

James LeVasseur

12/7/13

ENG 205

Public Reading Response

Estranged Response

Rachele Nelson was the single actress reading in the IMRC (Stewart Hall) building's room 104, however there were a myriad of actors and actresses reading from the University of New Hampshire's Hennessy Theater that were projected on to a background in the 104 room during the majority of the play. They are reading from a play titled "Estranged" that was written and directed by Nate Aldrich, an assistant professor of intermedia here at the University of Maine, and David Kaye, chair of the Department of Theatre and Dance at UNH. It was part of four-time event; all the same show.

The room is very dark because of the dim lighting and black walls. The only lights are on the stage of course, which is setup as the main character's study, with an intentionally messy desk, and trash can full of empty starbucks coffees and other trash. People are dressed in normal clothing. The audience consists of students, TAs, and undergraduate students, most of which are from the new media department, art department, or intermedia program. The actress is dressed in her character's clothes, which consists of a purple shirt, frilly scarf, headband, jeans, and boots (I should make it clear that the scarf and boots are in no way meant to be related to

winter attire, and are fashion based choices). There is no reception, though there is plenty of time before the show to chat.

The actress Rachel's reading style for the entirety of the show is confident, aggressive, and jaded. She did not make any eye contact with the audience for the entirety of the show. I believe there may have been one or two bits of humor, but the majority of the show held a very serious tone. The actors and actresses of UNH read in angry, or distressed tones for much of their lines as they were regularly caught up in a conflict. There is a message behind the show and that is of the disconnection that the age of information puts a lot of people in. The show starts with the main character, Patrice, being informed of her mother's death via email. Patrice reacts very apathetically to this making apathetic, and sarcastic facebook posts, and pictures.

The UNH actors and actresses, who were to represent Patrice's neighbors, that frequently, get into arguments had very odd lines. The lines for the UNH actors and actresses were picked by an algorithm, choosing different words and phrases from the book the play is based off of (Albert Camus' "L'Etranger"). The UNH actors and actresses repeated these lines many times over, making the show very abstract by this point. The abstractness makes the show very interesting to watch, if a little confusing. I find that it was more about picking up on the subtle messages hidden in the actions of the actors and actresses, than trying to read into the dialogue. For the fourth act Patrice simply sat in a corner and listened to music, while the conflict

with the neighbors escalated, and for the final act the UNH actors move across stage in patterns while the room was dark and while carrying macbooks. This I think was to represent how people move through life while only casually bumping into people and then moving onwards.

The entire experience was very interesting and was much different than anything that I was expecting. I view the show almost not as a play, but as a moving abstract sculpture since I feel that the emphasis was not on the dialogue, but the actions that portrayed while saying their repetitive lines. I think it was very interesting to hear the abstract lines regardless of how useful I felt that they were to plot development; it was like a puzzle I was trying to solve until I realized I couldn't. The experience was unique and interesting, I would like to see them do more with this idea of displaying the same show in two locations, or more.