

DRAMATURGIES OF FEMALE PERFORMANCE

FEB 16, 2.00PM-3.00PM

The four presenters, discussed — to different extents — how the dramaturgical thinking and sensibility of their creative processes take the female body vis-a-vis the male body as a frame and site of/for performance.

Natalie Hennedige opened this discussion by using her play *Ophelia* as a case study to investigate the imbalance of the power dynamics and representations of gender in her reimagination of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, giving Ophelia the opportunity to the struggle and wrestle away this power from Hamlet.

This theme of resistance and rebellion as further developed in the subsequent presentation by Eisa Jocson, who shared her primary practice in dislocating the performance of pole-dancing from the red-light district, which has since been re-appropriated by the fitness industry, by catapulting it into the public space in order to push for the visibility of the female gendered body. Through doing so, she goes on to detail the creative processes of her performances from 2010 to the present day, outlining the various strategies and research processes that she underwent in order to reformat her body, so as to challenge the politics of the body. Through doing so, she examines the possibilities of the female body as a repository of hybrid identities, as well as the site of the female body that has economic currency, both in a micro and macrospace.

Ruhanie Perera then zoomed out slightly in the conversation by approaching female performance by looking at it within the socio-cultural context of the war/post-war Sri Lanka. Through doing so, she examined the vulnerabilities of the female body, and a certain estrangement of the body from the self that takes place through the creative process. It is through this exploration of a specific production (*My Other History*) where she distilled 3 forms of silences that had to be negotiated through the creative process. The first, the silence of context (which stems from a lack of abstraction of the form), the silence of the female character (since the original narrative has no female character involved), and finally the silence that comes in the form of censorship (and how that was dealt with and foreground). By outlining her company's response to the censorship of the production, they ironically manage to foreground the resistance and evidence of the censorship in the show. This displacement of self in order to accommodate the whims of arbitrary censorship segued into another case study of another project titled *Absence*, which concerned the trajectory of the female story and its displacement. She shared an image, which was a retaken photograph of the woman poised as if in an old black and white photo, yet with her hair obscuring her face. This I felt succinctly encapsulated the throughline of her presentation which dealt the the performativity of the displacement, refusal, and resistance of the male gaze.

Finally, Shinta Febriany rounded off the presentations by discussing the production of *my name is adam without a capital letter*. She specified the context within which her dramaturgical practice was located in (Makassar, South Sulawesi), which was still extremely patriarchial and the challenge she faced in the creation and reception of her work. She extended the discourse on the performance of the female body looking at is vis-a-vis the performance of the male body, and how they both can offer similar perspectives on issues of representations of gender politics.

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