

**Abstracts**

### **MAKING SENSE OF A MULTI-PROTAGONIST FILM: AUDIENCE RESPONSE RESEARCH AND ROBERT ALTMAN'S *SHORT CUTS* (1993)**

M. Mar Azcona

This article explores the ways in which some of the unconventional narrative strategies used in multi-protagonist movies, namely, the multiplicity of characters, the abandonment of conventional notions of causality and the restriction of spectator involvement in the film may affect spectators' comprehension of the narrative. My evidence comes from an audience research investigation on Robert Altman's *Short Cuts* (1993). It attempts to show both the potentials and limitations of audience response study, which should not be seen as a substitute but rather as a supplement to scholarly theorization and analysis.

**Key words:** Audience response studies, structured questionnaire, multi-protagonist film, Robert Altman, *Short Cuts*, the structure of sympathy.

### **IN THE NAME OF THE PUBLIC: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC APPROACH TO THE TASTES AND HABITS OF FILM AUDIENCES**

M. Mar Azcona, Virginia Luzón and Juan Tarancón

Until very recently audience research was a neglected area in film studies. Critics tended to take for granted that they could read the minds of the implied spectator(s). However, cultural studies paved the way for a serious consideration of individual spectators' actual readings. This paper, which is the continuation of a previous study, seeks to foreground the opinions of real spectators in our

particular geographical context. In our previous and current investigation we made use of sociological research methods in order to obtain reliable data about cinema habits and tastes. This paper presents the results obtained through a self-administered questionnaire distributed over a four-month period among three different age groups of the population of Zaragoza.

**Key words:** Film audience research, response studies, ethnography, cinema-going habits, cinema tastes, cinema genres.

### **STEPHEN SPENDER, THE 1930S, AND SPANISH WRITING**

David Callahan

146 During the Spanish Civil War, the English literary world constructed important meanings about itself through its response to the conflict, a war in which the future of European Writing itself was being decided. One of the overlooked facets of this response involves the reading of and responding to Spanish writers on the part of the literary worlds for which the war was so significant. At the forefront of this encounter with Spanish writers in Britain was Stephen Spender, whose ensuing processing of what he found constitutes the most significant mediation of Spanish literature during the duration of the Civil War. This article examines Spender's articulation of Spanish writing both in terms of the English literary world of the time and his own poetic development. Particular attention is paid to his response to and translations of Lorca. While Spender's contacts, appreciation and translations of Spanish writers did not occasion noticeable alterations in his own work, but rather the solidifying of his beliefs about the nature of poetry and the role of the poet, the examination of this confluence of the poetry and politics of the 1930s reveals the stress points between a supposedly European politics of literary witness and the difficulties in absorbing literary traditions with which English writers were not familiar.

**Key words:** Stephen Spender, Spanish Civil War, Spanish literature, Lorca, reception.

### **READING ACROSS CULTURES: TWO STORIES FROM PAPUA NEW GUINEA ON ARRANGED MARRIAGES**

Daniela Cavallaro

After providing a brief sociological introduction to the custom of arranged marriages in Papua New Guinea, this article analyzes two stories by PNG writer Sally-Ann Bagita: "Regret Not" (1973) and "The Reluctant Bride" (1974). The

young men and women protagonists of these stories have no choice but to accept a marriage arranged by their families. Focusing particularly on the two female characters, the stories show how each reacts to the same initial situation in very different ways. The article claims that in these two stories Sally-Ann Bagita on the one hand appears to critique the tradition of arranged marriage. On the other hand, however, she also seems to reveal that the problems are not so much in the custom itself, as in the modern, Westernized understanding of it.

**Key words:** South Pacific literature, Papua New Guinea literature, Papua New Guinea women writers, Sally-Ann Bagita, arranged marriages.

### **THE HUMAN MOMENT: SELF, OTHER AND SUSPENSION IN JOHN BANVILLE'S *GHOSTS***

Brendan McNamee

The protagonist of *Ghosts* is a man isolated from the world around him, and from his own sense of self, by guilt for the crime of murder, but he is imbued also with a fascination for painting –one painting in particular– that seems occasionally to offer release from this condition. Examining how these two elements are intertwined in the novel, this reading suggests that ethics and imagination may be inseparable, and that both may be intrinsic, perhaps even anterior, to the kind of self that the protagonist here longs for –a self that belongs integrally to the world and feels the reality of otherness. The content of the novel, it is argued, is reflected in the form in a way that allows this theme to be enacted. Exploring the ways in which painting versus narrative can be seen as analogous to imagination versus time, the argument is made that the tension between the two is resolved through the idea of anticipation, of suspension, and that this serves both as a basis for art and as a tentative bridge between the reality the protagonist lives in and the one he longs for.

**Key words:** Self, other, suspension, ethics, imagination.

### **THE OLD ENGLISH POEM "A VAMPIRE OF THE FENS": A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL GHOST**

Eugenio Olivares Merino

Dudley Wrights' book *Vampires and Vampirism* (1914) might well be said to be the first serious attempt in English to compile vampire stories and reports from all over the world, as well as to elucidate how far a certain amount of scientific truth might underlie these accounts. In this work, the author makes a statement that has

passed unnoticed for both Anglosaxonists and vampire hunters: ‘There is an Anglo-Saxon poem with the title *A Vampyre of the Fens* (186). The veracity of this claim is demolished by the fact that students and scholars of Old English literature well know that *such a poem does not exist*. Besides, the dearth of vampiric literature in England before William of Malmesbury, William of Newburgh or Walter Map is widely attested. Finally, it is significant that the term ‘vampyre’ was not used in English until 1734, as reported by the *Oxford English Dictionary*. The evidence that refutes Wrights affirmation is, as we can see, overwhelming, and yet there is some truth in his words.

**Key words:** Vampyre, Theory of Reception, *Beowulf*, Victorian England.

**STRICTLY BALLROOM (1992): DEPARTURE FROM TRADITIONAL ANGLO-AUSTRALIAN DISCOURSES OR VEILED CONFIRMATION OF OLD NATIONAL-ENCOURAGEMENT MECHANISMS?**

Olga Seco Salvador

148

This article explores the ways in which the Australian feature *Strictly Ballroom* (Baz Luhrmann, 1992) represents on the screen inter-ethnic conflicts between the dominant Australian culture and the Spanish minority. Although the 1990s represent increased interest in the multicultural reality of the country, Luhrmann’s film proves to lack specificity in its treatment of ethnic issues, which remain repressed or submerged under cover of a more ‘politically correct’ attitude that favours the official ‘Austro-centric’ discourse. I will try to demonstrate that, despite the importance of the female Spanish character for the development and resolution of the film’s main conflicts, *Strictly Ballroom*’s narrative ends up by enhancing over and above everything else, the English and Irish white male values that have traditionally defined the ‘national type’ of Australian culture.

**Key words:** Australia, cinema, Baz Luhrmann, inter-ethnic, identity, discourse.