Women and Nonviolence

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Edited by

Anna Hamling

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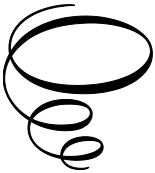

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Edited volumes are the result of a collective effort, and this one is no exception. I would like to acknowledge the excellent endeavours of all the international contributors for putting so much work into this project and the great help from the proofreader Graham Clarke and the Cambridge Scholars Publishing team, without whose commitment and support this would not have come to fruition.

My sincere gratitude goes to my husband, Richard, who is the "invisible force" behind all my research and so much more.

Thank you all,

Anna Hamling

INTRODUCTION

> I believe that peace is not merely an absence of war, but the nurture of human life, and that in time this nurture will do away with war as a natural process … I can see no reason why one should not see what one believes in times of war as in times of peace … Only in freedom is permanent peace possible … [in uniting] women in all countries who are opposed to any kind of war, exploitation and oppression and who work for universal disarmament … and by the establishment of social, political, and economic justice for all without distinction of sex, race, class, or creeds.
>
> —Jane Addams

> The most striking finding is that between 1900 and 2006, nonviolent resistance campaigns were nearly twice as likely to achieve full or partial success as their violent counterparts …
>
> In our data set of 218 violent insurgencies since 1900, democratic governments succeeded in only about 5 percent of violent insurgencies.
>
> —Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan

> Violence and nonviolence are, after all, two different forms of theater. They both depend and thrive on the response of an audience.
>
> —Julia Bacha

This book is about courageous women who, in the face of oppression and suffering, focus on a vision of a better future in their respective countries and the world. It is a small tribute to all known and unknown agents of change – the heroic women to whom this book is dedicated. Women who keep proving to the world that success in achieving change for the better cannot occur through any form of violence, and only through nonviolent means and tactics.

This current edited volume of twelve interdisciplinary chapters proposes a coherent discussion by renowned international contributors who analyse the multiple roles of the impressive achievements of women's activism in the field of nonviolence that deserve the attention of a global audience.

Women, with singular or multiple identities, have been historically silenced, neglected, or not given prominent space in the global histories of women engaged in either nonviolent resistance or, on a daily basis, using nonviolent acts.

The world of the twenty-first century has become increasingly complex and diverse. In this edited volume I propose to bring to light the entangled histories of women's lives and activism and to explore them through the histories and interconnections between groups, societies, and cultures in both diachronic and synchronic ways. We explore the issues of nonviolence and women from different perspectives and within a broad cultural context. The range of perspectives includes the intersection of gender and socio-political movements and nonviolence in the context of society, visual arts, literature, and politics.

All of the chapters offer an engaging, multiple analysis of women and nonviolence which should be of interest to those involved in the field of study and also enlightening to a wider readership interested in the often underreported role of women in global conflicts. For readers whose interest is not strictly academic, a short explanation of the terminology of "intersectionality" and "nonviolence" is essential.

After two decades of debate among women scholars and activists studying the concept of intersectionality, Kimberlé Crenshaw formally introduced this term in 1989 referring to black and developing-world women in the context of the emerging global women's movement. She argued that a focus on gender alone was not enough, and spoke of a middle-class, white, Western bias. Intersectionality experienced by civilian populations has been defined as the "idea that social identities such as race, class, and gender interact to form qualitatively different meanings and experiences."[1] For example, if we consider race or gender only (and not both simultaneously), we overlook the experiences of those with multiple identities providing only partial insights into identity. Intersectionality means describing the many interwoven systems of oppression. Class, race, gender identity, and sexuality all influence the kinds of the oppression women face.

In this study comprised of three sections, every chapter tells a tale of individuals or groups who engage with their community and in some way improve the quality of their own and others' lives. This is the purpose of all the women in this book – to achieve nonviolent, constructive social change that includes rather than excludes. It is not linear approach to improve the situation. Women within intersectionality theory support the holistic approach to achieve balance in nonviolent struggle.

The concepts of intersectionality and nonviolence both evoke many images. There has been a plethora of scholarship relating to civil

[1] Leah R. Warner, "A Best Practices Guide to Intersectional Approaches in Psychological Research," *Sex Roles: a Journal of Research* 59, no. 5–6 (2008): 454–63.

disobedience, nonviolence, and nonviolent resistance, but for the purpose of brevity and clarity in this volume I will refer to the following rather lengthy but fascinating quote from Professor Michael Nagler, one of the most important scholars and activists in the field of nonviolence, and founder of the Metta Centre, California.

In the recent volume *Icons of Nonviolence*, Professor Nagler defines nonviolence in the following way:

> For some, nonviolence is a roster of techniques. No one would disagree that there *are* techniques or tactics that implement nonviolence; but they are only the surface, and if you approach the topic with only that in mind you can make mistakes. A case in point (in my view) is the classic and influential list of 198 techniques assembled by the late Gene Sharp. Some of these, particularly those that humiliate the opponent, would not be considered nonviolent in the deeper sense but only non-violent, i.e. they do not inflict physical harm. Gandhi would make the British ashamed of what they were *doing*, but never ashamed of what they *were* – a subtle but critical distinction. When one's commitment to nonviolence is *only* to a set of techniques he called it "the non-violence of the weak." Any day more effective than violence (the technique of the *very* weak) but nowhere near the potential of a nonviolence arising from the awareness that the opponent, so called, is fully human and has arrived at her or his position, however much it may seem unjust or hurtful, for reasons that seemed legitimate to her or him. This is essentially a vision, an awareness, of the innate unity among people (indeed, in the end, with all that lives).
>
> The goal of a nonviolent action coming from this deeper place will of course involve a redress of grievances but include, perhaps primarily, repair and restoration of the *relationships* involved. This is how we get to one of the principles of nonviolence I like to call work vs. "work," where "work" means achieving one's immediate aim – reform of an unfair law, removal of a dictator; while work without quotes means to do good work on the social field – work that will often show up down the road as a far more important result than originally intended.
>
> Nonviolence, to the extent that it is engaged in any of the infinite ways possible, will *always* do good work on the social field, often, as we've seen, leading to unforeseen positive results that may far outweigh the immediate result whether or not the later was gained. Counter-intuitively, but perfectly in line with this principle, Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan found that nonviolent insurrections led to more democracy some years down the road than violent ones did, even if they "failed."
>
> What one brings to any situation of conflict, the techniques one selects to deal with one's partners (aka opponents), determines its ultimate results, and has been determined in turn by what one "sees" – in particular whether or to what degree one is aware of the humanity of the other. Critically, it also depends on what nonviolent options one is aware of. Awareness of nonviolence

> is not available in our educational system, not to mention that powerful (dis-)educational force, the mass media. That is changing, and informal avenues are becoming available now, though not nearly quickly enough to meet the urgent needs of the time.
>
> We can define principled nonviolence, Gandhi's nonviolence of the brave, as follows: "Nonviolence is a method of persuasion that draws on the best within a person to elicit the best from others." This definition goes far toward explaining the surprising effectiveness of nonviolence, how it elevates human dignity (which is in short supply these days) and why it is rewarding to doer and recipient alike – why it is such a fulfilling practice in sharp contrast to the devastating effects of practicing violence.
>
> The question then is, why has it taken so long – is still taking so long – for nonviolence to be recognized and used, and what shall we do about it?[2]

The women's voices in the following chapters will hopefully provide some clarification on the topic.

Maria Rosa Lehmann in "All You Need is *Cut Piece*: Yoko Ono's Strategy of Nonviolent Resistance" discusses *Cut Piece*, Yoko Ono's 1964 performance art piece, as a comment on human interaction, and the complicit relationship between individuals and the social body. The author explores the nonviolent resistance of the artist and the way Ono has been able to reach the mental freedom protecting her from outer aggression.

Alla Myzelev in "Loud Feminism: Pussy Riot's Presumed Violations" discusses the work of Pussy Riot, one of the most highly publicized and well-known feminist activist groups from Russia. Pussy Riot's case constitutes a rare opportunity to examine how the conscious self-fashioning of young DIY musicians, Russian feminists, and anonymous activists contributes to the discussion of third-wave feminism. Using non-violent protest they evoke not only resistance but also national and international debates that made them world famous, and more importantly attracted national and international attention to the situation of women in Russia.

Nilgun Anadolu-Okur in "Resisting Jim Crow Violence: Anne Moody's Freedom Movement in the American South" explores Anne Moody's contribution to twentieth-century activism and nonviolent struggle that reveals a hard-earned achievement which is consummate.

In "Contesting the Victim-Escapist-Terrorist Syndrome in Contemporary Arab American Women's Poetry," Mayy El Hayawi explores the mechanisms that Arab women poets have adopted for defending their religion, race, and dignity, and focuses on the works of five contemporary Arab American

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[2] Michael Nagler, "What is Nonviolence?" in *Contemporary Icons of Nonviolence*, edited by Anna Hamling, xx–xxi (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholar Publishing, 2019).

poets: Mohja Kahf, Laila Halaby, Suhair Hammad, Naomi Shihab Nye, and Emtithal Mahmoud.

Anwar and Nabil Ouassini in "Mother of the Revolution: Tawakkol Karman, Islamic Feminism, and Non-violent Mobilization in Yemen" explore the activism in the nonviolent movement of Tawakkol Karman, a leader who has had a lasting impact on Arab politics and society. She was the first Arab woman Nobel Laureate in 2011. Known as the "Mother of the Revolution" in Yemen, Karman led the non-violent movement Women Journalists Without Chains that not only challenged President Saleh's authoritarian regime through non-violent protests but also produced new boundaries surrounding the role of women as agents of change in Yemeni society.

Dagmar Wernitznig in "Past, Present, and Future Perspectives of Nonviolence and Gender: a Dialogue with Professor Mary Elizabeth King" chronicles the life and work of Mary Elizabeth King, a scholar and practitioner of nonviolence for more than five decades. By highlighting various moments in Mary's career, such as her activism in the 1960s US civil-rights movement, her publication – together with Casey Hayden – of *Sex and Caste*, or her appointment as Deputy Director of the Peace Corps during the Carter Administration, the author attempts to contextualize her leadership in widening the understanding of peacebuilding and women's rights globally.

Michael Iasilli in "Mobilization of a Collective Consciousness: How Nadezhda Krupskaya and Aleksandra Kollontai Shaped the First Socialist State" considers "the woman question" at the height of the Russian revolution through the civil war in 1917, and explores the activism of prominent women such as Nadezhda Krupskaya and Aleksandra Kollontai, who encouraged the Bolsheviks to appeal to working-class women in order to help national development. Both were key in constructing political organizations dealing with implementing education and social welfare.

Selina Gallo-Cruz in her chapter "Gender and 'Threat' in Women's Nonviolent Actions" outlines a comprehensive framework for understanding how different forms of women's nonviolent activism relates to different forms of social "threat." She explores the situation of women in Chile, El Salvador, and Palestine resistance movements. Through her case comparison, the author develops a social constructionist understanding of threat as a distinctive form of power, exploring how women's intersectional statuses of class, education, prestige, race, and ethnicity take precedence over gender.

In "Nonviolence for violence? Exploring innovative and emerging measures to curb wife battery in Africa (Focus on Nigeria)" Olayinka

Oluwakemi Adeniyi and Oluwaseyitan Ayotunde Solademi attempt an analysis of wife battery in Africa, particularly with the situation in Nigeria. They explore the best practices of nonviolence in some jurisdictions and share the success stories in Africa that lead them to consider innovative approaches to the realization of the possibility of non-violent measures to eradicate wife battery in Nigeria. The question remains as to the societal impact or resultant effect of the non-violent measures as effective solutions to eradicating violence against women and the possibilities of preventing violence against women through non-violent approaches.

In "Women and Anti-Tax Protests: Examining the Nonviolent Approach of the Women of Okigwe Division, 1929–1960," Livinus Ikwuako Okeke explores the policies which elicited reactions from the women of Igboland and led to the famous Aba Women's War. This war, led by women in the provinces of Calabar and Owerri in southeastern Nigeria in November and December of 1929, became known as the "Aba Women's Riots of 1929" in British colonial history, or the "Women's War" in Igbo history. The war was a violent response to colonial tax policy in the area which culminated in the loss of lives and properties. After the 1929 war, women refused to shy away from responding to any perceived act inimical to their wellbeing, albeit nonviolently.

Maria (Masha) Kardashevskaya in "Gendered nonviolence in North Sumatra: Shame as a Strategy of Nonviolent Resistance" analyses the outcomes of her field research in North Sumatra, exploring the gendered dimension of the struggle for customary land. The study is based on the experiences of women and considers the role of shame in the struggle for land. According to the author's research, women use shame (making the opponents ashamed and shy) as a strategy to gain and create a space for themselves and their community within the context of an unequal power relationship with the security forces and the government officials.

Finally, Srija Sanyal in "Bearing the Nonviolent Legacies in the Womb: an Indian Case Study" speaks of the women-led non-violent movements in India which compelled society to reconsider its decision-making process, boasting several women who have and are still leading movements in their own way both within and outside the domestic spheres. The chapter focuses specifically on two movements; the Chipko movement of the 1970s and #NoConditionsApply of 2018.

In conclusion, in this volume we consider fundamental issues that range from the interpersonal to the global experiences of building a more nonviolent world by women. However, as citizens of a shared world we must work together for a truly nonviolent planet, look to each and every individual as a co-citizen, and learn to be much more open with each other

and acknowledge that we are all in this work together. This is a constant and an ongoing effort.

PART ONE:

WOMEN EXPLORING NONVIOLENCE IN VISUAL ARTS AND LITERATURE

CHAPTER ONE

ALL YOU NEED IS *CUT PIECE*: YOKO ONO'S STRATEGY OF NONVIOLENT RESISTANCE

MARIA ROSA LEHMANN

In 1964, Yoko Ono presented the iconic[1] *Cut Piece* at the Yamaichi Concert Hall in Kyoto. She subsequently staged the same event in Tokyo a couple of months later in 1965 at Carnegie Hall in New York, and again in 1966 at the *Destruction in Art Symposium* in London. There have been many re-enactments since, always with different "performers," until Ono took on the mantle again in 2003 at the *Théatre du Ranelagh* in Paris. Although the historico-cultural context in which the event[2] has been staged varies from presentation to presentation – and subsequently so too does its interpretation – only a few structural differences exist between each performance. In all

[1] After years of obscurity, Ono's intermedia artwork has fascinated scholars since the end of the twentieth century, who continue to declare *Cut Piece* her defining work. The limitations of this tendency are not a concern of this article, but have been convincingly explored by Gregory Laynor in "The Making of Intermedia: John Cage to Yoko Ono, 1952 to 1972." PhD Diss (University of Washington, 2016), 95.

[2] Instead of performance or happening, Ono prefers the term "event." She says: "All my works in the other fields have an Event bent, so to speak. People asked me why I call some works Event and others not. They also ask me why I do not call my Events, Happenings. Event, to me, is not in a simulation of all other arts as happening seems to be, but an extraction from the various sensory perceptions. It is not a get togetherness as most happenings are, but a dealing with oneself. Also, it has no script as happenings do, though it has something that starts at moving – the closest word for it maybe wish or hope." See "To the Wesleyan People (Who Attended the Meeting), a Footnote to My Lecture of January 13, 1966." In *Yoko Ono. En Trance*, edited by Jon Hendricks and Birgit Hessellund (Randers: Randers Kunstmuseum, 1990), 40.

versions, Ono, dressed in elegant clothes,[3] has walked onto the stage with a pair of scissors in her hands. On reaching the middle of the platform, the artist has adopted one of two poses: the polite Japanese sitting position *seiza* (her legs folded underneath her, so that her body rests on her shins), or the *onna-zuwari* position – the "woman's way of sitting."[4] Ono then put the shears next to her, and asked the audience to cut her clothes away.[5] Staring straight ahead, she has fallen silent, seemingly expectant of the audience's response and at the same time lost in her serene pose.

Beneath the deceptive simplicity of the event, *Cut Piece* may be read on a number of levels. Ono herself has discussed the work in several ways: either as a challenge to her artistic ego, as a gift to the spectator, or as a spiritual act enabling the performer to transcend the critical situation they put themselves in. Yet, the element that generally attracts scholarly attention is the violence committed by the audience against the artist. In fact, according to Ono, the event is "a very frightening piece,"[6] and "dangerous."[7] Even though members of the audience have initially hesitated to accept the artist's spoken invitation,[8] the violation of her body has consistently grown, therefore exposing the piece's potential for violence. In Kyoto, for example, a man came up onstage and held the scissors over the artist's head, brandishing them like a knife. Had he realized his threat, the scissors would have completed their transformation into a weapon.[9] Hence, the audience's appetite for cruelty and assault manifested itself through the behaviour of certain audience members.

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[3] Ono remembers: "I went onto the stage bearing the best suit I had. To think that it would be OK to use the cheapest clothes because it was going to be cut up anyway would be wrong; it's against my intentions." See Kevin Concannon, "Yoko Ono's Cut Piece: from Text to Performance and Back Again," *PAJ: a Journal of Performance and Art* 30, no. 3 (2008): 89.

[4] Taro E. F. Nettleton, "Throw Out the Books, Get Out in the Streets: Subjectivity and Space in Japanese Underground Art of the 1960s," PhD Diss. (University of Rochester, 2010), 127.

[5] One of her event scores describing the thirty-minute piece is reproduced in Jon Hendricks, *Yoko Ono: To See the Skies* (Milan: Mazotta, 1990), 66–71.

[6] Jamie Mandelkau and William Bloom, "Interview Piece: Yoko Ono and Grapefruit," *International Times* (August 12–26, 1971), 11.

[7] Gray Watson and Rob La Frenais, "The Poetry of the Personal: in Conversation with Yoko Ono," *Performance* 63 (1991): 9–15.

[8] Ono remembered that "[i]t was very, very difficult for people to come up." See Barbara Haskell and John G. Hanhardt, *Yoko Ono: Arias and Objects* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith Publisher, 1991), 91.

[9] Nettleton, "Throw Out the Books," 125.

Yet, there is a dimension of *Cut Piece* that has scarcely been commented on – the event's inherent elements of nonviolent resistance. True, the event addresses "passivity and aggression on the presentation of the self as a victim connected to the reciprocity between abuse and self-denigration, or on the relinquishment of power."[10] However, there is a second dimension to the violent reading of the piece, namely the way Ono reacts to it. That which can be perceived as passivity or submissive behaviour by the artist vis-à-vis the audience's aggression can also be read as a nonviolent strategy to turn the power structures unfolding during the event on their head. Her specific pose is more than a simple reference to her victimization. She is not passive, but actively resisting the audience's transgression – albeit without using violence herself. She does not avoid conflict, but consciously provokes an action that exposes and prosecutes it.[11] A closer look reveals her posture as one of strength. It transforms into something like a sit-in – occupying the centre of the stage and refusing to move or react, Ono peacefully resists the aggression from the overwhelming force, the audience. Rather than a "relinquishment of power," *Cut Piece*, by acknowledging and exposing society's violence, as well as defying it through nonviolent means, reverts the power to the oppressed – to Ono, the "other," the woman, the foreigner.

All You Have is Aggression, or *Cut Piece*'s Dialogue of Violence

According to Ono, if "you wear clothes long enough they become part of you and you will suffer from serious physical maladjustment when you take them off."[12] Clothes don't just cover the naked body, but represent the body in society. They are the first thing that people perceive, and serve as the image one wants to – needs to – project in society. Therefore, clothes are intimately woven into our bodily fabric, especially in public. Having them forcefully removed not only renders the body vulnerable due to its nakedness, but strips a person of their social identity, of the image they want

[10] Kristine Stiles, "Between Water and Stone," in *In The Spirit of Fluxus*, edited by Elizabeth Armstrong and Joan Rothfuss (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1993), 81.

[11] Nonviolence also suffers from this misconception of passiveness. However, nonviolent action is a direct means for prosecuting conflicts with opponents and an explicit rejection of inaction, submission, and passivity. See Kurt Schock, "Nonviolent Action and Its Misconceptions: Insights for Social Scientists," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 36, no. 4 (2003): 705.

[12] Jung Ah Woo, *The Postwar Art of On Kawara and Yoko Ono: As If Nothing Happened*, dissertation (University of California, Los Angeles, 2006), 268.

to project to their environment. The act of cutting consequently becomes more than just an aggressive intrusion into the intimate zone surrounding the performer's skin as it endangers their social identity. However, the audience's transgression goes further than the violation of the artist's social body. Ono remembers that, "Finally there was only the stone remained of me that was in me, but they were still not satisfied and wanted to know what it's like in the stone."[13] Ono feels that the audience wished to cut more than just her clothes. They were not satisfied with stripping her of her social self and exposing her naked body. Rather, they seemed to cut down to her very soul, to her sense of self, her existence, her very *Dasein*.[14] Members of the audience appeared to violate more than the exterior strata through which people relate to one another.[15] Therefore, *Cut Piece* exposes the violence the inner self has to endure in social interactions. Through the violation of her clothes, skin, and outer body, the audience seems to invade and defile the artist's inner state, that which makes Ono herself. Corporeal and inter-corporeal processes of mental experience are intimately linked. In an interview with Gray Watson and Rob Le Frenais, the artist says: "we have all this conceptual world within us. But at the same time we have to be reminded that this is also a part of the body. We are a body and we often forget that."[16]

Ono's body is violated twice: first by those that participate in the process of cutting – the audience members that transgress her personal space and infringe upon her intimate individuality – then by those who decide to watch the action unfold before them.[17] Those who only observe, the passive participants, not only witness the violation of the artist but also assist in the exposure and consumption of her body. In a way, her violation is made public, displayed on the theatre platform as a spectacle for an audience that prefers to watch. Through the observing of all those present – actively participating or not – the transgression against Ono takes on another degree

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[13] Ingrid Pfeiffer, Max Hollein, and Jon Hendricks, *Yoko Ono. Half-a-wind Show – a Retrospective* (Frankfurt, Munich, London, and New York: Schirn Kunsthalle/ Prestel, 2013), 179.

[14] Martin Heidegger, "Sein und Zeit, 1927" (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1967). https://archive.org/stream/HeideggerMartinSeinUndZeit/Heidegger+Martin+-+Sein+und+Zeit_djvu.txt.

[15] Ibid, §5.

[16] Watson and Le Frenais, "The Poetry of the Personal," 15.

[17] Tony Cox points out that "only one third of the audience" actively took part in the event, "while the rest apparently consider the prospect." See "Instructive Auto-Destruction. Yoko Ono Leads in a Direction that Might be Called Concept Art," *Art and Artists* 5 (1966): 18.

that augments her humiliation. Trying to expose those who observe,[18] Ono proposes a social comment on the quiet violence that binds individuals and society – through action or inaction – as well as the alienation and pain resulting from it. *Cut Piece* comments on the complicit relationship between individuals and the social body as a whole and its collectivized behaviour.[19]

Although Ono did not conceive the event specifically for the female body,[20] because of the artist's gender, *Cut Piece* also invites a strictly feminist reading. Thomas Crow points out that, "[i]t is difficult to think of an earlier work of art that so acutely pinpoints (at the very point when modem feminist activism was just emerging) the political question of women's physical vulnerability as mediated by regimes of vision."[21] Not only did *Cut Piece* invite the violation of any body, it specifically encouraged an assault of Ono's female form. In fact, while the event unfolded, attention was increasingly focused on the artist's sexualized body. Certain people started to cut specific parts of her clothes, exposing the naked female flesh underneath. In one instance, a man came on stage and deliberately cut away the tissues covering her breasts. The audience clearly desired to expose the *woman* that placed herself between their explorative and destructive hands.

Although I do not think this feminist aspect of *Cut Piece* is one-dimensional – and therefore marginalizing the very work scholars seek to reclaim for history[22] – it is still necessary to point out that this is only one aspect of a very complex work. Of course, the physical violation of Ono's female body, as well as the psychological infraction committed by the participants of the piece, invite feminist speculation. Through *Cut Piece*, Ono exposes the "aggression that marks sexual difference and the laborious efforts women make not to be undone by it."[23] Subjected to acts of brutality, Ono demonstrates the "potential for objectification of the 'other.'"[24]

Othering describes a process through which one's own image is elevated while defining people with different characteristics, features, or traits as

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[18] Sylvie Coeller, *Histoire et esthétique du contact dans l'art contemporain* (Aix-en-Provence: Publications de l'université de Provence, 2005), 22.
[19] Alexandra Munroe and Jon Hendricks, *Yes Yoko Ono* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2000), 158.
[20] In one of her event scores, Ono points out that the performer "does not have to be a woman." See *Grapefruit* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1971).
[21] Thomas Crow, *The Rise of the Sixties* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996), 133.
[22] Concannon, "Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece*," 84.
[23] Peggy Phelan, "The Returns of Touch: Feminist Performances, 1960–80," in *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, edited by Lisa Gabrielle Mark (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 352.
[24] Stiles, "Between Water and Stone," 81.

different and strange.[25] A distinction and distancing from the "other" takes place. In patriarchal society, this "other" can (and often does) designate "woman." However, othering is also based on religious affiliation, ethnicity, and nationality, for example.[26] As a Japanese immigrant, Ono also references her status as "other" in Western society. In that respect, *Cut Piece* exposes what Johan Galtung calls cultural and structural violence, both of which are responsible for "lowering the real level of needs satisfaction below what is potentially possible" for a person deemed as "other."[27] The event exposes a culture that "preaches, teaches, admonishes, eggs on, and dulls us into seeing exploitation and/or repression as normal and natural, or not seeing them (especially exploitation) at all."[28] Inciting the violent encounter between her and the audience, Ono reveals what Doug McAdam and Sidney Tarrow call a "field of contention"[29]: the socially constructed set of adversarial relationships embedded in a legal/institutional system that effectively constrains the strategic options available to all contenders.

Thus defined, *Cut Piece* seems create "a confrontational language of interaction."[30] Yet, while the potential for aggression is certainly always there, the event is not simply a work about victimization and assault. While some critics understand the act of cutting as enacting and enabling the violence humans are capable of, it is not wholly a violation. Although *Cut Piece* clearly exposes the violence that lies beneath many a human interaction, as well as the resulting pain, there is also a dimension of healing.[31] In that respect, the violent elements of the event function "as imaginary techniques for communicating and, thereby, confronting pain, frustration, anger, and sorrow."[32]

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[25] Kerstin Gernig, *Fremde Körper: Zur Konstruktion des Anderen in europäischen Diskursen* (Berlin: Dahlem University Press, 2001).

[26] In his critique on Orientalism, Edward Said points out that the difference between cultures is conceived, "first, as creating a battlefront that separates them, and second, as inviting the West to control, contain, and otherwise govern (through superior knowledge and accommodating power) the Other." See *Orientalism* (London and Henley: Routledge/Kegan Paul, 1978), 55–6.

[27] Johan Galtung, *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization* (London: Sage, 1996), 4.

[28] Johan Galtung, "Cultural Violence," *Journal of Peace Research* 27, no. 3 (1990): 295.

[29] Doug McAdam and Sidney Tarrow. "Nonviolence as Contentious Interaction," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 33, no. 2 (2000): 149.

[30] Munroe and Hendricks, *Yes Yoko Ono*, 148.

[31] Stiles, "Between Water and Stone," 85.

[32] Kristine Stiles, "Unbosoming Lennon: the Politics of Yoko Ono's Experience," *Art Criticism* 7, no. 2 (1992): 39.

All You Need is Love, or *Cut Piece*'s Dialogue of Nonviolence

Ono has repeatedly credited her refugee experience in Second World War Japan with having oriented her entire artistic trajectory, including her peace activism from the 1960s onwards. Indeed, her wartime memories figure as a leitmotif in accounts she has given of her own life in popular and scholarly media in the last decade.[33] She wanted to address the trauma she had lived through, and at the same time find relief from it. Her "poetic acts of self-narration"[34] allow her to imagine the world other than it is, and to bring about a dialogue. Yet, some scholars question the sociopolitical validity of her acts. Because they have been firmly placed in the realm of art (or popular culture), they often forgo the qualification of being political acts of resistance – as demonstrated by Fabien Loszach's crushing review of the *Bed-in for Peace*.[35] However, it is my opinion that narrow interpretations such as this deny the many links that exist between the arts and political activism. In fact, although humorous and playful, Ono's art is "thoroughly uncompromising in its radicalism."[36] In his highly interesting article on Ono's and Lennon's activism of the late 1960s, Jon Wiener explains how both of them sought to "overcome the apolitical and antipolitical aspects of avant-garde art in a way that would also liberate radical political activity from its traditional forms."[37] Although I would argue that avant-garde movements such as dadaism, surrealism, automatism, or situationism were far from "anti-political," he has a point in trying to free Ono's activities from an artificially constructed art-only realm. Her work is that of protest, however unconventional. Her creativity acts as resistance activism, and gives her intermedia work its subversive power.

Nonviolent means of protest and resistance are intimately linked to Ono's activities of protest. She said it best herself:

> Why am I still an artist? Why am I not joining the violent revolutionaries? … I realized that destruction is not my game. I like to fight the establishment

[33] Midori Yoshimoto, *Into Performance: Japanese Women Artists in New York* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 79–81.
[34] Brigid Cohen, "Limits of National History: Yoko Ono, Stefan Wolpe, and Dilemmas of Cosmopolitanism," *The Musical Quarterly* 97, no. 2 (2014): 203.
[35] Fabien Loszach, "Le bed-in: un idéal de la contestation molle?" *Espace Sculpture* 90 (Winter 2009–10): 31.
[36] Jon Wiener, "Pop and Avant-Garde: the Case of John and Yoko," *Popular Music and Society* 22 no. 1 (1998): 7.
[37] Ibid., 8.

> by using methods that are so far removed from establishment-type thinking that the establishment doesn't know how to fight back.[38]

Her political art activities carry a profoundly positive and transformative message,[39] because they quietly unhinge reified structures and dynamics of power – a process of which *Cut Piece* serves as a perfect example. In fact, Ono herself, while acknowledging the event's violence, has "described it as equally concerned with the idea of peaceful resistance as a form of protest."[40] Rather than inciting a totalistic and absolute sociopolitical overhaul, Ono's message unfurls on a much more intimate scale.

Margaret Atwood rightly points out that questions about power normally concern "who's allowed to do what to whom, who gets away with it and how."[41] Intrinsically linked with the concept of domination, they address the divide between the "powerful" and the "powerless."[42] In this system, the powerful "get away" with the violation of the powerless. In *Cut Piece*, these two poles are represented by the audience and the artist. Because Ono has seemingly "let go" of the action, the power appears to be in the hands of the audience members – they decide what to cut, how much, and consequently the amount of flesh to be exposed. They seem to dominate Ono's body, either through their actions or their gaze. The artist, on the other hand, "just" sits there, completely still, her eyes fixed on a point somewhere behind the public, enduring her ordeal. At first glance, hers appears to be a position of submission and vulnerability. Furthermore, the video feed of the New York staging shows that Ono's composure during *Cut Piece* has not always been as non-responsive as described. As one (male) audience member comes up onstage to cut parts of her lingerie, theatrically declaring, "Very delicate … might take some time," the artist is clearly uncomfortable. She repeatedly looks down, observing the actions of the cutter. She bites her lip, and then looks upwards to collect her strength. On the one hand, "the denuding of Ono magnifie[s] her status as a fetishized and exotic object of voyeuristic

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[38] Julia Bryan-Wilson, "Remembering Yoko Ono's Cut Piece," *Oxford Art Journal* 26, no. 1 (2003): 116.
[39] Munroe and Hendricks, *Yes Yoko Ono*, 11.
[40] Rachel Wetzler, "Yoko Ono: Cut Piece," Haus der Kunst. https://postwar.hausderkunst.de/artworks-artists/artworks/cut-piece.
[41] Margaret Atwood, *Second Words: Selected Critical Prose* (Toronto: Anansi Press, 1982), 353.
[42] Penny Strange, "It'll Make a Man of You: a Feminist View of the Arms Race," in *Exposing Nuclear Phallacies*, edited by Diana E. H. Russel (New York: Pergamon Press, 1989), 112.

fascination."[43] However, it also underlines her vulnerability and the danger she is exposed to. In one photograph, she moves her arms to shield her naked breasts. This seemingly desperate, protective gesture seems to betray her suffering due to the violation against her body. The apparent loss of control over herself puts Ono in a very vulnerable position,[44] already conveyed by her submissive sitting position and accentuated by her slips of composure. Therefore, Ono must be the powerless, and her violation by the audience – i.e. the powerful – allowed.

Yet, Ono's submissive passivity is an illusion. Certainly, the gesture of shielding her breasts may be read as vulnerable, but also as a moment of self-assertion.[45] For one brief instant, Ono points out that the victimization of her body through others is her own doing. She invites the audience to cut as much fabric as they want. She dictates the parameters of the interaction. She planned the duration of the piece, chose the tools of her "domination," and decided upon her reaction to the violation. The audience has power, yes, but in the end Ono is in control. The liberties accorded to her public are restricted by the artist – the initiator of the action – who constructs in a selective manner the frame of the event. By manipulating the general structure of *Cut Piece* she has control over its meaning and intention. Therefore, Ono is neither the victim of the exchange between her and her public, nor the weak alienated other on which the dominant audience members can play out their aggression. Through her stoic, still, pensive and meditative, turned-into-herself attitude, Ono reverses the prevailing power structures that normally take place in social interactions. Rollo May conceptualizes aggression and violence as expressions of impotence, because they are symptoms of a failed power through self-affirmation, or self-assertion (i.e. the power to be/of the self).[46] Because the audience members make use of their power through violence, they in fact expose their own insecurity and impotence. Ono, on the other hand, turns out to be the powerful during the encounter, because she does not resort to violence while her power to be is violated. Those that are supposed to have power over her (i.e. the audience) may at first glance perceive her as passive and submissive, and therefore weak. However, through her quiet nonviolent resistance to her body's violation, Ono transforms from powerless to

[43] James M. Harding, *Cutting Performances: Collage Events, Feminist Artists, and the American Avant-Garde* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012), 105.
[44] Boris Groys, "A Genealogy of Participatory Art," in *The Art of Participation: 1950 to Now*, edited by Rudolf Frieling, Boris Groys, Robert Atkins, and Lev Manovich (London and New York: Thames & Hudson, 2008), 108.
[45] Bryan-Wilson, "Remembering Yoko Ono's Cut Piece," 107.
[46] Rollo May, *Power and Innocence* (New York: Norton, 1972), 54.

powerful. Gene Sharp points out that we need to rethink the notion of power (although he does speak of power in a strictly political context), because we have for too long assumed "that it originates in violence."[47] Ono does exactly that – she demonstrates that her power does not originate in her dominating the audience through a reaction more violent than those that transgress her body, but in her nonviolent attitude. Rather, *Cut Piece* reveals the violent actions of the audience as a sign of "weakness."

Richard Bartlett Gregg asserts that physically violent combat is conducted "on the basis of a strong fundamental agreement that violence is a sound mode of procedure."[48] However, if one of the parties eliminates that basic agreement, the other is startled and uncertain – their instincts no longer instantly tell them what to do. Trying to use violent means to end a conflict, they are caught off balance. Nonviolent resistance can therefore cause "the attacker to lose his moral balance."[49] True, Ono does not enter into physical combat with her audience, yet the same principle applies. In fact, violence is often "a feature of an interaction between two people."[50] Society being constructed on the powerful-powerless dichotomy, many interactions between two people are constructed on the basis of achieving power of and for oneself by dominating another (through violence and aggression, in whatever form they take). Most people cannot imagine any other reality than this dualism – if they "lose" power, the only available way of being is weak, passive, a victim.[51] Therefore, people expect their *Gegenüber* to want to assert themselves by the same means. They expect violence and aggression. Yet, Ono did not comply. She did not react the way she was supposed to, being neither submissive/weak as the victimized other nor aggressive due to her power to be/of the self being aggressed.

In a way, Ono withdraws her consent vis-à-vis the aggressive interaction between humans that defines society. In a larger sense, therefore, Ono makes use of what Gene Sharp has defined as one of the three broad categories of nonviolent action: non-cooperation.[52] By withdrawing that

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[47] Gene Sharp, *Social Power and Political Freedom* (Boston: Porter Sargent Publishers, 1980), 19.
[48] Richard Bartlett Gregg, *Power of Nonviolence* (London: James Clarke & Co, 1935), 44–5.
[49] Ibid., 44.
[50] Trudy Govier, "Violence, Nonviolence, and Definitions: a Dilemma for Peace Studies," *Peace Research* 40, no. 2 (2008): 64.
[51] Karen Malpede, "A Talk for the Conference on Feminism & Militarism," in *Reweavinq the Web of Life: Feminism and Nonviolence*, edited by Pam McAllister (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1982), 205.
[52] Gene Sharp, *Exploring Nonviolent Alternatives* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1970).

consent, she is able to "control and even destroy the power of [her] opponent."[53] Nonviolent resistance works "by identifying an opponent's vulnerabilities and taking away [his] ability to maintain control."[54] That is exactly what Ono does here. She identifies the power of the audience, then takes it away. Not only by controlling the event parameters through her role as the artist, initiator, and creator, but also through her body language that defies her status as the weak, submissive other, she demonstrates her ability to take control. In fact, nonviolent protesters often position their bodies consciously in relation to changing structures of power,[55] which is exactly what Ono does. The pose she adopts at the beginning of the event is a conscious decision as it conveys the presumed submissiveness, passiveness, and vulnerability of the other as weak. In that respect, the artist mirrors the dominant power structures. Her position should then underline the power of the audience who come on stage and violate her body. Yet, on the contrary, it undermines said power. Her stillness is not a sign of submission, but of strength, as stillness gives the nonviolent protester a powerful position from which to exert a sense of agency.[56] Barbara Browning explains that nonviolent non-cooperation "requires a technique of the body which in many ways resembles what contemporary choreographers refer to as 'release technique.'"[57] Ono seemingly releases control of her body, yet, again, that release is an illusion. By continuing to sit still and maintain an air of meditation, she projects a different image – that of a controlled and confident person, who is in fact in charge of the violation of her body.

However, *Cut Piece* does not simply reverse the power structures, which would mean creating another adversary system of the powerful-powerless dichotomy (even if the roles were reversed). Rather, Ono tempted a collective transformation by showing that not resorting to violence does not necessarily mean being weak, or that resorting to violence does not necessarily mean being powerful. Concerned with the "complex psychological interaction involving actors and spectators, with a process of heightened self-perception, and the development of an awareness of one's thoughts and

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[53] Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action. Part One: Power and Struggle* (Boston: Porter Sargent Publishers, 1973), 4.
[54] Peter Ackerman and Jack DuVall, *A Force More Powerful: a Century of Nonviolent Conflict* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 494.
[55] Danielle Goldman, "Bodies on the Line: Contact Improvisation and Techniques of Nonviolent Protest," *Dance Research Journal* 39, no. 1 (2007): 61.
[56] Susan Leigh Foster, "Choreographies of Protest," *Theatre Journal* 55, no. 3 (2003): 395–412.
[57] Barbara Browning, "Choreographing Postcoloniality: Reflections on the Passing of Edward Said," *Dance Research Journal* 35/36, no. 2 (2004): 169.

feelings,"[58] Ono believes that art should affect social change. Yet, she does not tell viewers what to do or how to feel and react, and instead gives them the means to experience that change for themselves. In an interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist, Ono says that wanting to "make 'change' into a positive move: let the work grow by asking people to participate and add their efforts."[59]

In much of her intermedia work, Ono wishes to reveal a person's interior world, the *Weltinnenraum* – a space where the visible and invisible mix and change constantly.[60] In her mind, this spirituality, the potential to look inside oneself, is capable of changing the world.[61] Her instructions are therefore not simple directives but an invitation to explore said interior life. As Deborah K. Ultan notes, Ono uses the ritual in performance to "explore myths and realities of identity toward seeking a greater self."[62] Her event scores, for example, she defines as "seeds" that are to be activated in the minds of those who receive them.[63] Drawing the spectator into acts of self-reflection,[64] Ono transforms them into self-conscious actors responding critically to the dilemma presented on stage.[65] The more committed she remains in her confident, transcendent posture, the more the violence used by the audience becomes pronounced and disturbing. The artist tries to invoke a feeling of unease on the public's side when faced with aggression. In fact, the artist seems to function "as a mirror, reflecting the feeling of audience members; through watching the performance, the audience discover[s] voyeurism or violence within itself."[66] The active and passive participants are therefore forced to not only confront their own violent behaviour, but also reflect on violence and make a choice. Just as acts of

[58] Pfeiffer, Hollein, and Hendricks, *Yoko Ono*, 30.
[59] Hans Ulrich Obrist and Yoko Ono, *Yoko Ono* (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2009), 8.
[60] Charles Dreyfus, "Yoko Ono. Lumière de l'aube," *Inter* 124 (Fall 2016): 63.
[61] Benoit Jodoin, "Compte rendu de Liberté conquérante de Yoko Ono," *Spirale* 270 (Fall 2019): 19.
[62] Deborah K. Ultan, "From the Personal to the Transpersonal: Self Reclamation Through Ritual-in-Performance," *Art Documentation: Journal of the Art Libraries Society of North America* 20, no. 2 (2001): 30.
[63] Concannon, "Yoko Ono's Cut Piece," 83.
[64] Munroe and Hendricks, *Yes Yoko Ono*, 147.
[65] Felicia Leu emphasizes that Ono frequently uses participatory processes as *kommunikationsmittel*. Her art has a social dimension by which to engage the public and create a change within the recipients. See "Yoko Ono's Instruction Paintings. RezipientInnen zwischen Partizipation und Performance" (Magistra der Philosophie, Institut für Kunstgeschichte, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich, 2019).
[66] Yoshimoto, *Into Performance*, 99.

nonviolence serve to "'conscientize' the larger population to the plight of others who are being oppressed,"[67] *Cut Piece* not only disrupts the processes of violence but spreads awareness among those participating in the event. It "throws responsibility for judgment upon the viewer." Not only does the artist force her public to confront their own attitudes towards aggression, but she incites audience members to take action upon that realization – or live with the fact that they don't.

Dick Higgins describes this act of transformation as central to performance art. According to him, during a performance two different horizons – that of the artist and the spectator – clash and fuse in a way (*horizontverschmelzung*). If and when that happens, those original horizons will alter. That way, even when they are no longer fused after the performance, they are forever changed: "The best piece is the one that permanently affects the recipient's horizon."[68] In *Cut Piece*, Ono fuses her horizon with that of the audience. *Cut Piece* is less about confrontation than communication. Ono points out that "[a] dream you dream alone may be a dream, but a dream two people dream together is a reality."[69] The artist needs the audience and their shared collective experience – first, of course, to expose the violence in human interaction, but more importantly so she can share with them her dream of human interaction liberated from a system of violence that is based on the powerful-powerless dichotomy. By sharing that dream, by spreading it and making other people dream about it, it might eventually become a reality. *Cut Piece* is a communicative act in which both artist and spectator work together. In a way, violence "breaks the sense of community because it seeks to end or limit participation in the decision-making process." Yet, nonviolence, as it involves "the transformation of a confrontation into a relationship of unity,"[70] restores this dialogue. Nonviolent action "plays a double role in relation to dialogue: it is both a direct attempt at dialogue – most obviously in methods of symbolic action – and preparation for dialogue."[71] By inciting an aggressive action against

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[67] Marjorie Hope and James Young, *The Struggle for Humanity: Agents of Nonviolent Change in a Violent World* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1977), 35.
[68] Dick Higgins, "Fluxus Theory and Reception," in *The Fluxus Reader* (New York: Academy Editions, 1998), 230.
[69] Yoko Ono, *Imagine Yoko* (Lund: Bakhall, 2005), 35.
[70] Theodore Herman, "Six Views of Nonviolence for Peace Research," in *A Just Peace Through Transformation: Cultural Economic and Political Foundations for Change*, edited by Chadwick Alger and Michael Stohl (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988), 104.
[71] Brian Martin and Wendy Varney, "Nonviolence and Communication," *Journal of Peace Research* 40, no. 2 (2003): 219.