

The Art of the Spectator: Seeing Sounds and Hearing Visions

Piergiorgio Giacchè

Free time and empty time

Even before Erving Goffman, in his studies of interaction, develops and makes the most of the metaphor of a daily life entirely composed of representation, or even stage acting,¹ sociology had already stolen from theatre a number of terms and modes particular to it: the concept of “role”, to take the most classic example, but also the term “actor”, which sociology in fact translates as *social actor*.

However, for “spectator” no such borrowing or transfer occurred: for instance, *social spectator* does not exist, even though it is the part played most often nowadays in daily life – especially if we consider the much reduced number of seats – for “social actors” as a result of the growth of the *limbo* outside the economy to which all children, many women, too many young people and almost all the elderly find themselves relegated.

In short at a time when the leading social role is certainly not given to the masses and political participation is summed up in consensus, being a “spectator” means first of all that you have lost the right to be an actor, in other words, that you are resigned to not having a positive role, or sometimes even any distinctive feature. For the first time a term that meant having a seat, and even one in the front row, today means not having any place or significance on the stage of everyday life. It is true that we can take comfort in the fact that we are members of the most enormous, most functional audience ever, the media public, but – even trying to make a virtue of necessity – the trick of the market and the status of consumers are now no longer either satisfying or purposeful: a large number of consumers deceive themselves when they still call their “empty time” “free time”, but the hundreds of ways of filling it – from free pastimes to pointless viewing, from social tourism to the university of old age – do not fool anyone any more. And above all, this time is no longer “freed up”, but rather crowded and captive, which paradoxically makes it *occupied time* or, to put it better, time “consumed”.

In particular, in this *time* and in this *limbo* (but by implication at any other time and place in our society and culture) it is precisely the show that has become the most widespread and functional type of consumption: first because it costs less and produces (or occupies) more; then because it is both individual consumption and socializing event; and finally because it fills social and private spaces, squares and houses, often combining the first and the second via television.

A show distracts in every sense (“by substituting image for merchandise”, as Debord wrote²) and forms a universal continuum that soaks into all time, even full or occupied time. Furthermore, the show creates the link between empty time and full time by “freeing”

it almost completely and for nearly everyone: a show that is already very common as a *noun* (or in the primary sense), but in addition is spreading and occupying, as a qualifying *adjective*, every person and thing, every moment and place in daily life. The show has become such a frequent object of consumption, such an ordinary decoration, that it forms the obsessive landscape of non-stop acculturation: once we are habituated, not only do we not know how to get rid of it, but (still as spectators) we have instead the power to replicate the effect at will: though “creating a show” remains a difficult duty for actors, “watching a show everywhere and in every way” is today an easy ability we are all compulsorily provided.

There is nothing and no one that can stop us living every moment of our lives “like a film”; nevertheless it is hard or impossible to avoid this gratifying effect (or accidental defect). And this ability or need to “create a show” has now replaced the imagination and stolen its name, or what once possessed us and was released as Fantasy.

The “social spectator”

This attitude has become so natural for us, that in order to pin it down and become aware of it, we have to have recourse to comparison with “other” situations or experiences in a more forgotten history or more distant geography. So we really have to get to know about the lived experience of far-off or ancient cultures, where a “fantastic” ability to create a show is (or was) a sought-after pleasure and not an automatic duty. And even if it was (or is) a quality that few possess and not a defect available to anyone – in fact, a difficult *art* rather than an easy *game* widely played.

As anthropologists and historians know well, in an Other time or an Other place the social spectator is not conceivable, not even when the show is put on publicly for everyone: even with the miracle of fireworks or the explosion of carnival, their *exceptional and sacred character* mean that the moment or the ingredient of show must be seen by everyone as an extraordinary experience and not as a habit that is anticipated and passive. There – in that Other time and Other place – the show always arises and is reproduced together with charm and enchantment, and being a spectator is like “putting on” a *habitus* that is known and has been tried by each individual, but is nevertheless *extra-quotidian*³ (outside the everyday) for all of them. Wonder and amazement can carry people away, but in the end they do affirm and complete them even in the role of social actors.

Here and Now, however, it seems there are only *social spectators* – if we may define in this way the members of a society that is now wholly and continuously given up to the show, or the healthy ignorant vehicles of creating a show out of any event that involves them or any person that they look at, starting of course with themselves (or rather, as it is usually put, with the *image* of themselves).

I do not wish to reopen the old yet still topical debate about the alienated world, *official culture*, mass society. If I choose as possible and helpful the generic term and the generalized condition of “social spectators”, it is simply in order to measure a gap, and in particular to pinpoint a change that has taken place and is likely to prevent us from understanding and appreciating the differences between an *extraordinary event* (a show) and an *ordinary consumption* (creating a show). And, I might add, between vision and television . . .

There are two changes in particular that have given rise to the “social spectator”: the attitude (and also the desire) of seeing oneself as a *spectator of everything* and the habit (and also the situation) of being seen as *spectators in any mode*.

Spectators of everything

“The whole world is a stage” is a saying and a reality that as old as it is harmless: “the whole world is my stage”, on the other hand, is a stronger statement connected to the appearance of the spectator. Indeed, being *spectators of everything* does not mean at times gazing with humility upon the marvels of creation, but starting to reverse the relationship between the I that looks and what is happening, to the extent that we encourage the wish and the illusion that basically everything was designed as a “stage” for us. As early as the seventeenth century a painter like Nicolas Poussin was writing “that it is wonderful, in this century when everything is happening, to stand in a corner and look at this whole creation that has been made available to us”. Thus there is a historical origin for what might be called the spectator mentality, or more precisely the spectator identity.⁴ The extent to which this identity was not at first seen as normal and was not assigned to everyone, but was in fact a choice and a social privilege, appears clearly at the beginning of the eighteenth century, when the term “spectator” began to be adopted as the title of the magazines that the link between information and politics was creating, and became the *nom de plume* for the modern journalist – the first and still rare “social spectator” by profession or even by vocation.

Joseph Addison’s magazine *The Spectator*, which began in 1711, shows us the first attempt to perfect the spectator as identity: Addison introduces himself to his readers as “the spectator *par excellence*”, the man who knows everybody but is recognized by nobody, who moves in the right social circles and meets influential people – the leading characters of social life – but stays strictly out of sight, in the wings and out of the action. By this very glorification of the separation between his observation and the world, “the spectator” becomes, or invents himself as, objective and trustworthy: he prides himself on not being tempted nor having the ambition to become an actor too.⁵

It is paradoxical that since then Spectator (initial capital!) has fast become the most prestigious role available to the social actor: the “spectator” is in fact the social actor who can enjoy the luxury of distancing himself from society so that he becomes the judge and in some cases the master of the spectacle that is the world.

It is paradoxical, but no longer at all surprising now, given that all of us (whether journalists or not) put on that “identity” incredibly often, when we consume the excessive number of shows that are part of our daily lives. If we consider, among all of them, only theatre shows, it is easy to see that for some time (or more precisely since the eighteenth century, the period when theatres were becoming widespread) we have been accustomed to and aware of being the natural judges of the staged event and the true owners of the place called the theatre – “the place of the seeing”. Furthermore, as spectators we are (and we know it) the authors of *success*, or the people who, by the approval they may show, literally vouch for the fact that a staged event really happened⁶ or otherwise.

It is also important, though nowadays this seems less so, to take the example of the theatre since it is here, in the physical encounter with the actor and the concrete

relationship there is with this space (which always features dressing-rooms, wardrobe, foyer, smoking room, etc.), that the spectator's identity is still confirmed and reinforced at the present time. And in any case it is "in the theatre" that this "identity" came into being and evolved:⁷ in a theatre that has not only clearly increased and educated its audience, but influenced public life and exported "the spectator" into the social arena, more and better than journalists and newspapers.

As we know, in the society of that period, "places of the seeing" had grown in number: all of them had been reinvented or remodelled in the image or imitation of the theatre, so that balconies, open-air or arcaded walks, men's clubs and cafés in squares were all opportunities to display prestige and encourage a liking for this passive activity of "seeing everything as a show", which fast became a synonym for "enjoyment".

Still today in French – as in many other languages – the "passive" activity of the spectator is expressed directly by the verb *jouir* (as opposed to *jouer*, the more tiring action of the actor). This sums up well the sense of that pleasure, which Poussin aspired to, of taking oneself out of the world in order to see it as available to us.

Spectators in every way

Nowadays we have lost the sense and even the memory of the elitist styles or privileged sites of the show: spectators have all been lumped together and yet flattened out, forming an *audience* that can now be configured at will, like a whole that includes everything. The Public (now transposed into the *audience*) is no longer a synonym but the very name of the social domain: more precisely, it is imprisoned in a such a wide family of spectators that every form and specific opportunity for social intercourse is transcended and in the end denied. "Being a member of the public" is, in other words, a condition and no longer an opportunity: a condition that does not increase or educate social relations any more, but blunts even the one between the spectator and the show, which motivated the creation and increased the size of the Public itself.

By becoming everyone precisely when the show is becoming everything, spectators are really the unconscious "actors" in a huge market of theatre, which contains them inside itself like variable functional dependants. It is true that the spectator's power still remains formally important to the extent that the smallest wavering or variation in the relevant Public is measured and assessed most attentively. It could be said that today more than yesterday spectators determine actors' and producers' lives or careers. But it is equally true that their "choices" are as frequent as they are manipulated and accidental. As we know and experience every day, these choices come down to an agitated finger randomly hitting the button on the (remote) control regulating a flow of (tele, that is, remote) visions that are ever more interchangeable, not to say identical.

This is a manoeuvre that is used to spend, without ever filling it, our increasing amount of "empty time", where we live without really being masters of the space. A manoeuvre that goes on until courage or fatigue makes us press the red button that turns the programme off. After this, time could finally become "free", but in fact, even if we have momentarily broken free from a compulsory entertainment, our situation as inhabitants of the market of show still continues to support and contain us (and not only in terms of statistics). We remain spectators even when we do not watch shows: we are counted as absent at the very most or, worse still, we are stigmatized as failing spectators.

But in the end is it really possible to be absent? The show society and the spectacle of society stop us from getting away. It is actually possible, but at the same time unthinkable, to turn our backs on the global panorama of the supply of show. It is also unthinkable that, once we are integrated into this culture, we might be able to hang inside ourselves this inert but never ineffective mechanism of creating a show.

A non-stop mass *activity* has obscured, if not eliminated, the taste and finally the identity of the aesthetic spectator. So we might ask ourselves whether and how the reception (and enjoyment) of some extraordinary spectacle is still possible and whether we are still able to alternate expectation and surprise, show curiosity and feel enchantment.

The demand and contradiction of contemporary "total spectators" is in fact this: beyond the steady uninterrupted flow of tele-visions and putting on shows by themselves, is there a chance of an exceptional discovery? And if there is, are the accumulated activity and experience of a contemporary media watcher an advantage to us, or do they become a handicap?

Consumption and "relationship"

If the situation is as we have thus far described, we should have all become "leading actor" spectators; however, we have all become "bit past actor", "extras" looking on.

This may be seen in particular in the theatre, but now even with a landscape: the oldest and most complex forms of looking or the simplest and most immediate ones require, among other things, innocence to be rediscovered (by person watching) and scarcity (of the object or spectacular event) to be brought back, whereas both are being sacrificed in favour of a blasé attitude and an abundance that were not been asked for. Once again, quantity kills the spectator's desire and hence capacity, at least when the spectacular event does not push itself like a product but offers itself as a process, that is, when it is not a product to be *consumed* but opens on to a relationship with the spectator.

This is what still happens in the theatre and in the past occurred for all forms and occasions of show: the spectator had to become aware of (and to a certain extent take responsibility for) the density and physical nature of the relationship. Before being measured as an effect of the show, this involvement had to be planned for among the reasons for the spectacular encounter. Indeed, going to theatre or looking at a painting or watching a sporting event was (and in fact is still today) a "custom" that it is not easy (and still less legitimate) to reduce to a form of "consumption". But once again consumer change is not so much disturbing because of the drop in status it seems to bring about (given that a complex art stoops below the level of a game, a journey is no longer an adventure but tourism, a culture interest is now just collecting), as it is important because of the drop in *demand* that does not have space or time under the current reign of ceaseless, unlimited *supply*. Being subject to the laws of this strange but all-powerful supply market, we resign ourselves to an obese scepticism, that is stuffed to the gills and has rid every spectator for evermore of intellectual curiosity and an innocent yearning for magic.

Perhaps we have not been reduced to this point, but something irrevocable has certainly happened, if we take a bird's eye view of the vast plateau of television that has for years been our home and school: the spectator and the spectacle have such a frequent and neighbourly connection that paradoxically time and space for a genuine

mutual relationship are precluded.⁸ Indeed the gap or change that I mentioned lies entirely in this: *nowadays becoming spectators is equivalent to saying we are giving up on any kind of relationship*. It is not simply “setting oneself outside the action” in order to enjoy the privilege or illusion of seeing the whole world as a spectacle. It is giving up on coming into play and also refusing to take part in the play by watching only: it is saying that basically nothing affects us and nothing touches us, and being satisfied with becoming an omnivorous passive terminal where every show is “put before a mass audience”. Thus, if we are *in every way spectators of everything*, there is no longer any reason why we should invest resources or thoughts that are not the automatic mechanisms of a bulimic receiver, which both devours and regurgitates everything that is put before its greedy apathy.

And so the spectators of the past have been replaced by modern consumers; their mode of looking has adapted to imitate a receiver’s decoding pattern and their selection method is like the buyer’s rights . . .

But still we are moved

Nevertheless, an unexpected absorption, a stronger emotional experience, an effect that influences us or a message that stimulates us to think – in short, the sensation of discovering that we are attentive moved spectators again, who are playing their age-old part with an intensity that is surprising and even exhausting – this still does take place. And each time it happens, there is a restoration, however accidental, of the *relationship* with the proper object of the spectacle. This occurs at least each time the show gets away from consuming production and regenerates itself as an exception that cannot be pigeonholed: on these occasions the spectators see themselves as out of the ordinary and outside their normal activity, and rediscover a desire and a need to have an individual identity. These are precisely the occasions when we are no longer dealing with spectators but supporters, fans, enthusiasts, addicts . . . and the show too comes under the heading of extraordinary event, marvellous vision, utter masterpiece . . . in a flight into superlatives that are not so much an expression of rational thought as of the need to hail a genuine success, the happening of a true spectacle, that is, an exception that for once does not prove the rule.

It is true that it is the show and not the spectator that has to perform the miracle. But in the presence of and within the miracle there always appears the relational element that turns out to be crucial for its “success” and significant in the transformation of spectators who are rediscovering their *custom* and turning away from *consumption*.

We do not and cannot know if what comes first is the result of emotion or the process of relating: the miracle of a show that involves and touches us translates into light and action that whirlwind of expectations and surprises where the spectators are forced to “play their part”. Certainly this can occur with all kinds of spectacle and spectacular occasion, but it echoes in the consciousness most especially in the theatre – the origin, if not the main representative, of the category of show that can be defined as “live”. Indeed, it is in those situations where the relationship with the spectacle is direct – or when the spectator is physically present in the place and time in which the actor is performing⁹ – that the relationship is necessary not only as an *effect* but also as a *cause* of the possible miracle of the spectacle.

It is true that, across the whole range of the media and their ever more sophisticated programmes, strong intense connections are formed that occur, as we know, with interactivity and virtual games. But paradoxically it is this very type of connection that kills the chance of "relationship". In the case of theatre, that is, "living spectacle" – and so even in the midst of the crowd in a stadium or at a rock concert or on a smaller scale listening to a song or story that is addressed only to us – *the relationship is based on the rule of fixed roles assigned and the illusion of an unbridgeable distance* that confine the spectators within the prison of their eyes.¹⁰ And it is precisely the poignant contradiction that opens up between their presence and their distance that is the stimulus for their continual important *action*: postures, tensions, attractions, and distractions, even if they are imperceptible, that indicate their vital participation in a relationship which, in the current context, changes from being anachronistic into being "exceptional".

Thus the "theatre relationship" can sometimes free us from our monotonous and colourless situation as "social spectators". Similarly in everyone's experience, alongside the ordinary mode of feeling like tourists and consumers of spectacles (books, recordings and pictures), there also exists still the extraordinary mode of the "living spectator". The role is not always pleasant, but it may be called passionate if we also include among the *passions* the boredom, the psychological upset, the physical embarrassment experienced in the relational situation of the "living spectacle" when on the other side, in other words, onstage, the "miracle" is not performed. And it has to be recognised that often the miracle of art or performance does not take place.

It is at that very moment that we discover that the "relationship" is not due only to the enjoyment or the involvement created by an exceptional show, but above all the exception of a behaviour that is activated, always and in every way, by those spectacular languages and events that cannot do otherwise (and primarily the theatre). It is at that very moment that we discover – regardless of the spectacle and its degree of beauty and effectiveness – that we are all torn between the rule or routine of the social spectator and the experience of the *exceptional* spectator.

The art of the spectator

The exceptional nature of spectators is not necessarily measured (as I have already mentioned) at an extraordinary spectacle, but by the change in both the substance and the awareness of their reception process. *Enjoying a show is not like consuming a product and still less can it be reduced to or restated as the reception of a message.* If spectator is not synonymous with consumer, it is even less like addressee of a communication.

It is worth stressing this distinction because our culture is a culture of communication in the sense that for years it has been struggling to order and interpret everything in the format and style of a message: the basic diagram containing on the one hand a producer and on the other a receiver (sending messages to one another) has become first the shorthand and then the metaphor we apply to every cultural area and phenomenon. So we have got used to translating every experience into information, looking for the signified in every symbol, extracting the content from every form: this is the way the people I have labelled "social spectators" work, in the end finding their definition and satisfaction in the role of *receiver*.

But it does not happen like this in every case or for everybody, and – despite what is believed and experienced – in this age of dominant mass communications, the reality or the model of “communicating” is not in a position to absorb within it the reception experience of “exceptional spectators”. This is exactly where they are different from social spectators: on one side there is the cultural tourism of the theatre season-ticket holders, the readers of the dailies, those who listen to non-stop piped music, those who visit and photograph all the landscapes and museums . . . and on the other side, in the far distance, we think of the phenomenon of the show and the act of enjoying it. It is not a matter of adding a critical quality or enhancing intellectual involvement, but a different reception experience or perhaps a different interpretation of the same experience. An interpretation of the “spectacular enjoyment” as distinct from the rational and emotional resumé of the “communication” (that doubtless occurred). An interpretation that attempts to hold and savour the moment and the nexus of the relationship that was created between ourselves and the show: an interpretation that does not “decode” the message or analyse the operation of receiving, but instead opens itself up to the ambivalence and vagueness of a perceptual phenomenon that involves and changes us.

It is not a question of discovering and adding new disciplinary approaches to the already overabundant activities of the psychology, semiology and sociology of theatre; rather of forgetting them in order to reconstruct faithfully the loss and incomprehension, the small portion of otherness and mystery contained in the experience of the “living spectator”. It is encountering without dominating, measuring without understanding, touching without seeing, the shadowy areas and indecipherable feelings that have made the relationship happy and created the show’s enchantment within us. Finally, in the obscurity and indefiniteness of the encounter with the show, before normal understanding, there is value given to the exceptional situation of being “taken over and taken up with” the show.

We will feel, with a certain unease, that all that is left – after this relationship and enchantment – bears no resemblance to the phenomenon lived through and experienced during the show. There is neither memory in the spectator for it, nor story in the show maybe, but *memory* and *story* do not have a central or “vital” role during the spectator’s experience in the theatre. We will realize that this experience cannot be recalled or defined without recourse to ambiguous and overblown words such as the spectator’s *imaginary* or *creativity*. Better still, we should refer to the “art” of the spectators, not in order to praise their imperceptible and individual work or their meticulous poetic effort, but simply because of the need to make their reactions become part of the same liminal aura where the spectacular event usually arises. In the end, spectators take on the role of interface between the creativity of the author and the actor. In the last analysis we can say everything that happens in an exceptional spectacular relationship is an art – or like an art – regardless of the (enormous) differences and (very different) responsibilities that distinguish the actor from the spectator, the work of art from attending to it, the event from watching it.

In this case the spectator’s art does not consist of a “savoir-faire”, even if it is important and difficult to “know how to watch, listen, imagine . . .”. Before all that what matters is the ability to “stay in the art”, that is, in practice being involved and theoretically being complicit with the work of art that comes to us in the form of a play and, to tell the truth, only in that form.

The spectacle of art then is the exclusive domain of the spectator, just as *the art of the spectacle* is the creation and domination of the author and the actor. If the spectacle is indeed the effect on the spectator of a staged event or a published, composed, painted work, the spectacle of art is much more than its intrinsic "communication" and, if you will, much less than its effective "transmission".

Each "artwork" aspires to its spectacle, even though it is not to be confused with it: the forms it manipulates and the contents it feeds on tend – truly "in the end" – to produce a nameless, meaningless effect. So its spectacle is not only the first thing that obviously arrives to the people it is addressed to, but also its *highest and most other* function compared with communication, instruction and entertainment itself.

"Spectacle" does not mean anything else or refer to the other because it is itself the Other of every "work" (of literature, theatre, painting, music . . .): the work is entitled or dedicated to the *heroic deeds* of . . . , *the person and work* of . . . , *the myth* of . . . , *the true story* of . . . , the spectacle is a flight) betraying each title, escaping its own language at a point where the whole work dissolves into an enchantment without meaning.

The spectators sit at that point. From that point on their most authentic (and truly primary) identity is created. And their "art" (if it exists) consists essentially in the fact of staying at that point as long as possible. The spectators' duty and desire is to keep themselves in the precarious balance of a confused enjoyment, being able to give themselves up to the event but also take advantage of the wind blowing from that quarter: stronger or weaker, continuous or to be continued, the dialogue with the spectacle is difficult and the magic may die. This too is put down to a "relationship" that may turn out to be disappointing or faulty but will never be neglected or denied.

Indeed we have to realize that, apart from that rare moment of balance, we come back to *communication* and that – before that point – we are still in *consumption*. So the spectator has no other choice but to stay "related" and that possibility defend "with art", even if it does not last long and has no purpose.

Furthermore, it is pointless to keep for oneself – or store up for "afterwards" – a magic moment to "reduce to reasonable explanation", to "commit to memory": for the spectator what is better is confident abandon and loyal pursuit of the spectacular effect to the limit of the possible, that is to say, of enjoyment.

Seeing sounds and hearing visions

For centuries the theatre was the school and gymnasium of this "art": there, because of its very status, the work of art was to be sacrificed immediately and utterly to its *effect*, at the cost of neglecting too much and too often the solidity and profundity of any *cause*. For this reason there are more failures and pretences than masterpieces in the theatre, to the extent that the signified of the word "fiction" slides over into the category of deceit and lies. It is true that in the theatre there are not many shows that reach the magic point, but there are even fewer spectators who know how to take on and cultivate this art. However, in some way or another place, all of them have experienced it and can remember and recognize the arrival of this point, this high top: it is when perception is complete and absorbs us, when the actor and the spectator or the stage and the auditorium seem to

merge, when ordinary senses multiply and move around. Then we realize we are seeing sounds and hearing visions.

I do not wish to exaggerate but simply go to the extreme: it is an extremism that is needed to stop us being swallowed up by compulsory consumption or official communication. And we do not want to banish from our own experience and memory every show that has not reached this level. There cannot be any *a priori* excommunication. Also, because we are talking about spectators and their “art” and not the art of those who create the spectacle, and it is a good idea to establish what the *maximum* is that spectators are still aiming for (it is no good denying it). However, this maximum is in fact *the minimum* that will satisfy them, although it is possible to reach this minimum-maximum through works and events of uncertain technique and inferior quality. There are no ideal models or objective measures: as we know, taste is personal and beyond debate. Everyone must certainly have come across novels that you are afraid will end too soon, storytellers who should not stop, music that carries you away and songs that hypnotize you, scenes that hold you captive, and actors who make you jealous . . . They are not always great artists or unarguable masterpieces, but there is always – for you – something that exists “outside the performance”.¹¹ There is something that frees us from the duty to understand and takes us far away from the work of “decoding” (*communication*), while prevents us from taking quick possession or easy metabolising (*consumption*).

Outside communication and before consumption there is only room left for a point. A vanishing point through which the spectator leaves behind the ordinary, the everyday, the social. Otherwise what spectacle is it?

The spectacle appears when this point is reached and the spectators recognize themselves as such when they search in whatever way for this same point. A point where seeing becomes listening and listening seems like seeing, a point where each of us realizes that the receiving role has been transcended, the consumer role has lost its frontier and its power. We are spectators, *malgré nous*: captivated, drawn in, directed and consenting without understanding, knowing, receiving anything any more. At last.

The rest – or what is left “after” the show – is not a subject to be discussed or rejected: there will just be a rich booty, an incredible legacy, a high-quality pedagogical, political, moral harvest. But this “rest” will still be only in the memory of those who have *already* been “exceptional” spectators.

And in any case the “rest” has nothing to do with the show. “*The rest is silence*”, Hamlet says, and does not see any more of the play that has all along bewitched us. All along that the forms and meanings of the *work*, story and characters, actions and words, sounds and colours, were transcended and “subverted” by their own *spectacle*.

Piergiorgio Giacchè
University of Perugia

Translated from the French by Jean Burrell

Notes

1. E. Goffman (1973), *La mise en scène de la vie quotidienne: 1. La présentation de soi*; 2. *Les relations en public* (Paris, Editions de Minuit).
2. Most recent French edition: G. Debord (1992), *La société du spectacle* (Paris, Gallimard).

3. I have borrowed from Eugenio Barba the term “extra-quotidian”, by which he means the area and extra-economic regime of the actor’s art; see E. Barba (1993), *Le canoë de papier. Traité d’anthropologie théâtrale, Bouffonnerie*, no. 28–29.
4. P. Giacchè (1988), *Antropologia e cultura teatrale. Note per un aggiornamento dell’approccio socio-antropologico al teatro*, in *Teatro e storia*, 4, no. I, April, pp. 23–50.
5. J. Addison (1982), *Lo spettatore* (Turin, Einaudi).
6. In Italian language the same term “*successo*” means the success of the show and its happening.
7. On the spectator’s identity, origins and history, see P. Giacchè (1995), *Nostalgia del teatro e simulazione della piazza*, in D. Scafoglio & M. Vitale (eds.), *La piazza nella storia: eventi, liturgie, rappresentazioni* (Naples, Ed. scientifiche italiane), pp. 201–254.
8. The definition of theatre as a “relationship between actor and spectator”, reformulated by Jerzy Grotowski (*Vers un théâtre pauvre*, Paris, La Cité, 1971), is in the end the basis for all the theories and practices in the contemporary theatre; what is at issue of course is a direct physical relationship that separates the theatre from all the forms of media spectacle.
9. It should be noted that, since the arrival and dominance of the mass media, “live spectacle” is defined not by the fact that it is performed by an actor but by the fact that it is happening before spectators who are present.
10. On the conditions that govern spectators’ behaviour in the theatre to the extent of telling them precise positions of the body, see P. Giacchè (1991), *Lo spettatore partecipante. Contributi per un’antropologia del teatro* (Milan, Guerini).
11. “Going outside the performance” and seeking a “theatre of the senses” may also be the actors’ aim, as all Carmelo Bene’s research and work demonstrates. See P. Giacchè (1997), *Carmelo Bene. Antropologia di una macchina attoriale* (Milan, Bompiani).