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Particip@tions Volume 1, Issue 2 (May 2004)

Introduction to Issue 2

Martin Barker (Editor, *Particip@tions*) and Ernest Mathijs (Chair of Editorial Board, *Particip@tions*)

The second issue of a new Journal is always a testing one – has the enthusiasm that helped the Journal's launch continued? Does it appear that there is the basis for an on-going Journal? We hope this issue confirms not only feeling that the broad field of audience and reception studies *needs* a Journal specifically devoted to its development, but also our optimism that this is the time and the manner in which to launch it. In this issue we carry a number of important pieces, valuable both for their individual qualities and for their range. All of these have in common that they challenge our current notions of what an 'audience' is.

We are delighted to publish Matthew Reason's essay exploring audiences' responses to a theatrical performance, in which he addresses the meanings of 'liveness' in theatre. Reason uses the findings of a small research project to explore the position taken by Philip Auslander on the changing meanings of 'liveness' in a 'mediated age'. This is important in itself – there is just too little research, in our view, into audiences for theatrical and performative events – but also for the sideways questions it raises about what we might take for granted in other contexts: the meanings of 'mediation' in other contexts. In what senses is a cinema screening 'live', for instance?

Karen Qureshi's essay raised a number of interesting issues for us. A fascinating exploration in itself of the nature of self-presentation among young Pakistani-origin men and women living in Edinburgh, Qureshi has chosen to describe the relations involved as ones of performance and audience-ing. This does raise important questions about the range and boundaries of our field. We think they are worth raising, and we hope it will raise some responses and debate.

Fiona Carruthers explores fan fiction communities around *The X-Files* and Japanese Anime on the Internet, and proposes that we can learn something interesting by considering fan fiction hackers as a particular kind of audience. Her essay uses the sharp encounters between hackers and their opponents to draw into view some of the characteristics of this kind of community, and the rules by which such a community implicitly operates.

Ellen Hijmans' essay is valuable, again, not only for its own intrinsic values, but also because of its use of a sometimes neglected tradition of investigation and theorisation. Hijmans reports her research into adolescent Dutch girls' responses to the teenage

magazine *YES*, and uses the resources of a symbolic interactionist approach to display and make sense of a series of distinctive patterns in the responses which her research discovered. She argues that the magazine can function importantly as a mediator between individual girls and their gendered cultural position, through becoming a Significant Other.

In issue #1, we published a commentary by Stephen Kline on the *Amici* Court submission in the USA in which a group of academics set out their reasons for objecting to the 'effects' tradition of work. Kline unpicked and questioned these arguments, and the implied policy positions of those who made the *Amici* submission. We published this both because it was important in its own right, and because we believe that there badly needs to be an open and continuing debate about the issues involved. In this issue, therefore, we publish a response to Kline by Martin Barker, writing in a personal capacity. Barker challenges Kline's claims that the issue is one about strengths or weaknesses of evidence, arguing that there is a fundamental clash of frameworks – which in themselves have political implications.

In this issue we carry again a number of reviews of recent books about audiences. We hope, in due course, to begin to build and make available a substantial bibliography of published work in audience and reception studies. This will not be an easy task. We would like to invite scholars and researchers around the world to help us in this. Would you be willing to send us any working lists which you have built up of substantive work on audiences and reception – the history, theory and practice of such research – so that we can assemble a strong working list?

We hope to get our readers' feedback on this issue, because of the important and challenging questions we believe it raises.

