***Theatre Journal***

**Special Issue**

**“Spectatorship”**

**Call for Papers**

Reception has been a perennial problem in theatre studies. How do we know what audiences receive and understand? How reliable are the various sources of evidence about reception? Since the publication in 1990 of the ground-breaking first edition of Susan Bennett’s *Theatre Audiences*, scholars have tended to write less about audiences and more about spectators and spectatorship. Perhaps this is because “the audience” refers to a collectivity, while “the spectator” connotes something more atomized, indicative of a more fractured or pluralistic understanding of reception. It may also be the case that, since the English language publication of Guy Debord’s *The Society of the Spectacle* and Jean Baudrillard’s *Simulacra and Simulation*, both in 1994, scholars have been preoccupied with spectatorship as an all-pervasive feature of contemporary life. And since the ascendancy of performance studies and the advent of global touring there has been less emphasis on *hearing* a (unilingual) text and more on *seeing* a (universally legible) spectacle. Scholars such as Dennis Kennedy and Jacques Rancière, both in 2009, have concerned themselves with spectatorship as an independent activity rather than a secondary, parasitic, or interpretative one. Rancière’s “emancipated spectator” is an active, individual subject, not a member of an audience-as-community; his project is to “challenge the opposition between viewing and acting”: “viewing,” he argues, “is also an action,” and “being a spectator…is our normal situation.” Taking all of this into account, this special issue invites contributions that challenge or expand our understanding of spectatorship, empirically, theoretically, or methodologically.

This special issue will be edited by *Theatre Journal* editor Ric Knowles. Submissions (6000-9000 words) should be e-mailed to managing editor Bob Kowkabany (doriclay@aol.com) no later than 14 February 2014.