

## Editorial Introduction

Martin Barker, Aberystwyth University, UK

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### Abstract

From its first planning around 2001 to its launch issue (2003), the fundamental purpose of *Participations* has been to provide a unified space and forum within which a very diverse range of interests in audience and reception topics, questions, methods and locations could come together. Its founders always hoped it would, by virtue of being a free-to-use Journal, encourage those who find issues of audiences scary and threatening (it is remarkable how frequently this one shows up), or difficult to conceive, design and conduct (a surprising number, even among scholars established in other fields), or simply hard to resource for teaching. And for that reason (among plenty of others) we have always stressed the virtues of good *explanations of relevance*, *clarity* of writing, and *explicitness about methods and concepts*. Our whole editorial process is designed to encourage these. This is why, very unusually, we opted for a system of open refereeing, because we hoped – and have indeed found – that discouraging anonymity would at the same time encourage supportive criticism. This has often enabled young scholars, making their first forays into publishing, to feel helped and developed. But we also hoped that we would attract the work of major names and established scholars in the field, and that has to some extent has been achieved.

This issue, our 14th, displays exactly the kind of mix I am thinking of. [Shaku Banaji](#), whose two books on Asian audiences have been so important in addressing empirically a series of topics about cross-cultural reception, and migratory audiences, here engages with the reception in Britain and India of the hit film *Slumdog Millionaire*. [Richard Butsch](#), whose books on the history of audiences and on the role of media in public spheres have shifted debates and understanding in very substantive ways, closely addresses one aspect within these broad domains: how people thought and worried about theatre audiences in Britain from Shakespeare's time onward. Two younger Dutch scholars, [Nathalie Claessens](#) & [Alexander Dhoest](#), explore the largely ignored area of comedy audiences, looking at responses by Flemish audiences to TV shows in different cultural registers. [Julian McDougall](#), an established researcher in educational fields, turns his attention to issues raised

by an issue of real relevance to young audiences, the issues of new media and how a TV programme like *The Wire* is mediated through online chat contexts. [Jeanette Monaco](#), who recently completed a PhD into responses to quality TV series such as *The Sopranos*, here draws on her experience of her doctoral research to engage with the debates about the values and problems of autoethnography. [Esteban del Rio](#), situated very differently within American communication studies, and also with particular interest in Latina/o issues, takes *Participations* for the first time into the field of reception of museum exhibits – in his case, the *Americanos* exhibit which toured from the Smithsonian to Los Angeles.

This kind of mix is exactly what we are for, and I hope that everyone in our expanding circuit of readers and users finds stimulus and challenge in this issue.

**Biographical Note**

Contact Martin: [mib@aber.ac.uk](mailto:mib@aber.ac.uk)