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Particip@tions Volume 2, Issue 2 (December 2005)

### Introduction to Volume 2 Issue 2

Ernest Mathijs (Chair of Editorial Board)

Welcome to Issue #2 of Volume 2 of *Participations*, the last one of 2005. Fitting with the season this introduction offers a trinity. First, there are the new essays. This issue harbours three essays, separated by the to-be-expected different approaches, methodologies and theoretical concerns, but held together by their commitment to stretching the *uses* of audience and reception studies beyond just observing audiences and receptions and, for instance, making them relevant for analysing texts.

The first essay is the first one to be published in the journal by someone of our own board, our editor no less (although he did pen a reply to one previous contribution) – and so now you know why he isn't writing this preface. We have thought hard and long about, and waited long before accepting submissions from our own stable, but now that *Participations* seems to have some gravitas we feel confident enough to submit the board's own work to the full, hard scrutiny of our referees. Martin Barker's essay, '*Loving and Hating Straw Dogs: the Meanings of Audience Responses to a Controversial Film*' uses contemporary audience responses to screenings of *Straw Dogs* to formulate a reply to those studies of the film assuming or indeed proclaiming audience behaviours about the film in general (as if they were timeless). Barker's research will appear in two issues of the journal, partly because its length required it, partly because its second part can be seen as a separate attempt, and quite a new and challenging one, to have the results of an empirical audience study inform a reconsideration of the film text itself – of its meanings and implications.

The second essay is Ramaswami Harindranath's *Ethnicity and cultural difference: some thematic and political issues on global audience research*. It departs from the observation that two streams in audience studies, a 'cultural imperialism' strand and a 'diasporic identities' one, take ethnicity to be a core delineator for types and classifications, imbued with ready equipped meaning. Harindranath argues against this, insisting instead that when considering the ethnicity of audiences, the transnationalism of migrating audiences requires audience studies to move beyond specific locales when analysing the reception of mediated texts.

The third essay also addresses film, and it also pertains to use audience studies to add to the pleasure of the text. In Celestine Woo's essay '*Communal Heritage vs. Crucible of Honor: The Function of Audience in Olivier's and Branagh's Henry V*' the text's

constructions of the audience, invitations to join in or warnings to keep clear of added meanings, are analyzed in two cinema versions of William Shakespeare's *Henry V*, one by Laurence Olivier, the other by Kenneth Branagh. A solidly entrenched discipline with set topics, Shakespeare studies recently sees itself confronted with audience and reception perspectives, and this essay is a sign of that development. Woo uses the notion of interpretive communities, in Stanley Fish's sense, as an audience notion upon whom both directors confer significant privilege and responsibility, as a mediation for meaning.

Second, there is news too. Simultaneously with the decision by the board to close the discussion on the regularity of appearances per year, and setting it at two per year, *Participations* has now received its ISSN number. Its ISSN 1749-8716. Furthermore, it is with some pride that we announce that *Participations* has come to an agreement with the editors of *Intensities*, the online Journal of Cult Media to take over their archive and maintain the web presence of their past issues. For a range of reasons *Intensities* feel they are not able to continue their run, but rather than let their legacy go to waste *Participations* is making room for it on its own web space. *Intensities* can, for the moment, still be accessed at its own address but it will be incorporated it into *Participations* soon. While never really exclusively concentrating on audience and reception studies *Intensities* has, in the nearly 5 years of its existence, produced a lot of work that shows a decidedly audience and reception studies inspiration and influence, including work on previewings of *The Lord of the Rings*, a study of the reception of *Playboy*, and an interview with Henry Jenkins.

And third, there is work in progress. The announcements made in the previous editorial introduction, that we are working on a rethinking, reshaping and broadening of the editorial board, and that there are plans to instigate a debate across publishers and disciplines about the needs and possibilities of online journals, have become more concrete. Some of you may have seen the email message to the academic community aimed to drum up interest and create some sort of momentum for discussions of online journals. The reinvigoration of the board, too, has been an ongoing process. More news to follow; watch this space, as they say.

Contact (by e-mail): [Ernest Mathijs](mailto:Ernest.Mathijs@participations.org)

