has some parallels with the disruptions of armed conflicts and post-conflict transitions. It therefore makes sense to think about how a transformative gender justice approach which aims to address the gendered power inequities during times of transitions (Boesten and Wilding, 2015) can be relevant to understanding experiences of violence among women migrants moving across borders.

In keeping with the themes of this collection, gender-based violence among migrants is explored here with reference to ideas around memories and how a feminist transformative

gender justice approach can be enacted and advanced with a view to improving the lives of women in the short and longer term. It examines the nature of violence against women among Brazilian migrant women in London and how memories are deeply imbued within their experiences. It also considers the role of performance art in understanding gender-based violence and raising awareness of its endemic nature among migrants in ways that speak to feminist transformative change. This entails communicating through theatre, in this case, through the play *Efêmera*. This chapter discusses how *Efêmera* and a recent campaign around the rights of migrant women with irregular immigration status led by LAWRS constitute forms of reparations that are processes of remembering, commemorating and visibilising everyday experiences of gendered violence (Bamber et al, 2010). It suggests that this needs to be done in ways that reflect women's agency across borders among specific migrant groups but also with women more widely as a form of transnational feminist alliance that challenges existing gender inequalities (also Boesten, 2019).

Memories of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) transnationally

While much work on transitional and transformative gender justice focuses on memory, I argue for the need to adopt a spatio-temporal approach when considering migrant women's stories of gender-based violence. Just as transitions in general entail potential fractures (Hörschelmann, 2011) or rethinking of existing gendered hierarchies in contexts of post-conflict transitions (Boesten, 2014), similar processes occur when people migrate transnationally.

A key conceptual tool that is almost universally used in feminist work on gender-based violence relates to the continuum of violence based on the foundation work of Liz Kelly (1988). This delineates the diversity of different types of sexual violence and the interconnections with various forms of gender-based threats and intimidations that are themselves rooted in deep-seated gender inequalities and invariably routinised (Boesten, 2017). The continuum has been adapted beyond sexual violence to include a huge diversity of interlinked forms of violence that occur across public and private domains. Of particular relevance here, is the need to acknowledge its spatial and transnational dimensions in relation to understanding the experiences of international migrants. Elsewhere, I have developed the notion of the 'transnational continuum of urban Violence Against Women

and Girls' which aims to capture various types of sexual, physical, emotional, economic and political gender-based violence that occur and extend spatially as well as over time (McIlwaine and Evans, 2019). In different ways, this continuum ties the intimate and the global together in complex ways that allows for examination of how they can be addressed holistically as part of a wider feminist project of transformative change. Intimacy stretches beyond the private domain and is imbued with relations of power, inequalities and violence that play out across multiple scales and disrupt hierarchies transnationally (Pain, 2014; Pratt and Rosner, 2012). What I aim to show here is how continuum thinking from a spatial perspective that ties the intimate and the global together is a useful prism for understanding experiences of gender-based violence among migrant women especially in relation to memory.

Memory has long been viewed as an integral element in thinking about diaspora; diasporic communities are centred around tensions around belonging, memory and separation or exile from the homeland (Clifford, 1994). Migrant identities are shaped through memories that may be individual or collective and variously associated with different forms of nostalgia that may be restorative or reflective, traumatic or comforting. Memories can evoke connections with home, community and place often facilitated through material objects and cultural practices which may be visual or literary enacted across space (Blunt, 2007; Tolia-Kelly, 2004).

Memory recovery has also been central to feminist theorisation; pain and triumphs from the past can be rethought and used to transform the present (hooks, 1989). As Ahn Hua (2005: 205) notes, migrant and diasporic women have been able to forge paths of resistance 'through the act of recalling and documenting memories' as a 'catalyst for self-discovery and community-building' in their challenging of sexism, racism, classism and heterosexism. Collective memorialisation can be a way of turning individual trauma of gender-based violence into transformation and activism (Bold, Knowles and Leach, 2002). Yet, it is not straight forward and may generate further trauma and estrangement. Although feminist work on memory, and especially that on the gendered politics of migration, is rooted in thinking about the past, it has also raised questions about the 'transmission of memories across spatial and generational boundaries' (Hirsch and Smith, 2002: 3). Therefore, while

much work on remembering gender-based violence through artistic practices remains focused on post-conflict transitions (Boesten, 2019), there is scope to explore memories of such violence across borders.

Contextualising Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) among migrant women

As is now widely reported, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO) (2013: 20), intimate partner and non-partner sexual violence has been experienced by almost 36 percent of women in 79 countries around the world. Within countries, intimate partner violence is thought to be more widespread in rural compared with urban areas, but non-intimate partner violence is often reported as more common in cities. Of relevance here, in Brazil, 37 percent of women in rural areas and 29 percent of those in urban areas had experienced physical or sexual intimate partner violence; in contrast, 23 percent of rural women had experienced non-intimate partner violence compared to 40 percent in cities (McIlwaine, 2013: 67). Beyond rural-urban differentials, it has also been widely acknowledged that Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) and migrant women experience gender-based violence disproportionately (Dominguez and Menjivar, 2014).

In terms of incidence globally, and acknowledging difficulties in measurements, a systematic review of intimate partner victimisation among immigrant women in the US and Europe rates between 2003 and 2013 found large variations from between 17 and 70.5 percent of women (Gonçalves and Matos, 2016). In England and Wales in 2017, 1.2 million women (7.5 percent of the population) aged 16 to 59 years were victims of domestic abuse in the previous 12 months (ONS, 2018). While there are no specific data on migrant women, it is usually assumed that they experience higher levels. In terms of Latin American migrants in London, qualitative research among Spanish-speaking Latin Americans found that one in four identified experiences of intimate partner violence (McIlwaine and Carlisle, 2011). It has also been reported by LAWRS that undocumented Latin American women are assaulted 60 times before their first call to the police, compared to 35 assaults among women in general (McIlwaine and Evans, 2018, 2019). The disproportionality of gender-based violence among migrants relates to the multiple exclusions and intersectional discrimination that migrant women face (Siddiqui, 2018). This is further undermined by complex barriers to safe disclosure and reporting (McIlwaine, Granada and Valenzuela-Oblitas, 2019).

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and memory among Brazilian women in London

Much research on migration and gender-based violence tends to be rather static, focusing mainly on the challenges faced by women in the places where they migrate to. Too often the context from where women migrate is forgotten even though this obviously has a major influence on their experiences of violence. When it is discussed, problematic culturalist arguments are often used to explain gender-based violence rather than the operation of structural inequalities (Erez et al, 2009). Patriarchal, 'traditional' cultures in home countries are often blamed as causing violence while gender inequalities and patriarchal relations in the host context are ignored or downplayed (Menjívar and Salcido, 2002; also Heimer, 2019). In contrast to using nostalgia as a way of arguing that socio-cultural practices back home to explain why perpetrators commit violence (Bhuyan et al., 2005), memories of gender-based violence are important in understanding women's experiences as they negotiate new forms of gender inequalities, racism and classism in destinations. Memories are transnational, dynamic and fluid and can act as a lens through which to understand how gender norms change across borders in negative and positive ways and for capturing structural power relations that underpin gender-based violence as individual memories shift to collective memories. This also addresses the wider calls for migration to be incorporated into a transitional justice approach through rehistoricising migration and engaging in truth telling among those who have fled wars and poverty which themselves are rooted in processes of uneven development created by colonial and postcolonial power relations (Hovel, 2019).

Before discussing these processes in more detail, it is important to briefly outline the nature of gender-based violence among Brazilian migrant women in London. This draws on research with over 200 Brazilian women including a survey with 175 women, together with 25 in-depth interviews and 6 focus group discussions, in addition to service mapping of 12 organisations providing support for women survivors of violence (McIlwaine and Evans, 2018). The survey showed that 82 percent of Brazilian women had experienced some form of gender-based violence over their life course of which 30 percent occurred in the private sphere and 70 percent in public sphere. Gender-based violence was endemic among women

back home in Brazil where 77 percent reported experiences yet more than half suffered it again in London (52 percent). In terms of different broad types of violence against women and girls, it emerged that in London, almost half (48 percent) had experienced psychological violence, 38 percent had suffered physical violence and 14 percent sexual violence. In Brazil prior to migration, physical violence emerged as most common (42 percent), followed by psychological (36 percent) and sexual (22 percent). When comparing the specific types of gender-based violence experienced in London and those that they remembered from Brazil, unwanted physical contact was the most commonly cited in both countries, yet it was more frequently identified in Brazil as were unwelcome comments about sex and being forced to participate in a sexual act. Yet in London, humiliation and being controlled were identified more frequently (McIlwaine and Evans, 2019).

This shows considerable transnational continuities in the incidence of gender-based violence despite important intersectional differences in the types experienced (Kelly, 2013' see below). In the views of women themselves, similar numbers (44 percent) thought that gendered violence was the same or more widespread after they migrated as those who thought it was less likely to occur (43 percent). Yet one of the main aspects of differentiation was around emotional violence which was more likely to be identified in London than in Brazil. This was partly linked with recognition of this as a 'legitimate' form of violence. Many recalled how emotional violence was often dismissed as insignificant in Brazil (see also Krenzinger et al., 2019) and it was not until women visited organisations in London for support for other issues such as housing or their immigration status that they were able to identify the violence they had been experienced. For example, 42-year-old Marcia who was from the state of Espírito Santo noted:

'All these years, 22 years, I didn't think I was suffering domestic violence, with the exception of the time when he [husband] punched me. But when I read the information on the leaflet, I was shocked to find that I had spent half my life suffering psychological, emotional abuse, without realising it.'

Experiences of gender-based violence in Brazil in the past were central in prompting the migration of several women to London. While for some the transition allowed them to escape violence, for others they re-encountered it and/or their memories of the violence affected their subsequent well-being. Juliana, 36, from Paraná moved to London in 2007 to escape her abusive husband. Unfortunately, she met another Brazilian man in London whom she then left after he was physically and sexually violent (and after having to live in a hostel for two months while securing a non-molestation order through the courts). Yet, it also emerged that she had been abused as a child by an uncle and cousin and which she claimed had affected her ability to forge healthy relationships with men. Indeed, 8 out of 25 interviewees spoke of this form of childhood abuse which affected their mental health in later life. Paula, 36 from Paraná spoke of her experiences:

‘I was very young, I think I must have been about four or five, an uncle came to live with us ... I remember that he used to ask me to touch him. He'd put my hand on his genitals and ask me to hold it. And you're a child, you're very scared, you don't tell anyone ... And even now, I've not told anyone, because so much time has gone by. The only thing is, you never forget it, you just grow up and remember it’

It was also not uncommon for women who migrated with abusive partners to experience even more intense forms of violence on arrival in the UK. Cristina, 37, from São Paulo, for example, experienced heightened forms of gender-based violence after migrating; while he was emotionally abusive in Brazil, he became physically and sexually violent after they moved.

Yet while gender-based violence persists transnationally over space and time, it manifests differently in multidimensional and diverse ways across public and private domains. While a culture of machismo prevails in Brazil and while elements of these gender norms also ‘travel’ as migrants move, the root causes everywhere are gendered power relations and various forms of structural violence delineated here as ‘chronic, historically-entrenched political-economic oppression and social inequality’ (Bourgois, 2001: 8). These inequalities can often intensify in London as migrants negotiate the hostile immigration environment, language barriers, and institutional racism (McIlwaine, Granada and Valenzuela-Oblitas,

2019; Menjívar and Salcido 2002). Gender-based violence is also experienced intersectionally underpinned symbolic violence identified 'as the internalized humiliations and legitimations of inequality and hierarchy ranging from sexism and racism to intimate expressions of class power' (Bourgois, 2001: 8). For instance, while it emerged that Brazilian women of mixed race in London were more likely to experience gender-based violence (63%) than white (44%), migrant status and occupational status was also fundamentally important. In part, this played out through symbolic violence of insidious stereotyping of where they are subject to complex racialization and sexualisation around essentialist interpretations based on skin colour, class, occupational and immigration status. This often constructed Brazilian women as 'exoticised', 'submissive' and sexually available (McDonnell and de Lourenço, 2009). As a survey respondent stated:

'What I feel, and Brazilian women whom I know also tell the same, is that when a [British man] asks where we are from, and we say that we are Brazilian, the looks and attitudes change. It has happened to me that I was measured up from head to toe and thought to be 'easy', 'sexy', or a 'sex worker'.'

Brazilian women also spoke of violence at work in London especially among those working as cleaners and as chambermaids in hotels where they felt they were also stereotyped as expendable, disposable and exploitable labour particularly when their immigration status was insecure. Indeed, the workplace was identified as the single most common space where gender-based violence occurred for Brazilian women. For example, Juliana spoke of sexual harassment in her cleaning job:

'He kept bothering me, to the point where I spoke to his boss and told him that I was going to have to leave because he was always chasing after me, flirting, always standing next to me'.

Several cases of trafficking were also reported by Brazilian women. Sabrina, 45 from Northeast Brazil who also spoke of incestuous sexual abuse as a child as well as a time working as a sex worker in Brazil, worked as a nanny with a Brazilian family in London. Soon after arriving, the family confiscated her passport and forced her to work as a cleaner in a

restaurant as well as nannying. After her visa expired, her boss then began to harass her sexually and she was too afraid to report it because of fear of being deported, a very common issue among migrant women. Indeed, as well as being a key aspect of exploitative labour abuses, threats to report women with insecure immigration status was a major tool of manipulation and power used by intimate partners as a service provider reported: 'if the woman is in this country illegally, and the husband is legal, he will do whatever he wants with her, because she is at his mercy' (see also McIlwaine and Evans, 2019; McIlwaine, Granada and Valenzuela-Oblitas, 2019).

Violence against women and girls certainly 'travelled' across borders but it was reconstituted in new ways in London in workplaces and in the private sphere. Indeed, some women spoke of experiencing new forms of intimate partner violence in London with men who were *not* Brazilian such as 34-year-old Flavia who moved to London in 2003 and who met and married an Italian man. After living in Italy for three years they returned to London in 2011 which was when the verbal abuse began which culminated in their divorce in 2015. Flavia felt that her husband found it emasculating to work as a waiter and took out his frustrations on her. This issue was mentioned frequently and relates to how all migrants are de-skilled and exploited in destination labour markets due to a combination of structural discrimination, lack of language competency and insecure immigration status, yet women invariably cope with these exclusions more effectively than men (Datta et al. 2009).

Women's memories of impunity and disregard for the severity of gender-based violence that prevailed in Brazil (and subsequently in London) were also related to disclosure and reporting of violence. For instance, although disclosure among friends and family was less common among women in London (51 percent) compared to Brazil (74 percent), possibly due to the lack of networks, reporting to police or other organisations was higher (49 percent compared to 26 percent), possibly linked with the prevalence of support organisations. Indeed, Cristina from São Paulo spoke of how her memories of treatment back home affected her willingness to seek help in London:

'the shame of it! I felt so bad, so humiliated! ... I didn't know how I was going to be treated here, because given that in my own country, in my own language, nobody

had ever done anything to help me, here I thought, "I'm nothing, I'm no one. They won't help me at all."

Therefore, while transformative justice approaches in post-conflict transitions need to recognise the structural gender inequalities that persist prior to war and which remain once the conflict has officially ended, examination of international migration and gender-based violence requires a similarly historicised but also spatial and life course perspective (Wright, 2018) that acknowledges how gendered hierarchies continue to undergird violence in source and destination countries as well as transnationally. Transitional and transformative gender justice requires a focus on process, power and participation rather than outcomes (Boesten and Wilding, 2015). In the context of international migration, it must also acknowledge the transnational ties that link women back home tangibly through family and financial networks and intangibly through memories of past lives. Integral to any feminist transformative process of dealing with gender-based violence is raising awareness of how it affects women and specifically migrant women and how it might be possible to challenge hegemonic power through a relational collaborative process. This is where performance art and theatre become important.

Memories and gender-based violence among migrants through theatre: *Efêmera* by Gaëlle Cornec

As noted above, cultural practices and the arts have the potential for providing a space for remembering, commemorating and visibilising experiences of gendered violence. Artistic production in general has been especially important among migrant and other excluded communities where conventional political expression and participation may be limited (Harman, 2017 on film; Martiniello and Lafleur, 2008 on music). Furthermore, the role of creative practices in highlighting how power is imbricated within space and place has been important for some time (Hawkins, 2014; Rogers, 2012). In terms of theatre performance, there is emerging work highlighting the structural violence of migrant's lives such as Pratt and Johnston's (2013) testimonial play *Nanay* about Filipino migrant workers in Canada and *Nirbhaya* directed by Yael Farber about the 2012 Delhi gang rape (Inchley, 2015).

Efêmera by Gaël le Cornec is a metanarrative verbatim play based on the testimonies and interviews carried out with Brazilian women's experiences of gender-based violence in London. *Efêmera* tells the story of Ana (Gaël le Cornec), a Brazilian migrant who is interviewed by Jo (Rosie MacPherson), a British documentary film-maker. The interview takes a dark turn as Ana begins to open-up about her memories of childhood sexual abuse back home at the hands of her uncle and her subsequent experiences of gender-based violence on arrival in London by a border guard at the airport and then at the hands of her violent husband. Ana's story also re-awakens disturbing memories of gender-based violence from Jo's past that threaten to overwhelm her. Yet the stories also bind the two women together as they recognise their shared abuse even if Ana's entrapment through her insecure immigration status where she is afraid to seek help marks her situation as especially difficult. The play also interweaves another story told by Gaël as actor rather than as Ana of her memories of a brutal rape back home in Brazil.

The character of Ana is a composite of the stories told by Flavia, Cristina, Juliana and others mentioned above. While Gaël was fully in charge of the creative process as playwright, director and actor, we discussed the storyline and made decisions about certain aspects together, especially in relation to the experiences of Jo as a British woman who experienced intimate partner violence. We felt it was important to highlight the transnational and intersectional nature of gender-based violence and show that it is not only experienced by Brazilian migrant women and thus feeding into a culturally racist logic. The storyline about Gaël as playwright was a further way of showing that it is not only marginalised Brazilian women with insecure immigration status who are survivors but also middle-class professional women in Brazil (and in London). Memory and memorialisation were also at the core of the play. Ana, Jo and Gaël gradually opened-up about their individual memories of violence which incrementally emerged as collective as the play progressed. Their memories travelled over space and time and the dialogue shifted between English and Spanish. The character of Jo as the film-maker made several calls to action to the audience to raise awareness of gender-based violence, the need for safe reporting and the fact that all women who experience violence have a human right to protection from the state regardless of their immigration status. Indeed, at one point, Jo responds to Ana's claim that no-one would believe her if she reported the abuse she experienced because she was

‘illegal’, with ‘no human being is illegal, it’s just that you don’t have your papers yet’. This was a key element in the development of a transformative approach within the performance (see below).

We first staged *Efêmera* at the Southwark Playhouse in October 2017 for three performances as part of the CASA Latin American Theatre festival where it sold out every night with mixed audiences of Latin Americans, British people and others interested in the theme. In November the same year, we then took *Efêmera* to Rio de Janeiro organised by People’s Palace Projects. We staged it at a feminist theatre festival in the Lapa area of the city (with an elite, educated audience) as well as in the favela of Maré at the Casa de Bellas Artes (Maré Arts Centre) developed by our other partners at the NGO, Redes da Maré and the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro where the other part of our research was being conducted. The audience at this performance was primarily favela residents. In 2018, *Efêmera* was performed another three times at the Brighton Fringe Festival. We had post-show discussions in all the venues capturing audience reactions at the Brighton shows through feedback cards.

The responses to *Efêmera* in person and via social media were multiple and interesting suggesting that the play was provocative, managing to bring a taboo issue into the public sphere. Some audience members at the Southwark Playhouse Q and A (including some service users) suggested that the interview process that is played out on stage was not how research is normally conducted, or that the use of humour at the beginning was not appropriate. Others were positive about the universal experiences of gender-based violence that emerged from the two characters. At the Rio de Janeiro Q and As, some audience members wanted to know more about the women on whose voices the play was built and why multiple characters were not included in the play. Overall, it was clear that the play was able to communicate the importance of Violence Against Women and Girls in a visceral manner on stage in a way that the written word cannot (see Harman, 2017 on film).

Memories of violence were central to the audience reactions in various ways. While memories were clearly portrayed through the performance as the characters of Ana (and to a lesser extent, Jo) recalled their experiences of gendered violence and the dialogue was

careful to show that such violence occurs everywhere, whether in London or Brazil, in private and public domains, it also evoked memories among audience members. In some of the reactions from the Brighton performances, for example, women spoke of their own suffering:

‘Efemera was absolutely fantastic and emotional. It spoke to me on a personal and deep level. As a Mexican-American who has been sexually abused as a child and later on helped others deal with the same issues. It is inspired and I’m continually inspired by those who choose to speak out. Thank you!’

While this was from a migrant living in the UK, women with less in common with the character of Ana also related to the story:

‘I was incredibly moved by your show. Brave, fierce, important, shocking, moving. As a middle-class white English woman who has been sexually assaulted/raped even - the stories were close to my heart. That Brazilian woman are the subject of such terrible sexual, emotional and physical violence is deeply distressing ... Thank you for your clarity your honesty and your courage.’

For those who watched the performances, some transformative processes were set in motion even if largely through catharsis rather than direct action as noted by this response:

‘The show left me with a question - how do you cope with the memory of violence, how do you cope with those memories your brain removes. But they come back eventually to be dealt with? As a child I witnessed a lot of abuse, as a daughter you try to forgive and forget. However, you realise that those memories have been affecting your private life consistently and quite strongly. It is our duty to expose, protect, heal and promote awareness. Thank you, Gael for doing your part.’

Indeed, Gäel spoke of how women came forward to speak with her about their experiences of abuse after every show in the UK and in Brazil stating that they identified in some way with her/Ana or with Jo, with others following up with her on Facebook. We had anticipated

that there was a potential danger that memories could be evoked and so we distributed information cards in London and Brighton about sources of support for those affected by violence. We soon realised that there are responsibilities in performance as well as a desire to raise awareness.ⁱ Indeed, it could be argued that *Efêmera* could be seen as part of a shift from testimonial to persuasive theatre where audiences are asked not just to be witnesses, but also to become activists as part of local and transnational feminist advocacy (Inchley, 2015). While this was not the intention when we created *Efêmera*, it soon became clear that there were possibilities for theatre to speak across borders to build transnational feminist consciousness, however nascent.

As a performance, *Efêmera* was able to capture the multidimensionality of gender-based violence experienced by migrants and by women in general. Memories of violence emerged as central to the story telling on which *Efêmera* was based as well as to the reactions from the audience members. As with all memorialisation and attempts to engender transformative justice processes through such provocations, the key is to think through to the next steps for advocating change, creating alliances and addressing fundamental and gendered power inequalities that affect the lives of women everywhere in the world.

Moving forward with *Efêmera*, we decided to make a short video that showed some excerpts from the performance intermingled with the key findings from the research as well as portraying some of the main issues through animation. This film is primarily for a policy-making audience.ⁱⁱ Gäel has also made a film based directly on *Efêmera* called *Ana* on which I am the producer and which aims to influence a more general audience.ⁱⁱⁱ

While this relates to the artistic work, other aspects of a transformative gender justice approach are linked with advocacy. Following the research with Brazilian migrant women and *Efêmera*, in 2017 LAWRS developed their *Step-Up Migrant Women* campaign. This entails an alliance of 36 organisations from the women and migrant sectors in London working on Violence Against Women and Girls. The primary goal of the campaign is to ensure that the rights of survivors of gender-based violence take precedence over controlling immigration status so that women can report violence safely and secure assistance without fear. The aim is to develop a 'firewall' to separate reporting of crimes

and the right to access support services regardless of immigration status as well as to challenge the barriers faced by migrant women survivors of violence and exploitation. It actively lobbies parliament and works closely with the London's City Hall Victims' Commissioner. A central part of *Step Up Migrant Women* was to conduct research to provide the evidence base for policy-makers around the experiences of migrant women from 22 different countries. We conducted this in 2018-19 through a survey with 50 women together with in-depth interviews with 11 women and 10 representatives from service provider organisations as well as two focus groups (McIlwaine, Granada and Valenzuela-Oblitas, 2019). The campaign and the research has led to some significant successes. These include securing new guidance identifying the national position on information sharing with immigration enforcement authorities in relation to victims of crime who are identified as being undocumented by the National Police Chief's Council in December 2018.^{iv} Also crucially important is that following lobbying by *Step Up Migrant Women*, the draft Domestic Abuse Bill published in June 2019 includes a section dedicated to migrant women and a recommendation to government to establish a 'firewall'.^v

Conclusions

This chapter has explored the ways in which memory is deeply imbued within understandings of gender-based violence among migrant women. In thinking about how lessons can be learnt from existing research on transitional and transformative gender approaches that tend to focus on post-conflict situations, the discussion identifies the process of international migration as a transition across time as well as space with memories of gendered violence, especially incestuous sexual abuse, travelling with women and affecting their lives in their new places of residence. Even if the violence was not replicated after they had migrated, for example, with an intimate partner they had moved with or met in London, the memories of abuse endured. Furthermore, new forms of gender-based violence also emerge in new destinations, underpinned by structural and symbolic violence that often excludes, exploits and discriminates against Brazilian migrant women.

Yet the chapter also shows how the metanarrative verbatim theatre play, *Efêmera*, based on the testimonials from the research, can act as the fulcrum for remembering and recording memories of gender-based violence. It has aimed to raise awareness of the issue and to

speak to several audiences in London, Brighton and Rio de Janeiro. It has provoked, memorialised and hopefully, initiated some persuasive practice as part of a wider call for transformative change (Inchley, 2015). The related *Step Up Migrant Women* campaign is an important form of feminist alliance-building at the community level through working with migrants from diverse origins. Individual experiences of gender-based violence, many of which are imbricated in memories that have travelled as well as new memories, have gradually become collective over time and through the work of feminist organisations who are members of *Step Up Migrant Women*. This has made important strides in engendering transformative gender justice through campaigning, lobbying parliament and working with London City Hall to improve the lives of migrant women who experience gender-based violence.

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ⁱ See the blog about Efêmera written shortly after the London and Rio de Janeiro performances: <https://www.urbantransformations.ox.ac.uk/blog/2018/communicating-the-experiences-of-violence-against-women-and-girls-vawg-among-brazilian-migrants-in-london-reflecting-on-the-role-of-the-performing-arts/> (accessed 10/6/19).

ⁱⁱ The video is available to view here: <https://youtu.be/LPDNxtWB9e0> (accessed 10/6/19).

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://filmfreeway.com/ANA279> (accessed 10/6/19).

^{iv} <https://stepupmigrantwomen.org/2018/12/07/npcs-policy-we-need-still-need-an-end-to-data-sharing-practices/> (accessed 10/6/19).

^v <https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/joint-select/draft-domestic-abuse-bill/news/chairs-statement-on-publication/> (accessed 14/6/19).