

The dividing line between actors and viewers

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Full The Dividing Line Between Actors and Viewers Aesthetic distance is that awareness of an audience that what happens onstage is apart from what is really happening in real life. It is that perception wherein the roles of actors and the audiences are controlled because of the knowledge that what is being portrayed is just a part of a portrayal and is not reality. For instance, when a male lover hurts his partner because of jealousy and threatens to kill her, the audience will just sit and watch. In real life, witnesses of similar circumstances may do something such as try to stop the enraged lover or call the authorities to get in between the quarrelling parties. Nevertheless, in theater, the 'witnesses' will not do anything but will just watch the unfolding of events because they are aware that the events they are watching are simply part of art. They know that even if someone is killed in the performance, s/he will not actually die but simply acts to die in order to bring to life the character and role one has in the play.

There are certain factors influencing aesthetic distance such as the actor's role and the audience's empathy. The actor gets onstage to perform his character in order to keep the story going and to complete it. What happens in the story is revealed through what the actors do onstage so that they are in full control of the emotions they can draw from the audience. When an actor's performance seems very real, the viewers will be transported to the setting of the story and will be able to respond to what they see accordingly. It is not that they will become parts of the performance but they will be able to appreciate what they see in terms of the actors' abilities to bring to life their roles and characters.

On the other hand, the viewers are in control of their emotions or reactions

toward the actors. In the example given above, the audience may feel sorry for the protagonist, understanding her situation and hopelessness but is unable to do anything but to feel sorry for her. The audience can also empathize with the helpless character, put herself in the shoes of the character so to speak, but controls her reactions. For some, they may cry because they have deeper understanding of the character's situation but some will simply feel sorry for her. As mentioned earlier, even if the viewers are witnessing something cruel, they are just limited to 'feeling' toward the characters. Audiences cannot stop the actors because they know that they are just acting and the things they are witnessing are not real. In addition to empathy, the spectators' reactions toward the actors as individuals are also controlled. For example, when one watches an actor playing the role of a cruel person, the theatergoer does not judge the personality of the actor through what he sees onstage. Instead, the viewer understands that the performer is just impersonating a character and the role he is playing does not necessarily define him. That is why, even if a person has been through similar circumstances that may make him/her hate the impersonation of an actor, he should not feel the same toward the actor because he knows that the performer and his character are two different identities.