ROUTLEDGE

HISTORY ON TELEVISION

ANN GRAY
and ERIN BELL

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In recent years non-fiction history programmes have flourished on television. This interdisciplinary study of history programming identifies and examines different genres employed by producers and tracks their commissioning, production, marketing and distribution histories.

With comparative references to other European nations and North America, the authors focus on British history programming over the last two decades and analyse the relationship between the academy and media professionals. They outline and discuss often-competing discourses about how to 'do' history and the underlying assumptions about who watches history programmes.

History on Television considers recent changes in the media landscape, which have affected to a great degree how history in general, and whose history in particular, appears onscreen. Through a number of case studies, using material from interviews by the authors with academic and media professionals, the role of the 'professional' historian and that of media professionals – commissioning editors and producer/directors – as mediators of historical material and interpretations is analysed, and the ways in which the 'logics of television' shape historical output are outlined and discussed.

Building on their analysis, Ann Gray and Erin Bell ask if history on television fulfils its potential to be a form of public history through offering, as it does, a range of interpretations of the past originating from, or otherwise including, those not based in the academy. Through consideration of the representation, or absence, of the diversity of British identity – gender, ethnicity and race, social status and regional identities – the authors substantially extend the scope of existing scholarship into history on television.

History on Television will be essential reading for all those interested in the complex processes involved in the representation of history on television.

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PREFACE

Beginning in 2004, and funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) www.ahrc.ac.uk standard Research Grant Scheme from 2006, the 'Televising History 1995–2010' research project enabled in-depth and sustained research drawing on a range of disciplinary areas and approaches – cultural studies, history, sociology and television studies – to be undertaken into the development of factual history programming on television, from the mid-1990s to the present. This allowed us to identify key developments in the representation of the past on television and to relate programming to broader changes in the national and international broadcasting landscape in the 1990s as well as to a seemingly insatiable public response to history, leading us to consider how television programming is, and might be, public history.

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During the course of our research we have presented our work at a number of conferences, including those held by the International Association for Media History (IAMHIST), the International Society for Cultural History (ISCH), the Centre for Media History, Aberystwyth, the Women's History Network (WHN) and workshops held by the Istituto Parri Bologna 'Towards a European TV History', and received stimulating and useful feedback during the ensuing discussions for which we are extremely grateful. In organizing a number of conferences at the University of Lincoln which focused on history on television, we were fortunate enough to attract many wonderful scholars, too numerous to mention individually, who generously presented their work and engaged in discussion and debate which has informed this book. Our thanks also go to Vicky Peters, Laura Mothersole and Michael Strang at Routledge for seeing it through, and to our anonymous reviewer for their insightful comments. Finally our thanks, as ever, go to Florian Gleisner and Nick Gray.

INTRODUCTION

The majority of people in the UK, mainland Europe and the US gain at least some of their knowledge about the past through television. Although history programming has been an important element of factual production since the earliest days of television, the mid-1990s saw a notable increase in history programming across terrestrial and satellite channels in the UK, a trend which was reflected in the US and other parts of Europe, and also in other sites of public discourse including the National Curriculum, and discussions over the relevance of history to political debate and to national and international policy, such as the work of the History and Policy Group (2002–present).[1] At a more general level Andreas Huyssen noted this history boom, and especially the role of the media in enabling the reproduction and representation of the past, commenting that '[t]he past has become part of the present in ways simply unimaginable in earlier centuries' (Huyssen 2003: 1). Huyssen draws our attention to the voracious nature of forms of representation in trawling the past for evocative and powerful content which, in the age of multiple channels and platforms is an extremely valuable commodity. It seems to us, therefore, that a pressing question, and one that this book seeks to answer, is 'How do we get the kind of history television that we do?'.

Our interdisciplinary approach, from television and cultural studies and historical studies respectively, acknowledges and seeks to explore the complex relationships between the different layers and practices of mediation of the past which are activated within and across different sites of knowledge production. These are the television industry itself, the academy, popular forms of communication and other related cultural sites all of which interpret and produce representations of the past. Our combination of disciplinary knowledge and methods therefore interrogates these practices and in particular their role and function in public history. Similarly, and at a more detailed level, when asking how television 'does history' we have drawn on insights from historiography in order to analyse how programmes present history, and what modes of engagement they invite from the viewer.

Our focus on history programming from the beginning of its renaissance on British television in 1995[2] provides a prism through which the conditions of the development and expansion of this category of programming can be rendered visible, or at least its contours can be identified. This brief history is one of a dynamic proliferation of forms, genres, formats and hybrids which is interesting in itself as evidence of television's 'churn rate'[3] but also of the relationships between independents and broadcasters in a highly competitive market. Similarly, in the academy, tracing developments in historiography and critically grounding the programmes within this contextual framework enabled us to reflect on the nature of the circulation of public knowledge about the past through the mediation of television.

Our analyses of programmes within the broad category of 'factual' history, of the processes and practice of commissioning, the perceptions of audiences held by broadcasters and producers and, to some extent, viewer responses, suggest specific tendencies. These are the construction of versions of the nation and national identity which in turn relate in complex ways through, for example, inclusion and exclusion of sensitivity towards gender, class, race and ethnicity. In coming to an understanding of the place of television within the construction and operation of 'public history', our imperative was therefore to question the versions of the past presented, from which perspective and point of view.

One of the earliest scholars to note the problematic nature of history on television was Colin McArthur (1978) whose short monograph, working within the theoretical framework of the time, employed Stuart Hall's analysis of the professional notion of 'good television' which was characterized by, for example, genre recognition, the sense of immediacy and transparency which suppresses the technical components of production, the perceived need for simplicity rather than complexity and the related use of the narrator which dominated historical programming at the time. McArthur demonstrated how all of these aspects mediated and shaped representations of the past towards the ideologically dominant historical narratives. It is certainly the case that history on film has received more scholarly attention than has been paid to history (e.g. Harper 1994, Higson 2003, Sobchack 1996, Sorlin 1980, Rosenstone 1995). This could be explained by the more established, and respectable, field of film studies within the academy and also the tendency in television studies to analyse more popular and fictional genres as against factual and documentary material. Another long-running and well-established seam of critical research is that associated with the International Association for Media and History, an organization of film makers, broadcasters, archivists and scholars dedicated to historical enquiry into film, radio, television, and related media. The organization also publishes a journal *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* and runs an annual conference. *The Historian, Television and Television History* (2001), a collection edited by Gordon Roberts and Philip M. Taylor, then both active members of IAMHIST, sought to legitimize the historical study of television as well as the use of visual archives in historical research and includes contributions which examine the production and analysis of specific history programmes.

The first publication motivated principally by the 'history boom' of the late-1990s was historian David Cannadine's edited collection *History and the Media*, published in

2004, with contributions from historians involved in television and media professionals themselves. This collection came out of a conference of the same name which provided a forum for discussion and debate about how history was represented from both the historian's and media producer's perspective. This was a welcome development but the collection, and conference, lacked contributions from television and media scholars whose intervention would have been to focus on television as a medium for analysis. As an example of such an approach, Amy Holdsworth examines the role and nature of television and its forms of memory. Many examples are used, including those taken from fictional genres and some documentary genres pertinent to our study (Holdsworth 2011). Further, Dafydd Sills-Jones's as yet unpublished PhD thesis *History Documentary on UK Terrestrial Television 1982–2002* (University of Aberystwyth 2009) should also be mentioned. Sills-Jones, through archive research and interviews with media professionals, seeks to demonstrate a link between the changes in the political economy of television during this period and the form of the history documentary. He argues that the period saw a shift from public service values towards a market-driven system. Our previous publications have also sought to remedy this deficit.

In addition, in 2009 two important books were published which examine, to a greater or lesser extent, history on television and both of which are relevant to our study. The historian Emma Hanna focuses on representations of the First World War on contemporary British television. Like us, she is interested in a range of different kinds of programmes and also some elements of their production. In particular she pays attention to the role of war veterans in documentary making, raising pertinent questions about the problems of relying on personal memory and how this unstable mode is used to shape the programme's narratives (Hanna 2009). The second is literary scholar Jerome de Groot's impressive and timely *Consuming History: Historians and Heritage in Contemporary Popular Culture* in which he looks at a wide range of forms of representing the past across popular culture and in so doing expands the notion of what constitutes 'public history' (de Groot 2009).

Robert Dillon's book *History on British Television: Constructing Nation, Nationality and Collective Memory* published in 2010 usefully charts the rise of television history as a popular form, focusing his analysis on themes of national identity. Peter J. Beck (2012) has also provided us with a valuable study of how communicators of the past present history, from the academy through to television via the historical novel. Hanna, de Groot, Holdsworth and Sills-Jones are all aware of the significance of the production context to the finished televisual product and we take their cues further in our study. However, we develop this in ways rarely attempted directly in studies of history on television. Specifically, we do so with the intention of addressing the ways in which deep-seated attitudes towards gender, class and ethnicity are present in assumptions about knowledge, authority and legitimacy.

We therefore located three key sites for investigation: history programmes, history in the academy and media production contexts. We began by monitoring and recording examples of factual history programming across terrestrial and satellite channels, and carried out interviews with historians and other professionals such as archaeologists, archivists and librarians who had in some way been involved in

history programmes, as presenters, onscreen experts or consultants, and with a number of media practitioners who played key roles in commissioning and programme making in terrestrial networks, satellite channels and the independent sector.[4]

Our collection and analysis of programmes aimed to chart important developments in programme styles, genres, transmission times and channel location as well as building up a picture of the main production units and personnel involved. In terms of our research with historians and related professionals our aim was to explore how, if at all, historical knowledge produced in the academy came to the screen and to begin to consider who 'authors' television history and how history content is generated. We were also interested in how historians are incorporated into the 'business of television' and to ascertain their views on their treatment within this process. Our exploration of television history as public history was also a key theme in our discussions with historians.

Turning to the production context, having been neglected for some time, there is now a growing body of work within media and cultural studies that acknowledges the importance of the conditions and practices of production in what are now being called the 'creative industries'. This interest, as Simon Cottle points out, explores 'a relatively unexplored and under-theorised "middle ground" of organizational structures and work place practices' (Cottle 2003: 4). The aim is to examine the structures, the practices and the ways of working within different cultural organizations and settings, and in particular the social aspects of these processes. What are the commercial constraints and how do creative workers manage and negotiate these? What role do personal relationships and networks play in the creative process? Three early exceptions to the neglect of the study of the production contexts of television are provided by Georgina Born (2004), John T. Caldwell (2008) and Caroline Dover (2004), all of which are pertinent to our study. Born's meticulous and much cited study of production practices across programming departments at the BBC provides valuable insights into internal changes within the institution. Caldwell, through a combination of methods, analysed trade journals, interviewed film and television workers and carried out ethnographic field observations of production spaces and professional gatherings in the Los Angeles film and television industries. His specific aim was to discover the cultural practices and belief systems of film/video production workers in Los Angeles. In her study of television documentary producers, Caroline Dover identifies a 'symbolic community' of documentary producers which 'is conceptually constructed through common practices, traditions and perceptions of genres' (Dover 2004: 242). We found her insights useful and relevant to the 'production ecology' of television commissioners and producers of history programmes which emerged through our research. In a similar vein, Anna Zoellner's (2009) and Chris Paterson and Zoellner's (2010) research into independent film production and creative labour provides valuable data on documentary production practice. Not indifferent to how the documentary text has, almost exclusively, constituted the focus of analysis in academic literature addressing generic changes in television documentary since the 1990s (Zoellner 2009), Zoellner follows Hesmondhalgh (2006) in arguing that in order to understand more fully generic transitions, and continuities in documentary film more broadly,

scholarly activity should be redirected to the structures and activities of media production. Similarly, she points out, the development process has been equally sidelined, and this despite its formative role in the creative process of documentary production. These studies are welcome and provide valuable insights into the actual practices of media producers which we have drawn upon within our study. However, none of them explores the impact of gender, class, race and ethnicity in the dynamics of the production ecology in any great depth, which, according to our research, cannot be overlooked.

Our study focuses on an area of television production which is defined by subject and topic. As such this can yield more nuanced understanding of those elements involved in the production of programmes which might be lost in more general studies. A number of production studies adopt an ethnographic method (e.g. Born 2004; Caldwell 2008) but we decided against conducting an ethnographic study as this would, in our view, have led to a concentration on specific settings and projects. As our interest lay in exploring the dynamics of commissioning and programme making, rather than the actual practice of production, although we garnered much information about this along the way, we considered the interview method to be the most effective in gleaning views from key individuals on the place of history programming within television, their decision making and, in the case of independent producers, how they developed and pitched successful commissions. From our interviews we found that the maintenance and sustainability of this particular 'symbolic community' is achieved through professional and personal networks which contribute to the social fabric of television history production and, by extension, collective and individual working practice.

We are, of course, aware of the shortcomings of the interview method itself. The particular problems in relation to our study are somewhat counter-intuitive in that all our interviewees were passionate, articulate and extremely well-informed about their field. Many also had very strong views on history programming which they had no hesitation in expressing. In speaking of his research methods, John Caldwell sounded a note of caution about interviewing those professionals high up in the pecking order of any organization. In his study he found that the corporate line was readily adopted and expressed by those in executive positions. While we were always aware and wary of these dangers, and certainly our interviewees constructed their professional selves during our interviews, in the majority of cases we found that history was their dominant interest and our questioning revealed their strong sense of identity in relation to this work. This applied in equal measure to those in the academy and in the media industries. We are heavily indebted to all our participants who were generous in sharing their time and knowledge with us. In addition to the interviews we followed the trade press, popular press and attended, where possible, professional gatherings of television history producers. These sources provided important contextual background for our understanding of the operations of the television industry and press and other responses to it.

These gatherings, trade journals and policy documents were essential resources for monitoring the rapid developments nationally and internationally in the broadcasting

landscape. These developments led to major changes including the rise of satellite channels, the switch to digital broadcasting, and resulting increased competition and economic pressures across the networks. Technological changes affected production, delivery and consumption and undoubtedly have shaped policy decisions and programme development ideas across television; they are considered here with particular reference to the work of Graeme Turner and Frances Bonner. In addition, these developments included a greater desire to cement particular channels to specific audience demographics, and links between the type of history offered by a channel and its perceived or desired audience have increasingly been apparent. It is certainly the case that the majority of people gain at least some knowledge of the past from TV, but a number of factors contribute to the appearance of the past onscreen. Based on our research we argue that television as an industry must be analysed as a producer and mediator of history and not simply a 'consumer' of the work of academic historians involved in history programming; trends and influences from within and outside the medium, whether the 'logics of television' or wider social, cultural and economic changes, as well as the work of scholars, ultimately determine what parts of, and how, the past is depicted onscreen. We now turn to a discussion of public history as it has been understood in order to lay the ground for our work on the developments of television history in this regard.

Public history

In a recent article, Hilda Kean outlined the different ways of thinking about the past encouraged by public history. Indeed, she noted, 'some of the most imaginative and engaging work on the past is not being conducted by historians at all but by artists and filmmakers, [by whom] the visual has been emphasized' (2010: 29). Throughout this book we too consider factual history programming on television as a particular type of public history, and draw parallels where appropriate to other forms in the UK and overseas, to links to the formation and maintenance of ideas and ideals of national, regional and other identities, as well as to related themes of authority and authenticity in the representation of the past.

Public history might be crudely defined as a representation of the past provided for and/or by people who are not university-based historians. As part of this broad field, 'an enormous range of approaches, forms and enthusiasms' has developed, as recognized by historians such as Jill Liddington and Graham Smith (2005: 28). In order to offer a brief history of public history as practice, it is necessary to take a geographical approach that draws on the work of Liddington and also of scholars based outside the UK, for the term carries different meanings in different nations. Liddington and Simon Ditchfield have suggested that distinctions should be made between 'new' nations identifying themselves as republics, such as the US; others defining themselves as distinct from a colonial past, such as Australia and New Zealand; and 'old' nations such as the UK, France and Italy in which the term 'heritage' or variants upon 'patrimony' may more commonly be used (2005: 40). Certainly, in the mid-1970s in the US, a nascent definition of public history developed, suggesting that it should

be used as a term for the work of historians beyond the university environment (Dalley 2001: 16–17; Liddington and Ditchfield 2005: 40).

While such reflections upon the term 'public history' offer working definitions to open up further discussion, scholars over the last three decades have been particularly interested in the power structures and hierarchies maintained or rejected by such narratives of the past, in film, television, museums and commemorative events, among others, leading to questions of how 'public', and certainly how democratic, such representations can be. This was highlighted, for example, in Australia in the late 1980s when the bicentennial celebrations provoked debate about *which* Australia was commemorated – that of settlers, or of Aboriginal inhabitants, a question which continues to be asked in public historical arenas including television series and audience websites (see e.g. Elder 2009).

In Britain the role of public history has related in part to the specific nations involved: in Scotland, for example, debates over appropriate representations of the past have been tied to wider discussions of national identity. In England, particularly from the 1970s, debates over the meaning of national heritage related to, it has been suggested, the 1974 exhibition at London's Victoria and Albert Museum on the 'Destruction of the Country House 1875–1975', which prompted reflection and, to some degree, action by those concerned at the apparent loss of most stately homes. However, scholarly interest in public history has moved in the last three decades beyond heritage and the preservation of elite architecture to 'history at large', a term used by the *History Workshop Journal* in a section introduced in 1995 (Liddington and Ditchfield 2005: 42–43).

Indeed, the diverse interests represented by the Public History Committee of the [British] Historical Association include

> the media, museums, galleries, libraries, archives and stately homes … those teaching history in further and higher education … local and regional settings and … a variety of forms from personal to national and international.[5]

This runs close to the twenty-first-century view of public history stated by the American Historical Association's then president James McPherson, who in addition noted that 'the true meaning of public history' was the interpretation of the past through such 'non-academic venues as museums, historical societies, electronic media, historical parks and battlefields, public lectures, and books aimed at a broad public readership' (2003).

Returning to Australasia, since the 1980s Australian public history has continued to include the work of freelance practitioners aligned to community history, occasionally engaged in local disputes over city developments, such as in Sydney (Liddington and Ditchfield 2005: 41; see also Ashton and Hamilton 2009: 72) while the definition of public history offered by the New Zealand historian Bronwyn Dalley is that it is 'historical work undertaken according to the research priorities, agendas or funding capacities of another party rather than being self-directed by the historian' (Phillips and Dalley 2001: 9). Such comments stem historically from the specific position of public historians in postcolonial nations including New Zealand and Australia, where

university-trained historians may act as advisers to groups and projects seeking alternatives to elite, colonial or otherwise hegemonic accounts of the past, but also as arbitrators during public disputes between conflicting ethnic and cultural groups over the commemoration or discounting of aspects of a nation's past.[6] In the latter case they may certainly be offering a service bound to wider national, liberal ideals of fairness in terms of representation of those living in the past and the present; as de Groot suggests of related elements of public history, it is part of 'a liberal discourse of inclusion' (2009: 237). However, as Knauer and Walkowitz assert, there are 'fundamental conflicts over the interpretation of history and its representation in the public arena', in part because 'local and national participants … have not only divergent agendas but also unequal reserves of financial, political, and cultural capital with which to advance those agendas' (2009: 3, 6). As they acknowledge, those working in public history do not necessarily share professional agendas, and therefore power struggles occur within the field as well as with outside agencies (2009: 3). But they refer in the main to the work of university-trained historians outside the academy rather than a multitude of works by a range of people. In this sense the definition of public history developed in the late 1980s, in which the historian is the active disseminator and the 'public' the more passive recipients (Kean 2010: 26), seems still to be considered appropriate by many scholars. Although this undoubtedly springs from a desire to democratize access to knowledge, as John Tosh (2008: 119) and several scholar interviewees asserted, this would also suggest, for example, that historians working on a television series, whether university-based or independent scholars, *are* engaged in public history but the producer of the series, and indeed eyewitnesses interviewed for it, often *are not* – a division perhaps between Public History and public history, with the former recognized as a legitimate source of information. Ashton and Hamilton make a similar point to ours, remarking on the frequent absence of media professionals from this model of public history (2009: 72).

Unsurprisingly, then, many of those teaching public history, like Kean, as well as museum professionals such as Jane Walton, assert that public history should be viewed as 'a partnership between those who own the history (i.e. their personal story) and those able to make it available to a wider audience'.[7] Walton's perspective is shared by some historians, including those contributing to the February 2011 panel discussion at Kingston University on 'Public History and the Historical Record', at which Justin Champion, Andrew Foster and Ludmilla Jordanova agreed that greater training in communication should be given to history undergraduates in order to engage the public in research which might require their assistance, if not the more active partnership conceived of by Walton.[8] Kean, citing US public historians such as Robert Archibald, goes so far as to view public history as a collaboration between historians and communities. In her interpretation the personal and public can be elided, with 'divisions between being a "historian" and "a member of the public" … broken down' (2010: 26, 33). This of course also occurs when film makers from a community represent its past, such as Vanessa Engle's *Jews* (BBC Four 2008) (Bell 2011). In addition, in his interview with us and also in his published work, the media scholar and Emmy-award-winning documentary maker Brian Winston has discussed his

experience of working on the WNET series *Heritage: Civilization and the Jews* (PBS 1984). Offering a history of Jews and Judaism, Winston believes that a large proportion, if not the majority, of individuals involved in the making of the series were Jewish, and, as Winston notes, some of his Jewish colleagues also shared his nationality and social class (Winston 2010: 48, 56). Such familial, ethnic and cultural ties are considered in the course of this book. Having considered broad developments in public history, we now move on to consider their relationship to media developments over a similar time period.

Media developments

The developments alluded to earlier emerged from and contributed to what Graeme Turner calls the 'entertainment age' (2010: 158–74) and Brett Christophers, drawing on Michael Goldhaber in the context of shifting business and media economics, terms the 'attention economy' (Christophers 2008). Therefore, during our research and in the writing of this book we were keen to capture factual history programming in all its forms, in order to identify how representation and mediation of the past has developed through a number of programme types and genres and, crucially, how this evolved in the decades under consideration. In *Ordinary People and the Media: The Demotic Turn* (2010), Graeme Turner refers to the 'structural shift' of western media, and television in particular, which provides us with a useful framework through which to analyse changes and developments to history programming as it appears routinely throughout channels and schedules. Turner's proposition is that we are now living in the 'entertainment age' engendered by the erosion of national public broadcasting services and the consequent increase of commercially driven media organizations. He also refers to broader developments in consumer culture, with its spawning of materialism, celebrity culture and the cult of personality. Noting the increasing participation of 'ordinary people' in the generation of 'made for television' content, Turner argues that the media is now, far from reflecting different social types, a constitutive element in the construction of identities, and he is particularly interested in the role of reality television formats in this process. We further consider Turner's insights, with which we broadly agree, but, by paying particular attention to the operation of history programming across the schedules and channels we also question both the role and power of the contribution of 'ordinary people' to history programming, as part of a consideration of the usefulness of the idea of the demotic to analysis of public history. In addition, with reference to the address of such programmes we will argue that the elements of identity on offer are not limited to the impulses of material consumption or lifestyle, nor are they entirely individualistic, but they open up possibilities of (re)connecting with the past, for example through familial, ethnic and regional belonging. These are all encouraged by, and can be triggered through, the programming discussed in forthcoming chapters, which are both popular and entertaining. However, as for other representations of the past, history on television may obscure as well as illuminate, as we discuss further throughout this book.

Before doing so, though, we will identify specific features of the changes in television that have resulted in the 'entertainment age' identified by Turner and of significance to our study: these include *intensification of competition* brought about by the expansion of channels. For history programming this includes satellite channels: the global The History Channel (re-branded as History in 2008), Discovery, National Geographic and UK History (re-branded as Yesterday in 2009) all draw on history content for their output. Terrestrial broadcasters have responded to the new digital environment and the strategies of BBC, ITV and Channel 4 are of particular relevance here but the increasingly competitive environment has had its impact also on independent producers as the market imperative bites. *Fragmentation of the audience* is another development relevant to our study. The proliferation of channels has resulted to a certain extent in the breaking up of the large national audience associated with terrestrial television. In addition to the establishment of satellite channels in the period under study, terrestrial networks in the UK (BBC, Channel 4 and ITV) have launched digital channels and all are keen to attract a younger demographic, especially male, and some, Channel 4 for example, a middle-class audience attractive to upmarket advertisers. This search for 'niche' audiences has shaped the requirements of history programmes in relation to choice of periods and topics considered to be attractive to these target audiences. Similarly, *branding* is a significant aspect of recent media change. Connected to the break-up of networks is the need for broadcasters to determine and reinforce a channel identity in order to be recognized in the broadening spectrum of available channels. This is most obviously true for satellite channels but large broadcasters like the BBC seek to give each of their channels an identity and 'feel' which appeals to its audience. More broadly, '*celebrity culture*' is of great significance. Turner argues that the expansion of consumer culture and the centrality of the cult of the celebrity to this development are key to understanding the rise of entertainment-led media. While Turner, and others writing on this topic, tend to focus on more popular programming such as reality television, we demonstrate throughout this book that history programming itself has responded to this development. A crucial element is the increasing importance of 'celebrity' and 'personality' as symbols of channels and types of programmes, but also their power to attract audiences. The expansion and intensification of celebrity culture has been noted across all aspects of the social sphere and history programming has certainly not been immune to this pressure. And conversely, perhaps, *ordinary people and first-person media* must be considered; many scholars have noted the increasing presence of so-called 'ordinary people' across different media. We consider how 'ordinary people' have appeared in history programming and argue that their presence performs a distinctive role in an understanding of the past and its relationship with viewers. Linked to this is Dovey's notion of 'first person media' that focuses on the personal, the individual and the experiential at the expense of the social, political and analytical (2000).

It is also pertinent to consider Frances Bonner's work, particularly her use of the term 'ordinary television' to identify cross-genre commonalities across the discourses of television, and to focus on the kinds of programmes often neglected in television studies and in discussions of history on television, the latter tending to focus on series

receiving large amounts of funding, presented by well-known male historians (see e.g. Cannadine 2004; Champion 2003). Bonner uses the term 'ordinary television' rather than 'everyday television' in order to distinguish it from the notion of the 'everyday', which carries the implication of more ethnographic approaches addressing the relationship between television and its different audiences. She does, however, insist that television is an important part of everyday lives, and draws usefully in this respect on Lefebvre's work, particularly his assertion that

> cinema and television divert the everyday by at times offering up to it its own spectacle or sometimes the spectacle of the distinctly non-everyday; violence, death, catastrophe, the lives of king or stars – those who we are led to believe defy everydayness. (Lefebvre 1987 cited in Bonner 2003: 30–31)

Bonner views this as suggestive of the division of television content between ordinary and special television (2003: 31). Drawing, therefore, on both Bonner and Lefebvre we make a similar distinction between high profile history programmes, as well as those more routinely present in the television schedules; both are explored in the following chapters.

A further concern of Bonner's that, like Turner, is central to her definition of 'ordinary television' is the increasing participation of so-called 'ordinary people' across many genres (2003: 88–92). Although she does not consider documentaries to be part of ordinary television, we would argue that developments within history programming reflect the wider shifts in television which she identifies. Certainly, the rise of celebrity culture and its significance for television has been accompanied, paradoxically, by the rise of 'ordinary people' in programming. This can be noted in many recently developed reality genres, game shows and talent shows. Turner interrogates this phenomenon, as well as the 'cult of celebrity' in western cultures, and takes issue with those scholars who argue that these developments can be understood as 'democratization' of television and broader media cultures. He uses the term 'demotic' to describe the phenomenon, which acknowledges increased access to appearance on and participation in media products, but which, he argues, does not automatically represent 'democratization' of media, society and culture. Although we are in broad agreement with Turner, the meaning of the visibility of 'ordinary people' becomes more complex if we consider history programming and, in particular, discussions and debates surrounding public history.

Jon Dovey, in his prescient book *The Freak Show* (2000), argued that factual television had become caught up in 'first person media' and noted the proliferation of '[s]ubjective, autobiographical and confessional modes of expression' across all media during the 1990s (2000: 1). We have since witnessed further proliferation of this mode, and in history programming most clearly in the popular genres discussed in more detail in the following chapters. At a more prosaic level, history on television has repeatedly relied upon individual contributors in the form of eyewitnesses, a persuasive and intense televisual mode that carries conviction and veracity within the overall narrative. The apparently authentic voice insisting that 'I was there and witnessed

these events. I am now going to tell you about it' is a powerful device regularly used by programme makers. As Liddington and Smith (2005: 30) comment, writing in the journal *Oral History*, '[d]iscussion about public presentations of the past have a particular relevance to oral historians', because both public and oral history present past lives, often of those hidden from written history. However, interestingly they do not refer directly to the shared *obligations* of public and oral history – which overlap considerably – to make findings available and accessible to a wider group of people than university historians alone. Relating oral to public history through another route, Graham Smith, in his analysis of the development of oral history, sees the work of the documentary maker Steve Humphries and earlier proponents of oral history on radio or television as representing a bridge between oral and public history. He goes on to note that despite its relative neglect in the UK in comparison to the US and Australia, oral historians, in a dual role as public historians also, have long been engaged in offering their insights in publicly accessible forums. Indeed, the journal *Oral History* has since 1997 included a public history section (Smith 2008; see e.g. Thomson 1997). Reflecting the desire for those interviewed as part of oral historical research to enjoy 'shared authority', it became apparent, Smith suggests, that a broader public, including interviewees, should also be able to engage with the material. Bearing this ethical and professional obligation in mind, then, links between oral history, television and other forms of public history are unsurprising.

Oral history on television

However, the deployment of oral history techniques on television has gone through change and what began as a practice influenced by external developments in historical studies, the so-called 'history from below' movement is now perhaps more akin to and certainly influenced by what is known as 'reality television' and the increasing visibility of 'ordinary people' onscreen noted above. Here we chart these developments.

Steve Humphries, formerly a university lecturer who got into television 'completely by accident' (Humphries 2008), finds the medium to be perfect for oral history, and traces the beginnings of oral history on television to the BBC *The Great War* series broadcast in 1964. According to Humphries, a production assistant suggested the idea to the programme makers who had not believed that using oral testimony in this way would be thought to be of historical value. The result was a powerful series that set the template for the many military history programmes produced since. A decade later, the Thames Television series *The World at War* (1973–74) used the testimony of, among others, 'ordinary people' caught up in total war to great effect. The use of testimony in both cases echoed the wider democratic mood of the period; the History Workshop Movement was a radical movement dedicated to political change and new ways of thinking about the past and present. The History Workshops, which began in 1967, provided opportunities for wide-ranging discussions between the students of the University of Oxford's Ruskin College and socialist historians, who debated history, especially the national past, and its application in the present. The Workshops had become very well established at

Ruskin College, Oxford by the 1970s and one outcome was the founding of the *History Workshop Journal* (1976), the manifesto of which was the democratization of history, its politicization and de-professionalization. An emphasis on working-class history broadened, after some controversy, to include women's history as part of 'history from below' (Taylor 2008).

The influence of the movement, and its support of oral historical techniques in particular (see Perks and Thomson 2003: *passim*), is reflected in a tendency in some history programme making to use oral history methods and eyewitness accounts, although not necessarily with the political and critical edge of the *History Workshop Journal*. The television producer Stephen Peet pioneered this form for television in his series *Yesterday's Witness* (BBC 1969–81), based on 'ordinary people telling extraordinary stories' (Humphries 2008) which resonated with broader social events; indeed in later years it has been seen by practitioners of oral history as pioneering a social movement (Bornat 2003: 189–90). By using oral history methods, history and an understanding of the past could be gleaned from those who lived through events which, if not directly challenging dominant narratives of the past, certainly furnished them with more detail, including their everyday and ordinary experiences. Perhaps two of the most remarkable 'history from below' programmes of the time, commissioned by the BBC, were the social histories of working-class life and feminist histories represented in Peter Pagnamenta's *All Our Working Lives* (BBC Two 1984) and Angela Holdsworth's *Out of the Doll's House* (BBC Two 1988).

The strong relationship between the dominant mode of television, the talking head, and the oral history method cannot be overemphasized. According to Humphries, who was mentored by Peet, it has 'emotional power: the power of people telling their stories directly to camera' (Humphries 2008). Humphries's company Testimony Films has produced a number of programmes, most of which employ oral history techniques to powerful effect. His *A Secret World of Sex*, made for BBC Two, was broadcast in 1991 and drew on the research carried out for his book of the same title, triggering what he describes as 'an absolute boom in oral history in the 1990s' (Humphries 2008). This was especially the case for public service broadcasters. In 1998, as part of the Channel 4 *Witness* series, Humphries produced *Sex in a Cold Climate*, a documentary denouncing the Magdelene Asylums of the Catholic Church by using the eyewitness testimony of surviving inmates who had the courage to speak. The documentary was seen by Peter Mullan, who wrote and directed *The Magdalene Sisters* (2002), a feature film based on the stories of the women in Humphries's documentary. Testimony's *Green and Pleasant Land* (Channel 4 1999) was, according to Humphries, 'the end of this great heyday of oral history series on primetime television' (2008). Audiences for the format were declining and it is telling that the beginning of their decline coincides with the beginning of the period studied in this book, which Martin Davidson, BBC commissioning editor for History, and others agree marked the start of significant changes in history programming, which we outline further throughout this book.

In part this hiatus in the regular production of oral history programming relates to the development, discussed above, of the role and appearance of 'ordinary people' in programming. From July 2000, with the first airing of the Channel 4 'reality show'

Big Brother, an increased interest in the representation of the ordinary – yet often depicted as extraordinary – person was apparent on television. We would argue, then, that *Big Brother* and its inclusion of ordinary people had a significant impact on the representation of the past. Although Humphries was again regularly commissioned to make oral history series from the late 2000s, it was arguably in this context rather than as part of the legacy of Peet or indeed the History Workshop. We return to this issue shortly in our discussion of Turner's ideas of the demotic.

Clearly, according to Humphries and others, television is the medium *par excellence* for eyewitness testimony but it is, of course, a constituent element in the very construction of those accounts. We cannot ignore the mediating apparatus of television in the gathering and incorporation of testimony for actual programmes. This involves mediation on (at least) two interrelated levels: the process of eliciting memories for television and the reliability of 'personal' accounts of experience. This has long been debated within the fields of sociology, anthropology, history and cultural studies. More recently scholars within the growing field of memory studies remind us of the instability of memory recall itself. The questions raised by the latter would take us beyond the main concerns of this book and we therefore limit our interrogation to the implications this instability has for the use of witnessing in television programmes.

'Oral testimony' is coaxed through skilful interviews for the camera. The very apparatus of film-making creates a special 'event' during which the interviewee is encouraged to perform the role of witness and of truth teller. The aim of the interviewer is to encourage a 'non-performative performance', to speak frankly and earnestly, disclosing possibly painful memories, which simulates an intimate conversation. According to Humphries, Peet developed an interview technique designed to give the interviewees the same power and presence as the presenters on the programme, by bypassing the interviewer. In order to achieve this he crouched underneath the camera lens so that his interviewees, although looking at him while answering his questions, appeared to be looking directly into the camera. With the advent of the much cheaper medium of video, the oral history and documentary interviewer was much less constrained by economic factors and Humphries describes filming interviews often over a complete day which gave time for those involved to relax and for participants to forget the camera's presence. For his first major series for Channel 4, the eight-part *A Century of Childhood* (1988), Humphries took his participants to significant locations in their lives such as their homes and schools, which triggered memories and afforded their testimony increased emotional power. In the editing process the interviewer is usually then removed from the final version, giving the viewer direct and seemingly unmediated access to the speaker. Through these techniques, and despite their reproduction on television screens across the nation, the eyewitness on television is granted a form of 'auratic power' (Bell 2010: 77). John Durham Peters, expanding John Ellis's notion of television as witness, suggests that audience members are invited to witness the witness in an undertaking which binds the past event, eyewitness and viewer witness together (2009: 23–41). The role of television as witness, as it is inscribed in history programming, is useful in thinking through the understanding of the past that this particular technique enables, especially through empathy and affect.

However, as Durham Peters reminds us, the witness is not necessarily, or is perhaps rarely, 'reliable' in that there is a vast distance between experiencing or living through an event and the expression of or telling of the story. Further, as John Corner and others point out, the voice of the witness is often used over other images, for example, archive and short extracts shown at the beginning of the programme. This can have the effect of an eyewitness account, as Tobias Ebbrecht points out in relation to reconstruction and dramatization of events which, through the use of the voice of the witness, are awarded the appearance of authenticity (2007a: 40–43). Emma Hanna suggests that Great War veterans asked to talk about their experience many times tended to revert to a recognizable narrative (2009: 66). Memories are not, of course, immediately accessible to individuals but are the result of a 'search' process and what scholars refer to as 'memory work'. That work and the resulting expression of memories are shaped and influenced by many elements but, in this example, also public representations. As Liddington and Smith note, '[t]he ways we understand and recall our pasts are influenced by many forms of public presentation … books, films, and – especially – on television', suggesting that especial attention should be paid to 'the part played by public history in shaping historical consciousness and memory.' This is not to discount the significance of these memories; they are keen to note that '[d]irect personal experience, along with the older myths we live by and the social narratives we live with … compete in giving shape to how we perceive, and remember, the past' (2005: 30). Certainly, television producers and researchers have assembled huge quantities of valuable original data for future researchers that reflect accounts of some of the experiences of 'ordinary' people. It should also be acknowledged that in and through television, the eyewitness is mostly afforded the unquestioned status of authenticity.

There is additional evidence in popular history programming for the exploration of contributions made by so-called 'ordinary people' to national and other histories. This not only takes the form of contributions to, for example, the World Wars (often explored through eyewitness accounts) but more broadly as bearers of history whose lives and biographies relate to a bigger historical picture. This may be an example of a democratization of the past, and certainly their memory work should be considered part of public history, as Walton suggests. Through television, potentially marginalized peoples, whose stories have not been heard, are given space to articulate their experiences and knowledge and are encouraged to explore their own experience for a purpose; certainly, one historian interviewee described oral testimony in television programming as 'very important and quite pioneering in bringing … people's life stories to a mass audience' and in our conclusion we discuss experience in relation to audience engagement.

Parallels here may, then, be drawn between the use of oral testimony on television and in other sites of public history such as museums. It is also pertinent to note that alongside university-based historians, professionals based at national institutions such as the Imperial War Museum in London have found such series as Laurence Rees's *Nazis: A Warning from History* (BBC 1997), discussed in our chapter on landmark television, to be stimulating in terms of content but also as a model for representing

traumatic pasts through public history (Bardgett 2005: 105–6). Another area in which such links may be found is reenactment, whether represented onscreen in a number of series aired since the late 1990s, discussed at length in our chapter dedicated to this form of representation, or in open air museums in which costumed demonstrators offer verbal and embodied insights into a specific period (see e.g. Bennett 1994: 118–19), in some of which, such as Morwellham Quay in Devon, recent reenactment series (*Edwardian Farm* (BBC 2010–11)) were filmed, enabling the Quay to include references to the series in publicity leaflets and online. Links with other forums of public history are, then, apparent in TV history and, rather than seeing history on television as entirely distinct, networks of interpretation are apparent, and are considered in the following chapters.

Demotic or democratic histories?

However, as Tony Bennett asked of Beamish Museum in Co. Durham in the mid-1990s, we must question if all history programming can be viewed as democratizing in its representation of the past. While oral testimony certainly offers the opportunity for previously unheard voices to gain a national or even international audience, especially in series such as *People's Century* (BBC 1995–97), in which eyewitnesses from across the globe spoke of their experiences of key events of the twentieth century, the editing and selection of accounts considered to fit the overall narrative of such series, not to mention the initial hurdle of having a programme commissioned by a broadcaster, affect the final product and therefore who is offered the opportunity to speak. This is certainly also true of museum exhibitions, for example, and Bennett was particularly scathing of Beamish Museum's apparent tendency to restyle 'popular memory' and to evoke conservative and sentimental recollection. In part the museum facilitated this through the depoliticization of the history depicted, removing social upheaval, strikes and the suffrage campaign from its account and leaving the region's population 'a people without politics' (1994: 112, 118) although in more recent years strenuous efforts have been made to include some aspects of nineteenth-century working-class life that are less sentimental and conservative, possibly reflecting, as for televised accounts, (see e.g. Bell 2009) the dwindling numbers of audience members or visitors likely even to have second-generation knowledge and therefore opening up the potential for a wider range of remembrance practices.[9] However, despite demographic changes over the past two decades, the extent to which TV history can be seen as fully democratizing is questionable. Oral testimony certainly does give voice to individuals and accounts of the past otherwise absent, but rarely if ever can those appearing onscreen be seen to have had an active role in the form of the final product, much as those agreeing to share testimony used in museum exhibitions may have an idea of the general themes to be considered but often little direct influence on its ultimate form. Furthermore, within television programmes drawing on eyewitness accounts, hierarchies of 'testimony' can be discerned. For example, those who held more powerful positions or who had knowledge of the wider context of events being lived out are afforded a higher level of legitimacy, which can be gleaned from elements such as location of

interview, the interview questions and therefore the responses received, as well as the selection of the responses in the final edit, and space afforded for evaluation. Predictably there is a tendency, therefore, for white interviewees, often male and of higher social status, to receive this treatment, whereas the responses of working-class women, for example, are more likely to appear as ancillary respondents or in less mainstream programming, including regional output.

The question is raised, then, of whether aspects of public history should be viewed as demotic rather than democratic. If demotic, as we considered earlier, refers to the increasing visibility of the 'ordinary' person, then it can include democratizing aspects, but does not necessarily do so. So a viewer of televised oral testimony may, like those of the reality series discussed by Turner, 'merge their personal everyday reality with that created publicly by television' (2010: 22) drawing on less visibly spectacular televisual material but still sharing a sense of identity, ultimately as a fellow human. A visitor to Beamish museum may engage in the past represented, perhaps even joining in with reenactments, and find it offers an account of a regional working-class past more representative of their experiences and those of their family than other forms of public history. But on neither occasion is the past necessarily offered in a democratizing fashion; arguably this depends as much on the individual consuming what is offered, as it does on the representation itself. Those able, in Bennett's terms, to bring critical perspective to the history depicted may 'resist the lure' of more limited versions of the past (1994: 118) but it is hardly a democratic representation in which a broader audience has contributed significantly to the *choice* of content: ultimately, even those participating in oral history projects, other than choosing whether or not to be interviewed, or to continue with an interview, often represent the demotic desires of public history rather than the democratic. While an audience member contributes to the testimony offered onscreen by posting online comments relating to the material to a broadcaster's website, such sites are often removed after a period, or only allow contributions for a limited period of time such as the BBC 'People's War' website, and so do not act as a permanent archive.[10] A truly democratic project could, of course, involve members of a community interviewing other members, such as the Living Memory of the Jewish Community project, materials from which are accessible through the British Library website;[11] groups organized around the principles of the original History Workshops; similar projects outlined in journals with a wide readership such as *Oral History*; or members of a community able to intervene in and amend museum exhibitions (Newman cited in Kean 2010: 35–36).

Television history as public history

A question then remains regarding the extent to which factual history programming might be considered public history. It is interesting to note that despite the growing body of scholarship considering history on television, relatively few scholars working in the field explicitly identify it as public history, and fewer yet consider the issues of power and authority in relation to gender, class, race and ethnicity bound up in the production of material for television as there have been for other sites of public

history. Some scholars have been keen to underline the 'wide – and sometimes heated' debates accompanying discussions of 'popular presentation[s] of the past to a wide range of audiences', which include a diverse range of history programming. Indeed, Liddington and Smith refer to the overlapping themes, yet distinctiveness, of series such as *Who Do You Think You Are?*, *Restoration*, and *A History of Britain*, all of which are considered in the following chapters (2005: 28–29). However, the early twenty-first-century collections of essays edited by Roberts and Taylor (2001) and Cannadine (2004) referred to above do not explicitly consider public history as an umbrella term under which factual programming might sit, and this is suggestive of a tendency to shy away from placing history programming within the broader category, although a few scholars, including Justin Champion, lament the short-sightedness of historians who reject the opportunity to engage in public history: communication with a broader public through television, or books written to be accessible to a wider readership (Champion 2003[12]). Analysing Simon Schama's assertions relating to his approach to his televisual work, Champion is keen to emphasize the validity of encouraging affective responses in the audience – an aspect of history on television considered further in our chapter on reenactment – and concludes that some of the critical responses to the series, whether from reviewers or scholars, stemmed from their failure to understand that the work was public history. While this may be the case, other scholars' criticism has been based not on a failure to recognize public history, but a rejection of the *type* offered, and by whom (e.g. Bell and Gray 2007a).

More recently, Jerome de Groot has considered, as part of his broader analysis of historians and heritage in popular culture, 'non-academic or non-professional history … defined as "public" history', particularly its complexity and dynamic nature, including that of television (2009: 4). Certainly, his discussion of David Lowenthal's work, and his choice of quotation, using Lowenthal's assertion that public history is often engaged in 'celebrating some bits and forgetting others' (Lowenthal cited in de Groot 2009: 4) usefully emphasizes the wariness of some university-based historians when encountering other representations of the past than their own,[13] and as part of this discussion of the relationship between public history and history on television, material drawn from interviews with a number of scholars engaged in both television and university work is utilized to gain a better understanding of the insights of those with direct experience of offering history to different audiences.

De Groot also considers historians in the public eye, from A. J. P. Taylor in the 1950s, although he sees Simon Schama's *A History of Britain* (BBC 2000–2002) as particularly groundbreaking in moving history 'from a standard part of television programming to a media phenomenon' (2009: 17); we consider the series at greater length in our chapter on landmark and flagship programming. However, it is pertinent at this point to note his comment that such figures as Schama became cultural gatekeepers and public intellectuals, as this was also discussed by several historian interviewees, one commenting that she believed that Schama was being positioned as a public intellectual, although in her view the BBC seemed to be 'taking it in a new direction [as] it's a bit depoliticised … the spectrum of opinions is quite narrow'. The interviews are considered in greater depth shortly; the idea of their relationship within and without

public history formed, for several scholars, an important part of thinking about the role of history and historians on television, almost always perceived as a form of public history. In contrast, de Groot also considers history series aiming to offer 'ordinary' people the experience of life in the past; discussed further in our chapter on reenactment, for de Groot this is part of an attempt ostensibly to enfranchise 'ordinary' people, appearing to allow democratic access to 'the institutions and discourses of their history' (2009: 60). The extent, within the criteria already outlined, to which this may be achieved is considered throughout this book.

However, a particularly interesting aspect of this 'enfranchisement' is the magazine *BBC History*, launched in May 2000 as part of the corporation's wider millennial activities and which describes itself as not 'stuffy' but rather 'an enjoyable read for anyone who's interested in the past'. As well as offering detail of forthcoming programming it includes information on heritage sites, genealogical research and museum exhibits. As for the public created through television, a public is created through the magazine, in which history is represented in a manner appropriate to the BBC. While it is the case that histories rarely seen onscreen *do* appear in the pages of the magazine, the overall tone of the publication reflects its middle-class readers: of a readership of more than a quarter of a million, 75 per cent are ABC1 and 59 per cent male.[14] In a similar fashion, *History Today* is a monthly magazine for 'well-educated and cultured' readers averaging 57 years of age, the majority of whom are graduates and almost half of whom are ABC1, who through the magazine's editorials in particular are able to read about developments in history on television and also its discussion in the press.[15] Certainly, in terms of the socio-economic background of readers, the readership of both publications represents the ideal audience for most channels and returns us to the question of how such public history creates its public not from a random selection of the population but from specific groups whose history is then arguably more likely to be represented onscreen.

In addition, as we discuss further in our chapter on audiences, it is apparent that it is almost always created with a particular audience in mind, relating to broadcasters' and channels' aspirations and identity. The question of who the 'public' are who watch history programming or visit museums is central to commissioning editors' or curators' work. By drawing on the work of Benedict Anderson we can consider how it is through an address to the 'public' or 'nation' that such a body is constructed and, as we note throughout this book, the nation and national history is regularly depicted onscreen, yet in ways which often remove contention and ignore areas of difference such as ethnicity and gender. Kean's call for a breaking down of the boundaries between the 'public' and professionals is, then, especially pertinent, for as many of the interviews revealed, the professionals we spoke with sometimes position themselves as both professional and viewer, resulting in particular ideas of what will be appealing. Evidence of this elision and its implications for viewers' responses to history on television is considered further in our conclusion.

The absence of television from most accounts of public history until recent years may reflect what the late Raphael Samuel suggested in his magisterial *Theatres of Memory*: that what 'the Americans and the Australians' termed public history was for

other anglophones 'community-based … and institutional forms of historical self-representation and display' which affirm 'minority identities' as well as 'boost[ing] corporate images' (1994: 278). It may not have been apparent to Samuel that television might fit into this description, although it does indeed offer an institutional form of self-representation, albeit on a far greater, even national, scale. The consideration of national, regional or other 'corporate images' are key to the representation of the past on television, and minority identities too – subsections of the national whole – are explored, although as we discuss throughout this book and in our concluding chapter in particular, this is not necessarily to a great extent beyond specific anniversaries. That is not to suggest that Samuel ignored television; on the contrary, he asserted that 'television ought to have pride of place in any attempt to map the unofficial sources of historical knowledge' (1994: 13), an assertion with which Pierre Sorlin concurs, stating recently that 'television channels have become the main purveyors of glimpses at the past' (2011). However, a combination of the view of public history as primarily created by, or otherwise closely involving, university-trained historians, and the domesticated and seemingly all-pervasive position of TV, may somehow have led to it being overlooked by many scholars of public history.

Certainly, though, television is no more or less likely than other forms of public history to be democratic, demotic or elitist, and individual programmes, production companies or broadcasters offer a range of perspectives on the past, just as museums do. So when reading an account such as Edward T. Linenthal and Tom Engelhardt's *History Wars* (1996) concerning controversy over the Smithsonian's planned exhibition of the *Enola Gay* to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima, and its eventual cancellation, control of the version of the past offered to the public is apparent: a 'correct' version, in the eyes of veterans' groups and some members of Congress, which did not highlight the deaths of Japanese civilians, was favoured. While that is not to suggest that all forms of public history are tools of the state, to be used to bolster the current political status quo and avoid contentious questions about the past and its relationship to the present, anniversaries of key events are particularly sensitive in terms of national identity maintenance and this may be seen in UK television as much as in an American museum. While British history programming has rarely, if ever, experienced the type of censorship that we have discussed elsewhere (Bell and Gray 2010: 253–54), it is pertinent to consider how commemoration of events key to national identity are effectively limited, if not explicitly censored, through broadcasters' preconceptions of audience preferences and their own institutional identities, as we consider in our chapter on the perceived and desired audience for history programming. Relating to this absence, the apparently depoliticized public intellectual, present in the media and engaged to comment upon educational reform or recent events, is otherwise largely silent.

It is also appropriate to consider the responses of historian interviewees, when asked how they viewed public history. It is important to mention here recent challenges to the university sector, particularly but not exclusively in the UK, brought about by a withdrawal of public funding and necessitating a more competitive approach to higher education. Academics in all disciplines are now expected to raise external

funding from a dwindling pot of national research monies and in order to do so must demonstrate the significance and impact of their research beyond the academy. In this sense, the involvement of historians in television programmes would seem to be an effective form of dissemination, although at the same time, as some history departments are threatened with closure, a degree of anxiety about the role and definition of the historian is discernible among some scholars, aware of the multiple and seemingly unrestrained uses to which the past is put on television. Interestingly, in the main those who had a positive experience of working on a television programme were far more likely to view television history as public history; in contrast, those unhappy with their experiences were likely to distinguish television programming from a perception of public history which, in their view, afforded them more opportunity to offer insights into their research field to a wider audience. Yet these are not necessarily conflicting opinions; the desire to reach a wider audience than a tiny group of peers working in the same field may certainly be defined as a desire to be engaged in public history; the issue, then, was more one of control: of how one appears, and more importantly for most scholars interviewed, of how one's work is used in a television programme. Authority, like author, derives from the Latin *auctor*, creator, and in this sense the creative agency of the historian is at stake, a similar point to that made by James Gardiner when he noted that he was troubled by the 'fundamentally different sense of the past' held by those outside of universities, that might be seen to challenge 'the viability of our work' (2004: 13) and which Kean, rather more positively, views as a type of creative destabilization of identity and authority, citing the BBC series *Who Do You Think You Are?*, further discussed in our consideration of flagship programming, as an example of a programme both responding to existing interest in the past but also demystifying historical research and, especially through websites, creating the opportunity for audience members to undertake their own research (2010: 27, 36–37).

Others were simply happy to see their work fitting into a wider, creative interpretation of the past if it meant it would reach a wider audience and if they could, in Kean's term, act as one of many 'voices of encouragement' for those interested in and willing to be challenged by the past (2010: 37). One historian working at a northern English institution who had been involved in a number of regional programmes stated that

> if I can disseminate the research that I've conducted, that's good, I would like to think I'm making a contribution to wider public knowledge, but I also think that it's good for me because, you know, you can raise the profile of what you're doing … I do see myself as a, hopefully as a public servant but also as an academic …

Defining himself as a public servant, the scholar was also involved in public speaking and was keen to see his work in this area as democratizing access to knowledge to some degree. Another, based at a north-western English university was more directly involved with public agencies, commenting that he worked with the organization Coastal Action Zone, which lobbies for policy changes towards the British coastline,

and was writing a report for the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, while he had initially become involved through attending a meeting about Blackpool's regeneration strategy. A scholar based at a northern English institution who has been involved in a large number of television series predominantly on the BBC noted in addition that

> [T]he role of the public historian has to be to simplify complex matter, to make it intelligible to an audience which is itself intelligent, but doesn't have the framework of knowledge and background that you would expect of an academic audience, and that means making some concessions, but also adopting different styles of presentation, whether it's through an interview or whether it's through involvement in the script of a TV programme … you see what is possible and what is not possible … you can do some things much better than you can on paper, but you can do other things less well, and it's getting that balance right …

For this scholar, television was not the poor step-sibling to academic dissemination; rather, as a form of public history it offered the opportunity to reach different audiences and see scholarship represented in different ways, appropriate to the topics discussed. His response was in many ways similar to that of Parita Mukta, a contributor to the *Oral History* 'Vox Pops' on public history, who notes how public history must have dissemination at its core in order to be truly public, interlinking 'questions of substance, method and audience'.[16]

Another scholar, also based in northern England, who had been involved in a number of radio and television series, commented that he found it important to engage with the public in museums, public lectures, radio or television, but also rather difficult as:

> the divide between … output that we produce as academics, and the kind of output that we might or might not produce or contribute to for a wider public is understandable … but I think it's also extremely important that we minimise the gap, or at least that we do our best to make sure that the two kinds of output so inform one another … So a public historian has a range of skills, which are not necessarily those of the academic historian, there's a big overlap, but they are skills which are not necessarily easy to acquire.

Like the previous historian, a scholar who had worked on a groundbreaking BBC series emphasized the skills necessary to undertake public history successfully, noting that:

> I'm interested in working with history in different media, because I think that poses different problems, and I like working with different kinds of people. If you said to me … 'why don't we do an exhibition?', then I'd think 'oh, that's interesting' because it sets up a different set of problems, which are partly about communication but partly about how you construct some kind of historical presentation …

Others were less keen to suggest such a divide between their university work and that with, or for, the public; one, an independent scholar, formerly a university lecturer, suggested rather a continuum along which both university history and public history might both be found, with the latter a popularized – although not vulgarized – version of the former. A similar point was made by a scholar based at an institution in the south of England, with experience of radio and television, who noted that

> There's a distinction but it's in a spectrum … I think that it's … also very good for you to [do because] ultimately you're paid by public money … the way the question is framed and formulated is different; the way the answers are formulated are different; but the issues are … the same … it would be terrible if you said 'look, I've got some things that I talk to the public about, but meanwhile … back in the study I do something completely different' …

Returning to the idea of the historian as a public servant of sorts, the scholar was keen to emphasize the potential of television to open up historical research and insights to a wider audience. A similar point was made by an independent scholar with substantial experience of television and radio work, who commented that

> [T]he general public, say 'are you popularising history?', and we say no, we're publicising history … I think it's really … important to … fight to keep the content high, and … not keep knowledge within a tiny, not ever decreasing sphere … I do think it's terribly important that information gets out to a wider public.

Despite her rejection of the term 'popularize' in favour of 'publicize' it is clear that both scholars sought to strike a balance between excessively arcane approaches and those that could be accused of being too simplistic when addressing a wider audience.

However, others were less likely to recognize history on television as public history. One contrasted British programming unfavourably with the French, on which there may be 'literally four historians sitting around the table, talking through an issue … And it's very interesting but the idea that something like that would be television in this country, that's radio in this country.' In another example, a scholar was offended by the question, responding that to ask if his television work had been a form of public history was to suggest that his integrity had been somehow compromised. While this was a unique response it does point to sensitivity on the part of a minority of scholars involved in television, for the medium offers the problematic opportunity to publicize their research but also to risk criticism from their peers. For others it was out of the question to be further involved in television:

> I wish that I could be a public historian … [but] the way the system seems to be set up at the moment, where production companies are chasing money, forced to come up with ideas that are sexy in order to get a contract … they're not … willing to take the risk in doing things in a more sophisticated and complicated way.

Interestingly, this scholar undoubtedly classified history on television as potentially public history, but he did not see it as achieving its potential due to economic and other imperatives. Probably more representative of scholars who have worked for several years alongside programme makers, another at the same northern English institution remarked:

> [M]ost of us say that we all want to think we have a public role and we have a public persona, but … very often they involve a lot of work … [but] there's actually a million people listening to you … [so] I do it because I enjoy it and I do it because I actually believe in it.

However, despite the large audiences reached, a minority determine what is viewed or experienced by the audience of history programming; it is one-sided – demotic rather than democratic – in the absence of influence on the part of the people making the history depicted onscreen and requires, according to Kean (2010: 38), a re-evaluation of the polarization of 'historian' and 'public' apparent in much scholarly commentary and indeed in responses of many media professionals to the perceived audiences of history programming, discussed in our chapter dedicated to this topic. While the internet offers increasing opportunity for interested parties to record, write or otherwise upload their interpretations, much history on television, like a great deal of public history, is demotic without being entirely democratic. This is especially the case when, like commemorative programming and national remembrance of other key historical events, as we consider in one of our chapters, certain forms of broadcast material fit with wider remits and identities, especially after changes to the broadcasting landscape since the mid-1990s. The democratization of history proposed by the History Workshops more than forty years ago is, in reality, still very much work in progress, making analysis of history programming in a wider context particularly pertinent.

In this introductory chapter we have outlined our key themes and points of intervention into a number of debates. These include the understanding of the television process in changing times, the construction of forms of the past and versions of national and other identities, and the modes of historiography and historical methods which lend themselves particularly to television and which therefore make a contribution to the understanding of the past presented for viewers. Our analysis throughout the book is in dialogue with the notion of public history and the contribution to that understanding by television.

In the next chapter we begin with an examination of the business and working practices of television relevant to the making of history programmes. The following three chapters focus on key genres of history programming: 'Landmark and flagship television', through which we examine the role of these high-end programmes and series within and without the industry and raise particular questions about heritage and national identity in relation to these products. Our chapter on 'Commemorative and "historical event" television' raises questions of memory and identity and in 'Reenactment: engagement, experience and empathy' we examine the genres of 'reality history' which blossomed during our period of study. In Chapter 5, 'Who do "they" think

"we" are?: considering the audience', we discuss the ways in which audiences are perceived within the discourses of television and how these shape the different products. In the conclusion, 'Problematizing "public history" – what is rarely there?' we provide examples of programmes which, although in the main produced within specific 'commemorative' or other programme 'seasons', deal with those aspects of the past which are largely ignored in more general output. In so doing we return to our understanding of public history and ask to what extent television can actually be described as a 'public historian'.

1

THE BUSINESS OF TELEVISION: PUBLIC SERVICE TO BRAND IDENTITY

In our introductory chapter we considered television as public history, and especially in relation to the changes to the television landscape noted by Turner, Bonner and Dovey. Our discussion focused on their observations of the changing nature of television discourse and content. In order to reach a deeper understanding of the operations of television and how they shape representations of history, we now turn to broadcasting organization, strategies and planning which are important but often-neglected elements in academic research. Although we refer on occasion to other national broadcasters and programmes relevant to our topic, our emphasis is on UK television. This is to acknowledge what Charlotte Brunsdon and David Morley call the 'nationalness' of broadcast television (Brunsdon and Morley 1999: 10) and, quoting John Ellis, its role as 'the private life of the nation state' (Ellis 1982: 5). While it is the case that some history programmes are exported, much output is made for a national audience, and all are the products of a particular amalgamation of broadcasters and producers operating within the UK broadcasting structures. As one of our primary aims is to demonstrate how the broad and specific production context shapes history programming it is imperative that we address this specificity while recognizing those 'external' pressures which in turn shape the production contexts. Indeed, the UK broadcasting structures and organizations have come under pressure to adapt to changes brought about by the increasing commercialization of culture more broadly and the impact of new technologies on television production and distribution more specifically. In this chapter we therefore examine how these challenges and the responses to them have shaped history programming in this specific national context.

We will discuss key aspects of the place of history programming within the business of television but one profound and enduring tension is that between the entertainment imperative and the still significant role of some broadcasters in the UK to fulfil their public service remit. In the case of the BBC, the continuing importance of history programming as part of its public service educational remit will be examined,

including its relationship with the Open University in providing web source back-up and access to learning programmes. Clearly the public service requirement is significant for the BBC and, as we shall see, other channels, and often manifests itself in the large-scale and highly visible products which we discuss in the following chapter, but history programming is also present in what has been referred to as 'ordinary television' (Bonner 2003) or more routine output, such as long-running series and strands. Broadcast scheduling remains an important element in day-to-day planning (Ellis 2000a) and we will see how the placing of history programmes and the development of new genres are reflected in broader scheduling strategies. Over the previous few years we have noted the various ways in which 'history content' has been mobilized in order to create programmes that fulfil new broadcasting criteria. One such, in the 2000s, was the import of audience voting into history programming with *Great Britons* and *Restoration* which, as Wayne Garvie, then Head of Entertainment at the BBC, insisted 'pushed all the buttons' by being entertaining and interactive, and joined in 'the national conversation' (quoted in Brown 2004). We will look closely at these examples and note in particular their distinctive constructions of the nation and national identity.

Scheduling and other strategies adopted by the terrestrial broadcasters in the UK are partly in response to the changes in television that have been brought about by challenges from increasing numbers of satellite channels and digital channels, some of which have been established by the terrestrial broadcasters themselves. The second part of this chapter focuses on the move to digital television in the UK within the context of a multi-channel environment. We look in particular at the strategy for history content developed by the BBC which remains the major producer of factual history programmes. Their strategy is aimed at developing distinctive channel identities through their history output. We contrast this with other terrestrial networks especially in relation to their 'brand' identity and assumed and desired audience. Su Holmes and James Bennett have produced insightful analyses of the value of the 'television personality' and their 'economic, ideological, textual and cultural importance' to broadcasters (Bennett 2010: 9). This is demonstrably the case for history programming and the final section of this chapter looks at how the 'logics of television' have called for particular styles and modes of performance from history presenters. Gender is our key category for analysis here but in drawing attention to the role and treatment of female presenters within the production process we invite consideration of the whiteness of much history and presentation thereof, a subject to which we return in our final chapter.

We begin our first section by outlining one of the earlier vehicles for history output, the series strand and its function for broadcasters. Dealing as we do with the major terrestrial broadcasters this brief history of this particular form of history programming provides an introduction to their approaches to factual history programming.

Series strands

Long-running series strands have been an enduring part of television programming, providing regular viewing points in the schedules and becoming identified with

the transmitting channel or network. In addition, as John Wyver has argued with reference to arts programming, they offer creative potential and editorial freedom for broadcasters and producers in that they are able to determine the content from week to week within the series run (Wyver 2007). However, in the digital age these series strands are coming under threat. This is particularly the case for more serious content. The chief example of a series strand for history content remains *Timewatch*, which was launched on BBC Two on 29 September 1982 under Tim Gardam's editorship. It adopted a magazine format which allowed for a number of stories, or 'features', to be included in each episode. Gardam, himself an enthusiast of history programming, invited academic historians to present self-contained items. The older long-running series *Chronicle* provided the template for *Timewatch*, which distinguished itself by focusing on history rather than archaeology. As well as providing editors and producers with the relative freedom to introduce a range of topics and presenter styles, television series such as these offered audiences a regular fixed time in the schedule.[1] The magazine format was dropped when Laurence Rees took over as editor in 1993 but the spirit of editorial freedom was expressed as recently as 2006 when John Farren, then editor of *Timewatch*, described it as 'the best job in the world of television'. He went on to describe how he chose the stories for the twelve episodes per year:

> I am 'pitched' many hundreds of stories by publishers, academics, authors, BBC producers, independent TV producers, BBC factual commissioners, friends, family, people I meet at parties. Many of these would make great films. And I just choose the 12 stories I like the most (and that more importantly I believe my audience will like the most.) Some of the obvious ingredients are emotion, name recognition, personal stories, fresh revelations, a sense of quest, the occasional real scoop. And literally anyone may have the story that does the trick.[2]

Timewatch came to be a symbol of high quality history public service broadcasting to the extent that when rumours circulated that it would be a victim of impending cuts in October 2007, a group of historians and television presenters wrote to the BBC Trust claiming that ending one of the BBC's most respected documentary strands could lead to 'fewer serious history programmes and more history-lite reality shows'.[3] Whether it was in response to this influential pressure or not, *Timewatch* was spared the axe. Indeed, the BBC and the Open University had signed a co-production deal for *Timewatch* in 2006. However, more recently the future of *Timewatch* has been uncertain. John Farren left to become Creative Director of 360° Productions in 2011 but four episodes were transmitted between 25 October and 15 November of that year. In his blog on the BBC website, Martin Davidson, BBC Commissioning Editor for History and Business, referred to these programmes as 'World War II's Secret Stories' which is, perhaps, evidence of a different editorial approach. It is notable, for example, that the four episodes had different executive producers with no named editor. Since leaving the BBC Farren has executive-produced the eight-episode series *Digging for Britain* presented by *Coast* presenter Alice Roberts (BBC Two 2011) and the three-episode series *The Crusades* presented by Tom Asbridge (BBC Two 2012).

Channel controllers were keen to develop 'flagship' series, further examples of which are considered in our chapter specifically relating to such programming, that helped to express the identity of their channel and *Timewatch* was undoubtedly a jewel in the BBC's crown in this respect.

Moving to ITV's history series, *All Our Yesterdays* (1960–69 and 1987–89) reconstructed the past using Movietone newsreel clips with a presenter on hand to contextualize the extracts. The beginning of the first series was produced by Jeremy Isaacs at Granada TV and shown weekly to a large national audience. It was avowedly populist and aimed to foster collective memory through the use of newsreel archives. Reflecting their regional locations a number of ITV companies created series for their audiences, such as Anglia's *Bygones* and Yorkshire produced a long-running series for schools, *How We Used to Live*, which received network coverage. During the period of our project ITV has undergone major change in structure largely due to economic challenges that it failed to meet. ITV later established the series format *The Way We Were* (2004), based on archive footage, much of which was drawn from 'amateur' film makers. Significantly, given ITV's original commitment to regional programming, Anglia, Granada, Meridian and Yorkshire Tyne Tees tailored the format to suit their regional audiences (Sadler forthcoming).

When Channel 4 was launched it responded to the BBC's series *Timewatch*, with its own history series *Today's History* (Channel 4 1982–84) which was clearly a strategy to demonstrate its public service remit in this important area. Channel 4, in line with its remit, and as publisher rather than producer, set out to commission items which demonstrated more innovative ways of doing history on television. Channel 4 history programming came under the remit of Naomi Sargent who had been given the job of senior commissioner for education by its first controller, Jeremy Isaacs. She was then a Pro-Vice Chancellor at the Open University and, as Isaacs says in his autobiography, 'wife of my Oxford friend Andrew McIntosh' (Isaacs 2006: 335). The programmes were made by Jerome Kuehl who had worked on Thames Television's *The World at War* and Stacy Marking who went on to produce A. J. P. Taylor's last TV series, *How Wars End* for Channel 4, which was broadcast in 1985. Both Kuehl and Marking were members of the consortium that bought the magazine *History Today* from Pearson/Longman in 1981. One of the regular presenters, Juliet Gardiner, was editor of *History Today* at the time, and she remembers titles included in the series such as 'Invisible History' (1982), 'Why War?' (1982) and 'Women and Society' (1983). Among the contributing guests were Stuart Hall, Neal Ascherson, Winifred Foley (*Child of the Forest*) and A. J. P. Taylor. *History Today* carried a supplement each month in the magazine linked to the programme but after two years the series was not re-commissioned. It was not until 1991 that Channel 4 introduced another series dedicated to history programming. This was *Secret History*, a format based on historical detective work, which ran until 2004 and which continued to offer challenging and sometimes radical versions of history. According to the Channel 4 website *Secret History* was 'the home of single, hour-long history documentaries that shed new light on some of the most intriguing stories from the past. New evidence from excavation, research and investigation reveal

strange, forgotten stories, and shed new light on the events we thought we knew well.' And to

> challenge accepted views of key events in history. Sometimes concealed, sometimes manipulated by the media, the truth has been submerged behind the headlines and the propaganda. From Roman legions to Nazi television, the series reexamined contemporary evidence, focusing on often-shocking first-hand accounts and the ground-breaking views of leading experts.

Channel 4 had another, if rather similar in aim, approach to historical subjects in their biographical strand *Secret Lives*. Presentations of the lives of, for example, Lord Baden-Powell, founder of the scouting movement, and L. Ron Hubbard aimed to reveal hitherto unknown facts about the lives of the famous. These programmes generated controversy and the series strand, re-branded *The Real …* in 1998, continued in its revelatory mode with exposés, among others, of Kaiser Bill, Albert Goering, Donald Bradman and Rupert Murdoch. Ralph Lee, commissioning editor for Channel 4 (Specialist Factual Commissioning Editor 2002–7; Head of Specialist Factual 2008–11, Head of Factual 2011–present) spoke of the demise of the history series on his channel:

> we used to have lots of strands here – we had *Secret History*, *Secrets of the Dead*, *To the Ends of the Earth* and we had *The Real*. … It used to be the case where people [the audience] came to those things and increasingly they didn't and we decided to put our resources elsewhere.

Declining audience figures are given as the reason for the axing of the series.

However, Lee hinted at other problems when speaking of *Timewatch*:

> *Timewatch* is a strand where you put individual films and they are all different … it should be in a way the most vibrant place where lots of innovation takes place and erm you get a different bit of history, different historians and directors but IT JUST ISN'T –

This indicates a lack of faith in the series format which, according to Lee's *Timewatch* example, has become tired and lacking in vibrancy. His ideas of what a programme *should* be are those of the Channel 4 remit but it is perhaps an indication of expectations of more 'audience grabbing' programming over more measured and closely argued and presented versions of history.

It was a little surprising, therefore, to learn that during his six-month period as Factual Programme Commissioner at Channel 5, during 2007, Lee commissioned its history series *Revealed*. All episodes were co-produced, the very minimum proportion of which according to Hannah Beckerman, Lee's successor, would be with a secondary UK window, for example The History Channel UK or Discovery UK, but most had agreements with American co-producers. In commissioning programmes for *Revealed*

Beckerman was looking for already familiar topics but with a treatment which she said 'also feels as if it has got something to say about us … and in some ways some kind of reflection or analysis or contribution to the understanding of how we got to where we are or something that is going on in our culture or society or economy or something about the way we live now'.

When we interviewed Beckerman Channel 5 had just aired a four-part series, *Secrets of the Cross*, which she had produced. She used the *Revealed* format with co-production money to ensure their relatively high production values but in order to fulfil their obligation to Ofcom to provide a certain number of hours of religion they decided to:

> do religion that feels like it's got the same both onscreen values and story-telling values as the history programmes that we know work really well for us so I think they did read as history programmes which happened to be on a religious subject.

This is another example of the kind of flexibility offered by strands for the broadcaster. Beckerman elaborated:

> I think having a strand gives you a lot of freedom. There's very few strands generally left, you know, and within a strand you definitely have more freedom because to some extent the risk is smaller in commissioning a single film within an eight-part run – if you get six out of eight right of those you're going to be fine.

Along with the lower risk element Beckerman valued the opportunities for creativity and eclecticism which the series strand offered:

> you'll take punts on things more, in a way there's more creative freedom, because you can do such a diverse range of topics which is what I love about having a strand. You know, you're not having to do a whole series on one subject, the sort of eclecticism of a strand has always been its absolute strength.

Although BBC Four presents much of its history programming within 'seasons', they launched the history series *Timeshift* in 2007 as '[a] series of documentaries exploring British cultural history'. The series is still running but their 2012 strap line extends its remit thus: 'Documentary series which ranges widely across Britain's social and cultural history'. The range of topics, which include, picture postcards, the circus, the funfair, film censorship and, most recently, smoking and drinking, have a distinctly 'popular' social and cultural historical feel. In the BBC History Strategy presentation of September 2009 it was felt that on BBC Four '"one-off" documentaries can drown in the schedule', thereby confirming another strength offered to commissioners and schedulers by the series format.

In 2004 Janice Hadlow had been appointed as second controller of BBC Four, which was launched in 2002, and she introduced innovative scheduling strategies especially for

their history output. These 'seasons' were made up of a mix of original, often innovative programmes, feature films and repeats from the back catalogue. Among them were *The Lost Decade* which focused on the post-War period and a season on the eighteenth century, *The Century That Made Us*. The year 2007 saw *The Edwardian Season* and 2008 *The Medieval Season*. This strategy continues to be successful for BBC Four. In their press release in autumn 2009 they explained: 'Seasons which cleverly blend distinctive original programmes and forgotten gems from the BBC's archive are a signature dish of BBC Four' (BBC press office; BBC Four autumn 2009). The examples given for the autumn 2009 schedules were *Electric Revolution*, about our changing relationship with technology and featuring '*Micro Men*, an affectionate comedy about the fledgling home computer market', as well as *This is Scotland,* which included *Jonathan Meades: Off Kilter* (BBC Four 2009), *The Play Season* and *The Glamour Season*, covering the 1920s and 1930s.

Public service remit – education in the age of entertainment

In addition to the stability and regularity of the series strands, they also signalled an educational intent on behalf of the broadcasters and in so doing contributed to the requirements of the public service remit, which is relevant in considering the changes to forms of history programming in the age of entertainment. Bonner suggests that certain elements of television output established in the broadcast age have been suppressed in contemporary television discourse, one of which is 'education'. While agreeing with her point to a certain extent, public service broadcasters like the BBC and those who maintain a public service ethos, such as Channel 4 in the UK, retain programming which, although it may not self-identify as 'educational', nevertheless has educational content or aims. For example, Wayne Garvie, when Head of Entertainment for the BBC, spoke of the successful business show *Dragon's Den* as a format which combines entertainment with what he referred to as some 'carry out' for the viewer. In this case, the 'carry out', or added value, would presumably be how to succeed in an entrepreneurial business environment. This strategy was confirmed by Roly Keating, then controller of BBC Two, in an interview with Lisa Kelly and Raymond Boyle for their project on the history of television business programmes (Kelly and Boyle 2011: 243):

> They [*The Apprentice* and *Dragon's Den*] are commissioned for entertainment but I think the penny has dropped that they are actually extremely potent tools to draw people, probably beyond the screen, into quite detailed information about how to set up a business or management techniques and so on.

Keating and Garvie are clearly expressing the BBC line on this topic and we could make similar points about history programming. Bonner argues that those programmes which draw on academic subjects such as science and history have to some extent suffered the same fate as other 'serious' programming but have not been so

'thoroughly expelled'. She refers to the UK Channel 4's *Time Team* and the *1900 House* as examples of what would formerly be understood as 'educational' output incorporating entertainment values and, in the *1900 House* case, casting ordinary people as the central performers, as we consider further in our analysis of reenactment series.

We do, however, question Bonner's understanding of 'education'. Garvie and Keating above give the broadcasters' view of how what are considered unpalatable elements of broadcasting and a turn-off for audiences can be 'smuggled in' to entertainment formats. In BBC publicity and in its calls for programme pitches the word 'education' is, admittedly, used sparingly or in small print with phrases such as 'knowledge strategy' and the 'learning journey' foregrounding a more 'audience led' pedagogic model. This echoes debates within the field of education where pedagogic modes of delivery have been subject to interrogation, resulting in a move towards a more democratic style of teaching and learning. School teachers in the UK, for example, are encouraged to think about the function of their roles as either the 'sage on the stage' or the 'guide from the side' and to consider how effective each method is in delivering learning objectives. In the late 1990s the revival of the 'sage on the stage' mode of delivery had considerable and surprising success within the industry. Simon Schama's *A History of Britain* and David Starkey's *Monarchy*[4] are the most obvious examples but this style is still present in many history programmes and especially those commissioned by the BBC for BBC Four. Here presenters are usually academic or professional historians or others involved in, say, museums as curators or art historians. They are knowledgeable experts who speak with authority. That said, even the overtly esoteric channel BBC Four, which was originally promoted as 'a place to think' deals with 'education' carefully. When she took over as controller of the channel, Janice Hadlow described the BBC Four output as 'clever pleasure'. Here both the problematic discourses of 'education' (for the popular audience) and 'entertainment' (for those who consider themselves more discerning than the usual viewer) are apparent. Hadlow hints strongly here of risks of 'worthiness' associated with some history programming. When at Channel 4 she declared that 'history TV viewing is not a civic duty' and insisted on the importance of commissioning good projects, placing them in appropriate time-slots in the schedules and always being aware of the viewers, thereby demonstrating the need for attractive programming.[5]

The presenter as a 'guide from the side' is much more familiar in programmes for BBC One and Two, both of which aim at a wider and different audience demographic. While these presenters may also be qualified historians, they set out on a quest of discovery and revelation that they themselves appear to share with the audience. There is, then, a fine line to be drawn between 'formality' and 'informality' and largely, as we shall see, channel identity along with broadcasters' perceptions of the audience are key factors in determining presentational style. Whatever they choose to call it, 'education' is still a strong element of the BBC's remit and output with history programming at the forefront of its offering.

The BBC also continues to produce programming with a discernible educational function. In this category some of its high profile programmes are associated with the

Open University. At its inauguration as the 'University of the Air' the Open University entered into a partnership with the BBC with jointly produced learning material in a variety of media including some for broadcast television. The airing of the programmes moved into the hours of night time and during the 1990s the OU BBC department was disbanded with BBC producers moving in to develop specific projects. In the period 2003–5 that aspect of the relationship came to an end. From that point on the Open University course materials were made by independent production companies for direct distribution, via DVD, to students under the management of the OU's media department. However, since 2004 the BBC and OU have had a partnership agreement. This has involved programmes such as *Timewatch* (2006), *Who Do You Think You Are?* (2004–present) and *Empire* (2012) which have links to material provided, in the main by the Open University, on related websites. The Open University also invites proposals for programmes on the BBC website under the BBC/OU 'Learning Journey' scheme which, according to the website, refers to 'the educational journey that enhances and enriches the broadcast experience that the viewer takes after watching/listening to the programme' (BBC website). In this respect public service broadcast television is acting as an access portal to other platforms, and audience responses to them are considered in our concluding chapter.

The collaboration between the BBC and the Open University has also produced the highly successful series *Coast*, first broadcast on BBC Two in 2005, the story of Britain's coastline. This adopted a magazine-style format incorporating a multi-disciplinary approach to the subject and included items on history, archaeology and geology. Each programme consisted of short and varied items presented by then little known experts and which did not assume sustained attention from the viewer. The series was considered to be a success and has been re-commissioned annually up to 2012. The programme had a decidedly educational role from a multi-disciplinary 'small dedicated team of experts' made up of a geographer, historian, archaeologist, zoologist and anthropologist. All were 'bouncy' and enthusiastic, their presentation performance moving at a fast pace through the landscape looking over their shoulders as the camera apparently struggled to keep up. The programme's longevity has enabled expansion and developments beyond its original scope. Felix Thompson argues that although *Coast* clearly set out, in its first series, through a sequential journey round the coast of the UK to tell the 'story of an island nation', its subsequent series moved away from the nationalist prospectus revealing national geographical boundaries which were permeable as well as enclosed and protective. This shift can be seen as an uneasy negotiation between home as identified by its geographical boundaries and *Heimat* as the symbolic ideal place of belonging (Morley 2000).

Although Bonner would not regard this programming as ordinary television it demonstrates elements of the containment of existing popular information shows which are brought together and combined with, in the second series, HD filming of sweeping landscape shots. Helen Wheatley's reading of the noticeable increase in the 'landscape mode' of television relates it directly to the BBC's venture into HDTV and into what she calls 'spectacular television' (Wheatley 2011). As we will see in the following chapter, the history of the landmark history programmes for television

culminates for the time being in the spectacular and can be further related to technological and institutional developments.

History with a decidedly educational address can also appear in surprising places in the daily schedules. For example, *The One Show* (BBC One 2007–present) a topical early evening magazine show which aims to showcase stories from around the whole of the UK,[6] has a 'resident' historian, Dan Snow, who has also presented his own series (including several with his father the veteran broadcaster Peter Snow). Snow presents short films which are sometimes clustered into a series of daily reports, for example 'Five Days that Changed Britain' – the arrival of the *Windrush*, the first passenger steam train, the sealing of the Magna Carta, the day Romans invaded Britain, and the East India Company receiving its charter. These are an interesting range of topics selected for the magazine show and Snow adopts the persona of an enthusiastic expert wanting to share his knowledge with the audience. In addition, in the summer of 2011, the BBC ran five weekly shows at 7.30pm, *National Treasures Live*, part of the BBC Learning's 'Hands on History' campaign presented by Snow and Sian Williams, who was at the time of broadcast well known to BBC One viewers as a Breakfast TV presenter. The BBC linked up with history and heritage organizations and their website gave information about events and activities to be pursued. Once again we see educational content inserted in accessible everyday formats as items which provide a 'carry out' for its viewers which might lead to a 'learning journey'.

As we note in detail in a dedicated chapter, anniversaries and commemoration are keystones of much historical programming. However, along with high profile 'historical event' outputs in prime time, programmes such as the BBC's *Land Girls* and *The Week We Went to War* (both broadcast daily 7–11 September marking the anniversary of the beginning of the Second World War in 2009) were placed in the daytime schedules. The latter was presented by Michael Aspel, a familiar and respected television presenter who retired from a long term of presenting the *Antiques Roadshow*. Also the marking of VE Day in 1995 included BBC's *News 45: VE Day* presented daily on BBC One. The news was read by the then presenter of the *Antiques Roadshow*, Hugh Sculley and former newsreader Sue Lawley. ITV included a themed section in *News at Ten* on 6 May 1995.

The public service commitment to education in general and history in particular, although still evident in terrestrial output, has undergone change in response to the need to ensure audience impact and share. What is striking, perhaps, is the sheer versatility of history as 'content' as it travels across popular genres and into the schedules. We will now consider the changing characteristics of the television schedules and the ways in which producers and commissioning editors responded to the new requirements.

The changing nature and role of scheduling

Some of the differences between the BBC and the OU involved the scheduling of the OU programmes and the BBC's drive at the time to maximize their audiences. Competition was beginning to bite and, as Georgina Born argues, the corporation was undergoing internal difficulties of its own, for example, the introduction of

'producer choice' and the 'marketization' if the BBC (Born 2004). Clearly technological developments played their role in the changing nature of the BBC's involvement with the OU as DVDs provided a cheap and accessible (to most) form of learning material. Satellite and other channels were offering 24/7 viewing and the sedate ending to the BBC Two's transmissions provided by the OU ident was, by the mid-1990s, clearly seen to be out of date.

As John Ellis points out, the academic study of television broadcasting has neglected scheduling, which he argues is a very important part of the television process (Ellis 2000a). In the early days of television studies scholars noted the power of the national broadcasters through the scheduling of their programming to construct or at least reinforce domestic and, especially, family routines. Also Scannell and Cardiff (1991) drew attention to the insertion of the national calendar and the rhythms of national life through the broadcasting of rituals and traditions, for example, sporting and state events, into domestic life. But much less attention has been paid to the actual process of scheduling adopted by the broadcasters and how this gives networks and channels a sense of their identity as well as going head-to-head with the competition. Ellis is the exception to this, including a chapter on 'Scheduling: where the power lies in television' in his book *Seeing Things: Television in the Age of Uncertainty*. For him '[t]he schedule defines the everyday specificity of television' (Ellis 2000b: 131) and, he argues, television in its recent history 'has moved from an offer-led system to a demand-led system'. This has been brought about by the increase in channels and, by extension, competition. He suggests that far from the programme makers and commissioners generating what might appear in the schedules, it is now far more the case that senior managers and chiefs of planning 'specify the kinds of programming they need to fill particular slots in their schedule' (*ibid.*: 132). This will be informed to varying degrees by considerations of 'budget, genre, target audience, and likely public image' (*ibid.*: 132). Although Ellis does not use this example, members of the Midlands Television Research Group based at the University of Warwick[7] identified that in the 1990s BBC Two's 8–9pm evening schedule came to be dominated by 'lifestyle' programming, and one argument put forward to explain this was the relative low cost of these programmes vis-à-vis their high audience ratings. The aim of this collective project was to 'produce an analysis which was attentive to the particular institutional and nationally timetabled aspects of programmes within a specific weekly time-slot'. The group analysed changes in the nightly schedules which demonstrated, for example, a decline in 'serious' documentary programmes which were replaced by what John Corner referred to as 'documentary-lite' programming and the loss of the regular situation comedy slot at 8pm. Charlotte Brunsdon, in her introduction to a collection of short articles, notes the pressures on broadcasters at that time of competition from satellite channels, the 25 per cent independent quota applied to the BBC since the 1992 Broadcasting Act and the requirement of controllers to commission relatively cheap programming to fill the slots and draw large and target audiences, hence the 'demand-led' system. Indeed, most of the programmes included in the analyses which followed, e.g. cooking, lifestyle and make-over programmes, were made by independent producers (Brunsdon et al. 2001: 29–62).

Although the Midlands Television Research Group did not explore the internal mechanics of scheduling, they had identified the significance of this important element of the television process in revealing broadcasters' responses to new sets of demands brought about by changes in the media ecology. The presiding controllers of BBC Two for most of the 1990s were Michael Jackson and Jane Root. Root, referred to recently as the 'high priestess of lifestyle TV', was appointed Director of Programmes for BBC Two in 1999, taking over from her former colleague Michael Jackson. Both had a background in media analysis and shared a more open view of what constituted 'culture', and Root has referred to Jackson as her 'mentor and friend' (Brown 2012). They both contributed to the 'scheduling solutions' of producing relatively cheap 'lifestyle' programming for the 8–9pm slot. While Jackson was recruited from within the BBC, Root, who although immediately prior to this appointment was heading up the BBC's Independent Commissioning Group (1997–99), had previously been joint MD of the company she co-founded in 1987 with Alex Graham, Wall to Wall. Root had been involved in the successful Wall to Wall *1900 House* and she retained a feel for the appeal of the past when presented in less conventional ways. Root's influence on the look of BBC Two was considerable and not always appreciated by the more conservative critics. As we shall see, history content became caught up in the 'lifestyle, makeover' tropes of the time, but Root also found a way of rendering 'the past' into a strong vehicle for interactive television which satisfied the then aim of the corporation to engage viewers with this new form of technology.

The nation's greatest

Notable examples of the way in which history programming was used to 'tick all the boxes' are those offering ostensibly direct audience engagement, producing a version of national identity and heritage apparently constructed through viewer voting preferences. The first programme to be considered here is BBC Two's 2002 series *Great Britons*, which encouraged viewers' engagement with the past through encouragement to vote for individuals. Appearing as part of the millennial programming on British television from the late 1990s to the early 2000s, *Great Britons* responded to perceived anxieties about British and especially English identity in the wake of the year 2000, but also the devolution of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland in 1998.

Unsurprisingly, several of the scholars and media professionals interviewed as part of the Televising History project commented on the series. Some were dismissive, viewing it as 'trite'; another specifically criticized the BBC for not using the BBC History Unit in its production while admitting that they had actually voted in it. Scholars commenting on the series have discussed the use, in the main, of celebrity presenters rather than historians to argue for individual 'Great Britons' in the mini-documentaries which were aired as part of the series; one interprets this as an example of journalists and presenters stepping in to the breach left by academic historians no longer prepared to discuss the state, which is, however, necessary in helping 'create and sustain a historicized sense of nationhood' (de Groot 2009: 23). However, the assumption that historians are not prepared to engage in programming considering

broad-brush issues may not be well founded; while many of those interviewed as part of the project were cautious about the extent to which they contributed to programmes not in their field of expertise, that is not to suggest that scholarly reticence and unwillingness to engage in explicitly nationalist series explains fully the move to celebrity presenters of history programming. Indeed, as we discuss later in this and in our final chapter, this has developed over several decades and relates to, for example, a tendency of some factual programming not to position women or visible ethnic minorities who are also historians as presenter-historians, irrespective of their willingness to discuss wide-ranging issues relating to identity and nationhood (see Bell 2008). The series did, however, parallel the historiography of the nineteenth-century historian Thomas Carlyle, especially his well-worn assertion that 'The History of the World … was the Biography of Great Men'. Offering, though, a particularly affective interpretation of the life and significance of Diana, the late Princess of Wales, the importance of affect especially to hybrid forms of historical programming will also be considered in our chapter on reenactment-based series.

Perhaps due to the format's political and cultural usefulness, and despite the series' roots in the UK, the format was by 2004 celebrated by the corporation as the 'big success' of BBC Worldwide, the commercial subsidiary of the BBC, with versions in production in twenty other nations (BBC 2004: 69). Revealingly, Wolter Braamhorst, then a commissioning editor for the Dutch broadcaster AVRO, commented in an interview on its importance to the ongoing project of determining a workable Dutch national identity. Contrasting *Great Britons* with its Dutch equivalent *De Grootste Nederlander*, broadcast on KRO (Katholieke Radio Omroep) in 2004, he noted how in his perception, unlike Britain, 'Holland is not very good at celebrating its heroes … nobody picked our famous poet from the 17th century; nobody knows who he is'. After outlining debates over the requirements for those applying for Dutch citizenship, he concluded that:

> I think history's coming back because we're redefining ourselves as a sort of against the others, like 'you're that and that and that but what are we?' We didn't know, so now we're looking for who we actually are.

Programming such as *The Greatest Dutchman* [sic] had, in his view, an important role in the search for national identity. That the overall winner was the recently assassinated right-wing politician Pim Fortuyn may have demonstrated, however, the problematic nature of such series. At best, mythic ideas of the nation in adversity or recovering from the brink of destruction may be drawn upon, for example Britain's choice of Winston Churchill and Germany's of the first post-war West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer. Tellingly, in the latter case, the public were not involved with creating the shortlist; rather, a panel of experts chose names of those the public might select, and any figure with links to Nazism was banned (Gimson 2003). Indeed, in the light of Britain's and Germany's choices a journalist writing on the Dutch broadcaster VPRO's history site suggested that the Dutch wartime monarch in exile Queen Wilhelmina had a good chance of gaining first place.[8]

While historians such as Hugh Brogan bemoaned the evident failure of the series to distinguish between different types of 'greatness', he did accede that the individual documentaries presented by public figures such as politicians, historians and journalists outlining the achievements of the top 10 Britons were useful, at least in laying bare the historical myths the British, or perhaps more accurately, given the dearth of figures from elsewhere in the British Isles, the English continue to live by: like responses to *A History of Britain*'s focus on England, this absence was noted by Scottish newspapers and their readers.[9] The documentaries were, though, intended to sway the viewers and persuade them to vote: Jane Root suggested that audience members would be 'moved by the passion in their argument' and therefore inspired to join in the debate (BBC Press Office 2002).[10] Whether this was democratic in any real sense is highly debatable but her comments give a sense of the increasing desire, particularly in BBC programming, to encourage emotional responses in either audience members or those participating onscreen, the 'affective turn' described by Vanessa Agnew and discussed at greater length as part of our consideration of reenactment. Viewing Churchill's win as almost inevitable, 'so many of the living remember … what we owe to our leader', the absence of imperialists and capitalists from the top ten Brogan also reads as demonstrating many modern Britons' mentalité, although this seems less convincing, especially given the response of one reader, who noted the presence in the 'long list' of Enoch Powell, a politician whose racist rhetoric sought to stir up tensions in Britain in the late 1960s (Brogan 2003: 46–47; Dabby 2003). Indeed, rather than the uncontroversial view of British public opinion offered by Brogan, awareness of the appearance of such figures, albeit rather further down the 'top 100' Britons, along with the absence of a representative number of Scottish, Welsh or Northern Irish, as well as non-white British,[11] among the suggestions collated in the year prior to the television series reminds us of ongoing tensions in British society, as well as other nations in Europe and worldwide (see de Groot 2009: 26–27), despite their ostensibly unifying potential.

Restoring the nation

With *Restoration* (BBC 2003 and 2004) and *Restoration Village* (2006) the BBC offered the nation the opportunity to vote for which of a range of regionally based historic buildings and, in the case of the latter, wider historic sites should be fully restored from semi-dereliction. The format was developed by Endemol, who had achieved global success with the format for the gameshow/documentary *Big Brother*, which first aired in the UK in 2000 but whose CEO Peter Bazalgette had been responsible for the 1990s' lifestyle 'make-over' shows *Changing Rooms* (BBC 1996) and *Ground Force* (BBC 1996). Although both series share an element of audience participation, with preferred candidates kept in the running and less favoured choices voted out of the competition, its participants 'both game players and television "actors"' (Corner 2002: 268), it seems excessive to condemn their similarities to the extent that the historian Tristram Hunt has, including such programmes as examples of 'bastard [history] genres' (Hunt 2005), and indeed the participation of the audience may

instead be seen as an example of the democratizing potential of television. De Groot makes a valuable point with his assertion that the series 'presents the reclamation of heritage as the responsibility of the somehow historically enfranchized individual rather than the community' (de Groot 2009: 168) and, as we would argue, the move to a representation of the past and present as the responsibility of the somehow historically enfranchized *community*, however defined, became more evident in programming broadcast in the later years of the decade, and relates to wider social and economic changes in Britain. He distinguishes between such series and the 'reality history' reenactment series – which we discuss in a later chapter – on the basis not only of the former's use of voting, but also of its apparent 'lack of human involvement'; such series do not seek to physically and emotionally experience the past. However, this risks conflating the intentions of the programme makers with the actual effect of the series; viewers voting for a local building shown on *Restoration* which resonated with a sense of their regional or national identity, for example, may well have been as engaged by the past represented to them as those watching, or indeed participating in, series such as *Edwardian Country House*. It should not be assumed that those who feel themselves enfranchized by being able to contribute their opinions to a debate over national or regional heritage through a series like *Restoration* do not experience an emotional sense of the past, however tenuous, through their participation. As Wolter Braamhorst commented of the Dutch version:

> [T]he big buildings with the big themes … came very close to winning but they didn't win. What won was a not-so-important little church … it was not a building of historical importance. It was a building of communal importance … So the whole process … was an interesting mutual influence between television on the one hand and cultural heritage on the other.

Apart from *Restoration Revisited* (2009), a one-off programme which showed the current state of the winning buildings, nothing further in this genre was offered by the BBC until some two years later, when a rather different version was aired. Possibly in the wake of 'phone scandals' on several gameshows in the intervening years, with calls charged for but not logged, the 2011 version *Restoration Home*, also produced by Endemol, combined an account of owners' attempts to maintain the homes they had, in the main, bought rather than inherited. This reflects, then, more a merging of lifestyle programming and architectural and social history – in the words of BBC Two Commissioning Editor Alison Kirkham, it draws together 'history and the popular topics of restoration and reclamation' – rather than a return to the original format; although de Groot perceives the earlier series to have been 'historical makeover shows' (2009: 172) they may equally be seen as consciously offering parallels between the work of the BBC as national broadcaster and preserver of culture and heritage, and the work of bodies such as the National Trust. Further, the success of *Who Do You Think You Are?* also broadcast by the BBC and discussed in the following chapter on flagship television is drawn upon by Endemol, who describe the series as revealing 'the family trees of these crumbling ruins.' Yet here historic sites rather than

individuals have genealogy and in this respect it resembles its older sibling, *Restoration*.[12] (Endemol 2010; BBC Press Office 2010a). Presented by actress Caroline Quentin and including historian Kate Williams and architectural expert Kieran Long, the change of personnel was also, reportedly, due to the economic recession, an influential factor affecting several formats considered in this chapter. Specifically, the former presenter Griff Rhys Jones was perceived to have been among those paid 'too much' by the corporation, particular in the economic climate of the 2010s (Bell and Leftly 2010).

The *Restoration* impulse, although not the format, has remained on television in the form of 'reality programmes' such as *Village SOS* for BBC One in partnership with the Big Lottery Fund which aimed at 'promoting community action in rural areas', and was screened on BBC One in September 2011. Three episodes from Talgarth in Wales, Caistor, Lincolnshire and Honeystreet in Wiltshire involved the community in restoration projects: restoration of a mill and local pub and in Caistor the establishment of an arts and heritage centre. BBC Two also screened *The Big Bread Experiment* in December 2011, which focused on the renovation of Crakehall Watermill in North Yorkshire and the establishment of a working bakery. In these later series enterprise meets renovation, set within Prime Minister Cameron's 'big society', otherwise translated as self-help through community action. Such programmes provide excellent examples both of the schedule serving and box ticking required by the major public service broadcaster in the UK.

New challenges for the schedulers

Even though the ways in which people view television are changing, for example, via iPlayer and time-shift, the art of scheduling still has an important role to play and is arguably increasingly critical for terrestrial television in the UK. In the context of increasing competition for viewing share from satellite channels, the strategy adopted by terrestrial broadcasters has been to develop 'must see' entertainment formats especially for weekend viewing. Examples are talent shows such as *X Factor*, *Pop Idol* and *Strictly Come Dancing* screened by ITV and BBC on Saturdays with catch-up programmes on Sundays. BBC and ITV continue to produce dramas with high production values with which they battle for audience share, especially on key viewing nights at weekends. So critical has this become to broadcasters that, partly in response to press complaints of schedule battles for popular television, the controllers of the main television networks exchange their planned schedules a fortnight ahead. This is designed to maximize audience choice of broadcast time viewing. Sunday night television is, according to George Dixon, controller of channel management for Channel 4, the biggest night of the week on which there are 30 million viewers available. Programme strategy for Sunday nights has been criticized recently for its appeal to older viewers with period dramas which are also skewed towards the female audience. At the time of writing, *Upstairs Downstairs,* a BBC re-make of the successful LWT 1971 series (BBC 2010 and 2012), *Call the Midwife* (BBC One 2012) and *Downton Abbey* (ITV 2010 and 2011) are being shunted around the schedules in order to avoid time-slot clashes (Mark Lawson, *The Guardian* 18 February 2012). This cooperation between

the terrestrial competitors is a new development and one that underlines the importance of scheduling to broadcasters and audiences. However, viewers are using electronic programme guides (EPGs) to search for viewing information. This certainly does not override scheduling in any way but it has influenced the way television programmes are presented and especially with reference to their title. The title must 'stand out' in the guides and the first words of a title must be both eye-catching and give as clear an indication as possible of the content of the programme.

Richard Melman, Executive Director of The History Channel UK (now re-branded History UK), told us that the titles of programmes have become an extremely important element in attracting audiences. Formerly a television producer, he said he used to 'spend days coming up with esoteric titles that you would only understand in the closing moments of the programme'. As Executive Director and main commissioner for the UK arm of The History Channel, he said: '[N]ow I sit here and say "call it 'Tank'".' Melman was also acting MD of the Biography Channel at the time of our interview and he told us of his regret in recently letting a programme title 'The Real Story of Tommy Cooper' through the editing process. The words 'The Real Story … ' only appeared on EPGs which was the lowest rating programme of the week because, as he said, 'no-one could be bothered to find out what it was about' They re-titled it 'Tommy Cooper – The Real Story' and transmitted it a few weeks later and it gained the highest ratings of the week on Biography. Although this example is taken from a satellite channel the constraints of EPGs apply to all channels and networks.

The established and long-running contribution of history programming to broadcasters' remits to the fulfilment of public service remains, but it has undergone changes, if not transformation, in the ways in which it is presented to the viewer. This can be seen in the insertion of history programming into popular or regular magazine formats and as important 'content' in the development of new and hybrid genres. Each of the examples upon which we have dwelt at some length also reveal a strong sense of the nation's past, of its landscape and geographical boundaries and of the achievements of its so-called Great Britons. In addition, the *Great Britons* and *Restoration* genres are also examples of involvement of the viewing public through new forms of technology and a key objective of the BBC in this period. The *Restoration* impulse also morphed into a number of 'community self-help' shows which resonated with current public and government rhetoric about the 'big society'.

The move to digital

One of the responses from broadcasters to the changes in the television landscape during the period of our study can be seen in the increasing importance of branding and channel identity in what Brett Christophers refers to as a shift from the 'distribution economy' to the 'attention economy' (Christophers 2008, citing Goldhaber 1997 and Davenport and Beck 2001). Catherine Johnson suggests that, far from being a strategy limited to commercial networks and organizations, this strategy has been employed by those broadcasters who have a commitment to public service

broadcasting. For Johnson the corporate brand is a critical strategic factor for terrestrial broadcasters and especially, in the UK's case, the BBC. As many television scholars have acknowledged, the BBC found itself having to respond to competition which threatened to challenge its dominance in terms of audience and what is more, as Johnson points out (2012), its branding strategy was as important for internal distinctions as it was for its external identity.

As early as 1988 the BBC referred to itself as a 'brand leader … setting the standard by which quality and service to the public are judged' (BBC 1988 quoted in Johnson 2012: 96). Since then the BBC has worked hard on developing their brand, which defines its public service remit. However, the more recent history of the BBC's diversification has meant that the use of its brand is not homogeneous but is variable according to the context and markets being addressed. In April 1992 the BBC with Thames Television launched the UK Gold channel designed to exploit their joint back catalogues. This proved a successful partnership and in 1997 in a joint venture with Flextech the BBC launched a slate of channels, UKTV, one of which was UK History, to transmit BBC content. UKTV operated as a brand and was funded through advertising, which was at odds with the BBC's public service remit. But the BBC was also active in launching digital channels under its own brand. BBC News 24 was launched in 1997, BBC Choice in 1998 (re-branded as BBC Three in 2003) and BBC Knowledge in 1999 (re-branded as BBC Four in 2002) with CBeebies and CBBC following in 2002.

In response to threatened dominance from Sky the BBC (with Crown Castle and BSkyB) launched its Freeview box, a free but limited digital terrestrial service which proved to be successful in establishing its suite of digital channels. However, as Johnson points out, this meant that the BBC was effectively competing with itself through UKTV as it used its back catalogue on its own digital channels.

In 2007 UKTV began a re-branding exercise which was eventually expanded to all its channels. In 2009 UKTV History became Yesterday: 'where the past is always present'. This strategy, according to Johnson, invested channels with 'distinctive personalities' most obviously in the case of UKTV G2 which became 'Dave', one of the most successful channels and especially, as far as the BBC was concerned, in its appeal to the lucrative, in advertising terms, market of young males. As Johnson points out, the BBC is careful to play down its presence in UKTV. This is in distinct opposition to its exploitation of the BBC brand in its more global operations through its commercial arm, BBC Worldwide. In this way, she argues, the BBC can be understood to be a 'global' brand but one which exploits its already established reputation as a public service broadcaster.

The detail of this complex branding strategy is a fascinating example of the fleetness of foot which terrestrial broadcasters have had to demonstrate in order to keep pace with the major and relatively rapid changes to their environments. This is in sharp contrast to ITV with Carlton and Granada's failed attempts at entering the digital environment. ITV Digital, after a four-year struggle which included crass errors of judgement on behalf of the management, ceased trading in May 2002 (Fitzwalter 2008). Freeview was launched in October of that year and proved to be a big success as a free, but limited,

digital terrestrial service. Freeview, the trading name of DTV, is now operated by its five equal shareholders: BBC, ITV, Channel 4, Sky and the transmitter operator Aquiva.

Channel 4, a channel wishing to retain its public service ethos, also diversified during this period into digital channels. The Broadcasting Act of 1990 effectively changed the way the channel was funded and from 1993 it became responsible for selling its own advertising. This came at a time when satellite channels were opening up, bringing with it increased competition for advertisers across the television sector. In its strategy document of 1991 the channel declared its aim to increase its audience share but emphasizing the importance of two particular demographic groups: 16–34 year olds and ABC1s.[13] Both groups were considered to be light viewers of ITV in particular and of television in general, but both were lucrative potential markets for advertisers. In addition to this strategy Channel 4 expanded its commercial operations through Channel 4 International. Under the directorship of Michael Jackson the channel expanded into a number of commercial areas – for example E4 (aimed at its key 16–34 demographic) and Film4. In 2005 More4 (aimed at its ABC1 and an older, i.e. over 35, demographic who make up 80 per cent of the Channel 4 audience) was launched. Thus, like the BBC, Channel 4 had, by 2006, a digital presence and brand strategy.

Channel identity and history

BBC

In 2009 the BBC History Unit under Martin Davidson's leadership commissioned research into the performance of history programmes across the BBC channels between 2007 and 2009 in terms of programme type and audience. This would produce data for the BBC's future plans for history programming as part of its overall 'knowledge strategy' across all their channels and was made available to us by the BBC. Each of the relevant BBC channels – BBC One, BBC Two and BBC Four – were investigated in terms of their programme types and outputs, and audience successes were measured against audience share and their perceptions of originality and distinctiveness of the programmes watched. This piece of research clearly provides a 'snapshot' of history programmes within a two-year period, but it provides insights into how the BBC defines its output as well as the profiles they build of their actual and ideal audiences for the different channels. We will return to the study in our chapter which considers broader industry perceptions of the audience, but here we consider the different categories of programme identified by the BBC and tease out some of the characteristics that shape the different forms of history programme.

The concept of genre is an important component in the analysis of television. Imported from literary and film studies, the notion of genre has provided a valuable template for understanding the characteristics of different cultural products and how they function in the relationship(s) between producers, text and intended audiences. It is interesting, therefore, to discover the kinds of programme categories used by broadcasters and what these classifications mean to their strategic planning. The categories of history programmes identified were: Heartland; Investigative; Immersive

Adventures; Contemporary Journeys; and Drama. These genres covered the following topics defined by the BBC: History of Britain; Empire and Colony; War and Military; Social History; and History of the World.

Here we will outline briefly the definitions produced by the BBC study:

Heartland. This is described as straight narrative history which is built around an event, a person or an era with or without presenting talent. This kind of programming makes up the bulk of BBC history output. Examples of these programmes from the 2007–9 period on BBC One were *How We Built Britain* (BBC One 2007), *Victoria's Empire* (BBC One 2007), *Ian Fleming: Where Bond Began* (BBC Two 2008), *Charles Darwin and the Tree of Life* (BBC One 2009) and *The Victorians* (BBC One 2007). On BBC Two 50 per cent of the series and programmes listed, excluding *Timewatch* which employs a range of styles, were in this category. Notable examples from the period of the BBC study were *Andrew Marr's History of Modern Britain* (BBC Two 2007), *Great British Journeys* (BBC Two 2007), *Jeremy Clarkson: Greatest Raid of All Times* (BBC Two 2007) and *The Story of India* (BBC Two 2007). In 2008 examples were *Hadrian* (BBC Two 2008), *RAF at 90* (BBC One 2008) and *The American Future: A History by Simon Schama* (BBC Two 2008). It can be observed that, in spite of its name, 'Heartland' programming does not focus on British history alone but can cover, as we see from the above, 'history of the world' topics and 'war and military' subjects.

Investigative. For the BBC this describes those history programmes which are challenging and which require intellectual engagement from the audience. They are usually presenter-led. This genre appears mostly in the BBC Two schedules during the period. These were: *Moira Stuart in Search of Wilberforce* (BBC Two 2007), *Simon Schama: Rough Crossings* (BBC Two 2007) (both of these programmes were part of the abolition of slavery season and are referred to in our final chapter), *Clash of Worlds* (BBC Two 2008) and *After Rome* (BBC Two 2008). BBC Four's contribution to this season was, *Racism: A History* (BBC Four 2007) and, according to the BBC's review, was the only programme in this category on BBC Four during the period.

Immersive adventures. As their name suggest, these are programmes that offer excitement to the viewer through the use of, for example, CGI, reconstruction and drama, and are commissioned for BBC One or BBC Two. During the period, BBC One broadcast the following 'immersive adventures': *Heroes and Villains* six episodes (BBC One 2007 and 2008) and *Cleopatra: Portrait of a killer* (BBC One 2009), which represented BBC One output in the 'history of the world' topic category over the three years. In 2007 BBC Two offered *20th Century Battlefields* (with Peter and Dan Snow, BBC Two 2007), *The Day India Burned: Partition* (BBC Two 2007) and *The Wild West* (BBC Two 2007).

Contemporary journeys. This classification describes those programmes that use contemporary experience as a way into historical stories and information. This encompasses reality history and reenactment programmes. Three series of the genealogy programme, *Who Do You Think You Are?* ran during the years studied. The only other example on BBC One during the period was *My Family at War* (BBC One 2008). In

2008 BBC Two screened *The Supersizers Go …* [14] series in this genre which was followed by *The Supersizers Eat …* in 2009. 2009 also saw the first run of *Victorian Farm* (BBC Two 2009) in this category, which is discussed at greater length in our consideration of reenactment series. While *Supersizers* is categorized as 'social history', *Victorian Farm* comes under the 'History of Britain – Victorian England' topic heading. Contemporary journeys featured on BBC Four in 2007 in *The History of the World Backwards* (BBC Four 2007), *How to be Edwardian* (BBC Four 2007) and *Edwardian Supersize Me* (BBC Four 2007). In 2008 *Stephen Fry and the Machine that Made Us* (BBC Four 2008) and *Clarissa and the King's Cookbook* (BBC Four 2008) were transmitted.

Drama. This category refers to scripted drama such as *The Devil's Whore* and is distinct from dramatic reconstruction. During the entire period the History Unit's drama output was limited to *Florence Nightingale* (BBC One 2008); *Versailles: the Dream of a King* (BBC Two 2009), *Margaret Thatcher – the Long Walk to Finchley* (BBC Four 2008) and, in the same year *1908: the First True Olympics* (BBC Four 2008). According to Martin Davidson this low drama output is partly due to the high cost of drama compared with other genres but also a barely disguised disdain from the drama department when the factual units attempt this form of programme.

The researchers commissioned by the BBC attempted to ascertain from audiences, through appreciation index techniques, which programmes or series they considered to be 'original' and 'distinctive' for each of their channels. For BBC One the 'contemporary journey' genre scored highly in this respect, especially those programmes which utilized the techniques of *Who Do You Think You Are?* such as tracing public records, interviewing local historians, etc. Because of the success of the contemporary journey format, such as *Who Do You Think You Are?*, BBC One garnered a younger audience than for other BBC channels. For BBC Two in the period *Victorian Farm* and *After Rome,* presented by the London Mayor Boris Johnson, scored well in terms of distinctiveness and audience share. This was encouraging for the channel in that the topics covered were rarely seen on television, looked at discrete issues and were more distinctly focused aspects of history. According to their research the majority of BBC Two output felt the same for the viewers consulted which, although delivering a good share of audience, lacks clear distinctiveness. *Supersizers* delivered high originality and distinctiveness scores as well as audience share. This skewed the audience towards a younger demographic and, along with *Victorian Farm*, led the researchers to suggest that the channel was ready for more immersive or formatted history. The BBC Four audience identified those programmes which approached familiar topics or subject matter in a different way as the most distinctive. The two programmes which scored highest for originality and distinctiveness were *Stephen Fry and the Machine that Made Us* and *How the Edwardians Spoke*; the latter used original recordings of Edwardians speaking while Stephen Fry looked at medieval history through its most significant development, the printing press. On this channel *Edwardian Supersize Me* scored lower than average on originality and distinctiveness, whereas on BBC Two *The Supersizers* format scored above average. The researchers noted that what they

described as the more 'conceptual and "ideas based" propositions', *History of the World Backwards* and *Racism: A History* were the weakest performers. They asked whether stronger talent would have increased their appeal or if this could have been the 'wrong kind of flavour' for BBC Four.

It is, however, important to point out that there are programmes which can surprise the commissioners and broadcasters. Two examples, one prior to the BBC's study and one post-dating it will provide salutary reminders of the unpredictability of reception. The first is a three-hour series broadcast on BBC One which was made up in the main of black and white film archive. Its title was *The Lost World of Mitchell and Kenyon* and was the result of collaboration between the British Film Institute and the BBC. The basis was recently found archive of the Lancashire commercial movie makers founded in 1879. The stock had been discovered in 1994 during demolition of shop premises, hidden in milk churns. The film was preserved and stored and the University of Sheffield, with funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Board, researched the 800 hours of film. As well as a selection of the films, the programme included interviews with descendants of people shown in the films and some dramatic reconstruction. It came as a surprise to those who had worked on the project that the familiar Dan Cruickshank was chosen as presenter when film and cultural history expertise was represented by those who had worked on the project and in the culminating collection of essays (Toulmin et al. 2004). That said, the series was a success and, arguably, led to further 'found archive' based programmes such as *The Lost World of Friese-Greene* (BBC Two 2006) and even Cruickshank's more recent *The Great British Home Movie Roadshow* (BBC Two 2010) with *Newsnight* presenter Kirsty Wark.

The second example is the success in critical and audience terms of Professor Mary Beard's programmes *Pompeii: Life and Death of a Roman Town* (BBC Two 2010) and *Meet the Romans with Mary Beard* (BBC Two 2012). Although, as we shall see later, her presence on television was not welcomed by all, her programme on Pompeii was the highest rating documentary on BBC Two for that year. A number of commissioning editors confirmed that they would like to see more women presenters on history programmes but, as we discuss below and elsewhere in the book, this was not without qualification as to availability of females with both expertise and the required performance skills.

However, from the BBC's strategy documents we can see their approach to what Catherine Johnson calls 'programme branding', which is to say that distinctly different programmes in terms of content, style and educational aim are formulated for each of the BBC channels. The industry concepts are useful in understanding the imperatives which drive commissioners and, consequently, the shaping of the kinds of history programming on offer. This relates to period, location and style of presentation. The BBC also aims to offer the audience what they require from such programming as well as to place their programmes within an overall mission for history programmes across the channels.

ITV

From its beginnings the strictly regulated ITV network was, Catherine Johnson and Rob Turnock point out, paradoxically, a commercially funded public service broadcaster.

Furthermore, each of the companies based in UK regions were required to produce national and regional broadcasts. Early notable history presenters for ITV were Kenneth Clark and A. J. P. Taylor but it is the case that ITV is not well known for its large output of history programmes, but arguably one of the most significant and long-lasting series about the Second World War was produced by the ITV company Thames Television, *The World at War* (Thames 1973).[15] Following that groundbreaking series Thames continued to produce history documentaries from a small unit within the documentary department. These included a series on the history of Palestine, and one on the conflict in Northern Ireland, *The Troubles* (ITV 1981), among others. These one-off or multi-part documentaries had to compete for network transmission slots which, in terms of documentaries, were gradually moved into late evening in the schedules.[16] Granada and Central Television also produced one-off history documentaries. In 2007 ITV commissioned the series *You Don't Know You're Born* from Wall to Wall, the makers of *Who Do You Think You Are?* A similar style of series using 'family history research as an investigative narrative structure' (Holdsworth 2010: 234), with celebrities 'rolling up their sleeves to do their ancestor's job'[17] in a brief moment of living history, it was relatively unsuccessful and was not re-commissioned. This is but one of several instances in which the increasingly embattled ITV, who the following year were released from their public service obligations by Ofcom, sought programming similar to popular BBC series, especially those which were presenter- or celebrity-led (Sadler forthcoming; Zoellner 2009: 511, 528). Wall to Wall's later production for ITV, *Long Lost Family* (2011–), was sponsored, like *You Don't Know You're Born*, by Genes Reunited, and draws upon narratives of loss to bring together family members separated years before for reasons that often reflect Britain's recent history, although this is by no means the central purpose of the series. The first series was successful in terms of viewing figures, garnering audiences of almost five million and a second, and third series commissioned for 2012 and 2013. As we noted above, the ITV regions have remained true to 'one of the original founding principles of commercial television in the UK' (Johnson and Turnock 2005: 31) and continue to produce history programming specific to their regional location. Barbara Sadler, a doctoral student, has researched this area of programming and her findings are referred to throughout this book. In particular, we have already referred to the format *The Way We Were* but here we note Sadler's argument that ITV companies Anglia, Granada, Meridian and Yorkshire Tyne Tees used the format at a time when their distinctive identities were coming under threat from the restructuring which resulted in the establishment, in 2004, of ITV plc (Sadler forthcoming).

Channel 4

Channel 4 recognized the importance of history programming as an element of its public service commitment and in their first five months of transmission broadcast *The Spanish Civil War*, made by Granada, in 1984 Central Television's *Vietnam: A TV History* and in 1985 the now famous, in academic circles at least, *The Dragon Has Two Tongues*. In the early days of broadcasting Channel 4 re-screened some ITV

programmes, for example, *The World at War* (Thames) and the period drama *A Jewel in the Crown* (Granada). According to their then chairman, Edmund Dell, this agreement garnered ITV's support for the channel's request for extended viewing hours, thereby avoiding the 'blank screen' when all other channels were broadcasting (Channel 4 Annual Report 1984). After the demise of *Today's History*, their own commissioned or bought-in history programmes continued to consist of one-off programmes or short series. After the establishment of the *Secret History* strand in 1996 Channel 4's 'factual' history output was in the main contained within this umbrella. Tim Gardam, referred to above, moved from the BBC in 1998 to take on Director of Programmes at Channel 4. We have noted Gardam's commitment to history programming which he brought to his new role at Channel 4. This was the year of David Starkey's first real venture into history presenting on television, *Henry VIII*. Gardam also commissioned *1900 House* which, in his words, 'stripped away nostalgia to lay bare the realities of family life 100 years ago' (Channel 4 1999: 8, 12).

Following Gardam, in 1999 Janice Hadlow, previously Head of BBC's History Department, was appointed Head of History, Art and Religion at Channel 4 and then Head of Specialist Factual in 2002. Her statement in the Channel 4 Report for 2003 was as follows:

> In History Channel 4 will continue to distinguish itself from the competition with programmes of real distinction and purpose. In 2003 these will include Niall Ferguson's *Empire*, a deliberately authored landmark series with a revisionist argument on the achievements of the British Empire. We also will show *SAS*, *Winston's War*, a ten-part series taking a global perspective on the First World War, *Carthage*, the eighteenth-century season and a range of more contemporary history documentaries. We will build on the strengths of presenters such David Starkey, Bettany Hughes and Tony Robinson. *Time Team* will continue to grow, and in 2003 will extend into a major public event with the *Time Team* Test Pit Challenge.

Starkey and Ferguson were interesting choices for Channel 4 as both, in their different ways, have created and continue to create controversy. Ferguson, as we will discuss further in the following chapter is often defined or categorized as a 'counterfactual' historian and is said to have inspired Alan Bennett's Irwin in his highly successful play *The History Boys*, later adapted into a film, a figure which appalled British audiences but whose type was embraced by their US equivalent. The fictitious Irwin became a television historian. The counterfactual accounts of history or those which might deliberately set out to be controversial were exactly what Channel 4 wanted to maintain their 'credo'. The success of this series, in audience rating terms at least, at 2.5 million viewers led to the re-commissioning of further series: *Colossus* (2004); *The War of the World* (2006); *The Ascent of Money* (2008); *Civilisation: Is the West History?* (2011), and in spring 2012 Ferguson's company's series of films about China, *China: Triumph and Turmoil*, was aired on Channel 4. *The Ascent of Money* was the first to be made by Chimerica Media, a company which

Ferguson himself co-founded with Adrian Pennink, a former BBC director, and producer Melanie Fall, who has worked both for the BBC and the independent sector. Their aim, according to their website, is 'to make high quality history'.

During her time at Channel 4 Hadlow continued 'historical season' programming. In 1999 the *Untold: Season of Black History* included their 'landmark series' *Britain's Slave Trade* (Channel 4 Annual Report 1999). The *17th Century Season* aired in 2001 with the highly acclaimed series of docudramas *Plague, Fire, War* and *Treason: A Century of Troubles* made by Juniper Films. According to Hadlow, speaking at the History and the Media Conference in 2002, this form of history programming demonstrated what television does best. Working with documentary evidence, Justin Hardy produced a close-up, detailed and personal 'drama' involving individuals and, as Hadlow put it, 'the impact of big events on ordinary people'. In 2001 this season was the first history output to be showcased in the Channel's annual report for that year.

This general approach to history output remains an imperative for Channel 4. Ralph Lee, their Commissioning Editor told us 'At C4 we are obsessed with originality' (referred to in the Landmark chapter). The ways in which the different channels and networks do their history are, therefore, an important part of their image and identity. This is linked, of course, to their knowledge of their existing audiences and those which they wish to reach.

Channel 5

We have already referred to the Channel 5 strand *Revealed*, a series about which Beckerman was a little ambivalent regarding its 'fit' with the ethos of Channel 5.

> I think *Revealed* is an interesting case in point because there are ways in which you could say it is not 'on brand' in terms of the Channel. The audience is much younger than the audience for *Revealed* and it's got a slightly different tone and sensibility. A lot of the films that have worked very well in *Revealed* are quite traditional, conventional pieces of documentary story-telling.

We asked Hannah Beckerman if the audience was the main driver behind her mixed feelings about *Revealed*. She replied:

> Well I think it's partly because of the audience but it's partly because of the overall brand of the Channel. The Channel just wanting to feel like it's modern and tapped into contemporary concerns and mores and culture and entertainment and everything. Us wanting to feel like we're a bit more kind of alive in the present day.

For History UK, Richard Melman expressed his views on the role of his channel very clearly:

> I think the most important and most valuable thing for us which we are already fortunately is your trusted brand provider. I think that's what going to separate

> the weak from the strong – have a strong brand, make sure you're doing what you say you are going to do, make sure it's very high quality – people come to you.

We have outlined aspects of the rationale behind programme choices in relation to channel identity, we will now turn to an increasingly significant aspect of these identities, the television personality.

TV personalities and history programming

In his discussion about the rise of the television celebrity, James Bennett begins with Langer's early work on the television personality, which he distinguishes, following previous work in film and cinema studies, from 'stars'. Bennett, writing with Su Holmes (2010), quite correctly insists that the fact that debates within film and media studies have left the television personality/celebrity as a 'poor cousin' is testament to the fact that little actual attention has been paid to the important role which the television personality plays. Thus Bennett insists that 'it is important to understand the television personality's ordinariness, authenticity and intimacy not in terms of a "lack" in relation to the film star, but precisely as a site of their economic, ideological, textual and cultural importance' (Bennett 2010: 9). These personalities do indeed play an important role in relation to the branding of channels but also, for our purposes, in presenting history. In addition to the functions identified by Bennett, seen through the prism of history programming, we can add legitimacy and authority claims which are necessary for particular modes of television history. We will also note how television personalities drawn from fields other than history programmes are transferred across to history genres, carrying with them familiarity and trust engendered elsewhere. For Janice Hadlow, these performers are 'familiar and trusted guides' whose names can attract audiences due to their already established credibility and authority. Examples of presenters from this category are David Dimbleby, Jeremy Paxman, Andrew Marr and John Sargeant, all of whom are well known to audiences from news and current affairs genres, and the latter from his chaotic but lovable performance in *Strictly Come Dancing*. They also perform the role, according to Hadlow, of 'ambassadors for the idea of history'. These 'high end' performers are particularly important for BBC One, and in Sargeant's case BBC Four and ITV1 programmes. Furthermore, they present the 'Heartland' programmes which in the main focus on British history. Dimbleby's *Pictures of Britain* (BBC One 2005), *How we Built Britain* (BBC One 2007) and *Seven Ages of Britain* (BBC One 2010), Paxman's *The Victorians* and *Empire*, and Marr's *History of Modern Britain* (BBC One 2007) and *The Diamond Queen* (BBC One 2012) are all accompanied by their authored books.[18] However, these presenters are never allowed to be the 'sage on the stage'. Rather they engage with the material representation of their subject and conduct interviews which range from those with experts to so-called 'ordinary people' who have lived through, for example, colonialization. But they are more than simply 'guides from the side'. This is because of their already established 'personality' and they are at the centre of the programme themselves. Paxman's *Empire*, to which we return in our final chapter, was broadcast in

February–March 2012 on BBC One and depicts him walking through streets, landscapes, rural villages, sailing on boats and driving in trucks in a bewildering number of locations previously or currently belonging to the British Empire. The result lacks the depth required for any understanding of the activities of Britain in its colonies but Paxman's presence has the effect of overriding this superficiality. Most of the press reviews mention his television persona, that of a tough questioning, veering towards the arrogant and rude, front man of the BBC's flagship nightly current affairs series *Newsnight*. Andrew Anthony, writing in the *Observer* quotes a telling scene from the series:

> At a croquet club built by British occupiers in Cairo, he asked an Egyptian spectator:
>
> 'Were you glad to see the English go?'
> 'For sure,' replied the man, between puffs on his cigar.
> 'We weren't all bad, were we?' Paxman probed, a little desperately.
> 'All kinds of imperialism are bad,' the man explained.
> 'Was there nothing good that the British did here?' Paxman persisted.
> 'Nothing was good,' came the stony reply.
> 'All the time they were here, 70 years … did they do *nothing* good?'
> Oh for God's sake man, give it up, he's not Michael Howard.
> 'I think not,' said the Egyptian.
>
> In fact this little scene was unintentionally illuminating, and not just because the Egyptian was conspicuously enjoying one particular legacy of British rule – the rarefied sporting club. It was also noticeable how Paxman slipped about from 'we' to 'they' and 'English' to 'British', as though, when confronted with a native, his sense of national identity and personal culpability was put to the test.
>
> At such moments, was Paxman speaking as a member of Britain's privileged classes, a guilty liberal, or as representative of us, the viewers? These were questions that were actually worthy of further examination.
>
> *(Anthony 2012)*

Andrew Marr, formerly Political Editor of the BBC, currently fronts his regular politics show on Sunday mornings *The Andrew Marr Show* on BBC One. He has also recently presented a number of history programmes for the channel. He followed *History of Modern Britain* with *Andrew Marr's The Making of Modern Britain* (BBC One 2009); has also had other prime-time series such as *Britain from Above* (BBC One 2008) and *Andrew Marr's Megacities* (BBC One 2010). Marr has arguably become a brand and a significant face of history on BBC One. He adopts an active presentational style, giving impressions of historical characters and exuding a bouncy enthusiasm. Sam Wollaston writing in *The Guardian* on 23 May 2007 notes that with this programme Marr 'moves into the realms of TV aristocracy' as he turns to presenting this 'address-the-nation TV'. It is significant for our purposes that his name precedes each title giving him clear authorship and a 'personal view'. Marr then has become what Janice Hadlow referred to as an 'essayist of the TV world'.

David Dimbleby, son of Richard and brother to Jonathan and as such a member of a BBC dynasty, recently moved out of current affairs and into prime-time television programming. Dimbleby is well known to BBC audiences for his chairing of the flagship current affairs programme *Question Time* and his coverage of elections and (like his father before him) state occasions. In 2005 Dimbleby presented a six-part series for BBC One, *A Picture of Britain*, celebrating the British landscape and its representation. This was followed in 2007 by *How We Built Britain*, a lavish and well-publicized programme promoted as 'event' television for the BBC One Sunday evening 9pm slot. The series was also accompanied by a book and in 2010 his *Seven Ages of Britain* followed.

Marr, Paxman and Dimbleby are what James Bennett has called 'televisually skilled presenters' (2008b, 2010). That is to say that they are best known for their televisual presence and are assumed to attract audiences who know and trust them as their guides. They are what the industry calls 'onscreen talent'. Diane Charlesworth[19] has noted how, especially in Dimbleby's case, there is a 'projection of the self into the narratives'. This is an important device in that the viewer is introduced through the programme to another side of an already familiar character and finds out something more about them. Elsewhere we comment on Jeremy Paxman's appearance on *Who Do You Think You Are?*, which revealed his background and famously moved him to tears. These presenters and the ways in which they have been moved across to history programming are valuable components of the economy of viewing and also as key personalities for BBC One. In addition they are telling 'our' national story which, however problematic and partial, as we see in the Paxman example above, packs a strong ideological punch as their narratives, woven as they are into the BBC narrative, become the national and therefore 'the nation's' narrative.

Female television personalities do not appear to travel as easily across genres. The exceptions to this in relation to history programming are Victoria Wood (*Victoria's Empire* BBC 2007) and Carolyn Quentin who now presents *Renovation* (see earlier). Along with Sue Perkins these female personalities are best known in comedy genres.

Cross-over personalities appearing on BBC Two history programmes are Peter Snow, formerly a news and current affairs presenter who, along with his son, Dan Snow (now labelled as a historian), presented *Battlefield Britain* and other military histories. Ian Hislop, editor of the satirical magazine *Private Eye* and regular panelist on the BBC's *Have I Got News For You* has recently presented programmes for BBC Two – for example, in 2010, *The Age of Do-Gooders*, about Victorian philanthropy and in 2011 *When Bankers Were Good* which struck poignant chords with contemporary and contradictory views on this occupational group.

As we have said, history programming has not played a strong role in ITV's network identity but significantly former newsreader and 'national treasure', Sir Trevor McDonald, has presented programmes touching on royalty and, most recently, *The Mighty Mississippi with Trevor McDonald* (2012). McDonald's Jamaican identity reminds us of the consistent absence of ethnic minority presenters, a topic to which we return in our closing chapter. It also undermines the easily evoked but problematic national 'we' of Jeremy Paxman as discussed above. At the beginning of the first episode

McDonald visits the film actor Morgan Freeman who has returned to Clarksdale, his family home. McDonald asks him about his experiences growing up in what Freeman has referred to as an apartheid state. Such was the segregation that he became aware of the problem only when he made a trip to a nearby town and saw separate facilities for whites and blacks: 'As soon as I realized it I left Mississippi' and when McDonald says 'and now we have a black man in the White House', Freeman replies, with a serious look, 'Do we? What's he doing there?' and the two share the joke.

True to form, perhaps, the Channel 4 cross-over performer is best represented by Tony Robinson, presenter of the long-running *Time Team* who brings to this and all the history programmes with which he has been involved the whiff of Baldrick, the scrofulous character he played in the BBC's hit comedy history series *Blackadder*. In 1996 Ian Hislop presented *Canterbury Tales*, a history of the Church of England and a memorable series of programmes *Not Forgotten* about the impact of the First World War on British society. Hislop has also presented programmes for BBC Four, *Ian Hislop's Scouting for Boys* and *Ian Hislop Goes off the Rails* (2008) which was part of the channel's *Golden Age of Steam* season. Hislop, along with his co-panellist on *Have I Got News For You*, Paul Merton, were seen by the then controller of BBC Four, Janice Hadlow, as potential 'key figures' for the channel as it tried to build a closer working relationship with BBC Two. Merton's *Paul Merton Looks at Alfred Hitchcock* (BBC Four 2009) continued his already established interest in early cinema (*Silent Clowns* BBC Two 2007) and in 2011 BBC Two aired his *Paul Merton's Birth of Hollywood*.

We agree with James Bennett that these figures are a crucial part of the economics of television and brand management. They are familiar faces with particular personalities and backgrounds which attract target audiences for each channel. The fact that they have become the essayists of the contemporary world who are authoring versions of the past for large audiences is further evidence of their powerful position across the channels.

There are examples of television performers who also have expertise in specific areas and who become familiar and popular presenters on history programmes. Two such are Michael Wood and Adam Hart-Davis who have academic qualifications in history and science respectively. Before becoming well known for presenting history programmes they had both worked in television, Wood as researcher for YTV and BBC and Hart-Davis as researcher and producer for Yorkshire Television's popular science programmes. Wood has a long track record in presenting history programmes, beginning with *In Search of the Dark Ages* (BBC Two 1981). We have discussed his style of presentation of topics, as travelogue and historical adventure, and contribution to the popularizing of television history elsewhere (Bell and Gray 2007b), and refer to some of his programmes later in this book. He has covered a range of periods in the main for the BBC, produced by his own company, Maya Vision, and his most recent productions were a six-part series for BBC Four, *Michael Wood's Story of England* (BBC Four 2010) and *The Great British Story: A People's History* (BBC Two 2012). Hart-Davis's onscreen career began with *Local Heroes* (1996–99), produced by YTV, in which he cycled in search of significant historical figures. He then presented history of science programmes such as *What the Romans Did For Us* from 2000, ending with *What the Ancients Did for Us* in 2005, co-produced with the Open University. Dan

Cruickshank, an art historian and architecture expert, contributed to the architectural series *One Foot in the Past* (BBC Two 1993) and has presented a number of programmes and series since, mainly for BBC Two.

Vocationally skilled performers and the logics of television

Both BBC and Channel 4 have been keen to attract 'vocationally skilled performers' into their history programme schedules. In Bennett's terms, and for our purpose, these are qualified historians who carry authority and legitimacy but nevertheless also have the right style which is seen to reflect the channels' aims and ethos. We have already drawn attention to the big names in history programming: Simon Schama, David Starkey and Niall Ferguson who, as we have argued, are given 'landmark' or 'major' series and who will be considered further in the following chapter.

In order to explore further the ways in which the demands of television define what we see on the screen we now focus on the problematic position of female vocationally skilled performers on history programmes. We were told by a number of the commissioning editors and producers we interviewed that they were constantly looking out for potential female historians for presenters who they would like to employ. When Janice Hadlow attended the Televising History 2009 Conference at Lincoln she was asked why there were so few female historian presenters. She confirmed her desire to use female historians but added:

> You need a really big ego and to be totally single-minded if you are to succeed in the television talent world. A lot of women don't seem to want to take on those big presenter jobs.

Bettany Hughes has been presenting history programmes since 2000 and has bucked the trend in writing and presenting major series for Channel 4 and BBC Two, but the fact that she is the only female historian 'onscreen talent' with any such extended track record is the exception which proves the rule. However, during the life of the project we have noted a number of female historians taking to the screen. But, for women, visibility on the television screen is not without its problems. Appearance is salient where women on television are concerned and nowhere is this more apparent than when women appear to be 'clever'. Women speaking from positions of authority incite very curious responses from many quarters but none more so from the television critics themselves. Taking 'authority' as our key characteristic goes beyond the well-rehearsed, but significant, debates about 'women on television' that have focused on ageism and sexism.[20] Important as these matters are, we wish to argue that clever and intellectual women pose a threat to the 'natural' order of femininity and masculinity and especially in the very public arena of television.

Appearing on television

As a female interviewee commented, 'You can be a young woman, you can be an old crotchety David Starkey, you know, opinionated and ugly, but you can only be Bettany

Hughes.' Although she did not seek to denigrate Hughes's achievements, it is certainly the case that the media prefer younger female presenters, but describe them in ways that do little to acknowledge their authority or historical knowledge. A. A. Gill's *Sunday Times* review of Hughes's series *Athens* (Channel 4 July 2007) reflected largely on Hughes's dress and figure: 'You do have a bum that makes the Gordian knot look like a telephone-wire tangle. But, don't worry … We're really interested in what you have to say about the single transferable vote and committee decisions in 3rd-century-BC Greece' (see Bell 2008).

Indeed, in her interview with us, Bettany Hughes said

> I mean, there is no question that you have to work harder to be taken seriously as a woman on television. If you've seen the reviews for the programmes, or previews, almost without exception they're very very good, in that they can talk about how great the programme is, how great the argument is, but without exception they talk about what I look like, and what I'm wearing, so there is still a deeply seated, innate sexism within the television industry, and within the commentators on the television.

This observation was confirmed by Dr Maria Misra, a historian of Keble College, Oxford, who has presented programmes about imperial history and especially about the history of India, her area of scholarly expertise, who told us: 'Yes, I got so many emails, and a lot of the reviews mentioned the clothes, rather than the argument'. These attitudes continue. Kate Williams who presented an episode of *Timewatch*, 'Young Victoria' (BBC Two 2008) inspired the following review from *The Guardian*'s regular television reviewer, Sam Wollaston.

> Phwoar, new TV history totty. She looks like a cross between Botticelli's Venus and Meryl Streep's French Lieutenant's Woman. And she's brainy as hell and writes books. If I was Tristram Hunt – who used to be new TV history totty – I'd be seriously worried. Simon Schama? History.
>
> *(Wollaston 2008)*

Clearly this has an ironic tone and teases the broadcasters about their efforts to be more inclusive in their selection of high profile presenters but the fact that this kind of comment was irresistible is revealing. Writing a regular column for a national daily newspaper requires immediate and, as we can see, often knee-jerk responses to programmes. However, an academic view of Williams's presentational style echoes these dominant ideas about femininity. Robert Dillon in his recent book *History on British Television* refers to the choice of Williams as a move into 'problematic territory' (Dillon 2010: 77) because, he asserts, 'the most powerful signifier within the frame was Williams herself. Highly photogenic and visual arresting, Williams became the dominant visual spectacle that motivated and powered the narrative forward' (*ibid*. 78). This begs the question of which members of the audience would experience this. Dillon clearly does but places the blame for this state of affairs on Williams herself who 'by adopting this screen persona, through her willingness to be framed in such a way, turns herself into an object' (*ibid*.). He goes on to exclaim 'The camera clearly

adores her, and the shots have a similarity to the historical depiction of women sexually objectified on canvas' (*ibid*.). To suggest that Williams might have control over the way in which she is depicted is to overlook both the apparatus of television itself and the tenacious hold of particular regimes of representation of the female in visual culture.

BBC Four, given its strong commitment to history programming, have been active in recruiting unfamiliar faces to their screens. These include a number of female historians one of whom is Lucy Worsley, who presented *If Walls Could Talk*, a BBC Four history of the domestic interior. She has become a relatively high profile figure but one of the first responses to her appearance read thus:

> Do, come clean: just how enchanted are you by our latest lovely television historian, Lucy Worsley? You know the one, blonde bob, posh girl's speech impediment; looks like a mischievous flapper or a pen-and-ink drawing by EH Shepard of Christopher Robin's bohemian godmother.
>
> *(Woods 2011)*

Another example is historian Amanda Vickery, whose *At Home with the Georgians* for BBC Four incited the following review:

> Her almost naughty enthusiasm is infectious and fun, while her presenting skills are not dissimilar to that of delicious television cook Nigella Lawson. As the beguiling Professor alludes to the 'bachelor ghettos' and 'stones drenched with testosterone' it is impossible not to find the prospect of the Georgian dating scene somewhat invigorating.
>
> *(Jordan 2010)*

Since we interviewed Professor Mary Beard her programme *Pompeii: Life and Death of a Roman town* (BBC Two 2010) has been broadcast. She is an inveterate blogger and many responses to her accounts of the filming process were very positive about the programme. Many, however, did complement her on her choice of shoes (red – flat, of course, for clambering through the ruins) and matching jacket. *The Observer* reviewer was very complimentary about the programme could not resist commenting on her appearance saying:

> Beard is a great name even for a female professor, and I mean no disrespect when I say she has a determinedly un-groomed look. But traipsing as scruffily as eccentric high donnery would permit amid the evocative ruins of Pompeii, she was the perfect teller of this engaging story.
>
> *(Hogan 2010)*

This programme, according to the BBC website, attracted the highest audience on BBC Two and was therefore considered to be the most successful history programme of the year.

Beard's success resulted in a commission for a new series on Rome for the BBC, *Meet the Romans with Mary Beard*. The programme was promoted in *The Sunday Times* through an interview with Professor Beard by John-Paul Flintoff. The strap-line read:

'She's no ordinary TV presenter. She has grey hair, crow's feet and tombstone teeth.' Transpose the gender and this statement has no logic. A. A. Gill, typically, given his comments quoted earlier, in his review of the programme in *The Sunday Times* of 22 April 2011 declared that Beard was 'too ugly to be on television'. Gill's remarks provoked many comments, mostly from female journalists and television personalities (for example, presenter Clare Balding, sports commentator and presenter of popular countryside programmes whom Gill called 'the dyke on a bike'). Beard tackled Gill head on the following day in *femail Mail Online*, the online site of the *Daily Mail* newspaper and otherwise bastion of anti-feminist views, with a well-argued response entitled 'Too ugly for TV? No, I'm too brainy for men who fear clever women'.[21] Beard's series has otherwise been well received but these comments have been overshadowed by the controversy created by offensive statements by Flintoff and Gill. Her own analysis of the sexist and misogynistic gibes goes to the heart of the problem, that is, the troubling nature of female authority.

Undermining authority: positioning, presenting and subject positioning

We have already discussed the positioning of the historian presenter Kate Williams in the programme *Young Victoria* and, to further emphasize our point about the gender bias in history programmes draw attention to an example of the presentation of female historians in a 2008 programme on BBC Four. Part of the BBC Four eighteenth-century season, *The Age of Excess* was a programme about sexuality and pornography. As Erin Bell points out:

> Literary scholar John Mullan appeared in an eighteenth-century style drawing room; historian Vic Gatrell in a dining room of the same period; historian Jenny Skipp on a chair in a darkened room; and historian Hallie Rubenhold on a bed.
>
> *(Bell 2008: 7)*

At the visual level these are striking comparisons. The male scholars are able to address their views to camera with little background distraction. The female scholars were surrounded by props and eroticized 'set dressings' which hardly created an expectation of intellectual discourse for the audience. It is surely difficult to be authoritative when sprawled on a bed. As Bell continues:

> Although it is difficult to determine the extent to which each scholar was aware of how their peers were filmed, in order to make an informed decision about how they were being depicted themselves, the selection of eroticised and eroticising sets for female but not male scholars is troubling. This certainly limits the degree to which women can be taken seriously as historians.
>
> *(Bell 2008: 7)*

As Bennett acknowledges, television presenting is a highly skilled activity and when 'vocational experts' are recruited to present programmes they are, understandably,

given advice by their director and producer. One of the commissioning editors we interviewed insisted that the 'sage on the stage' was a thing of the past and that presenters were required to be much more active and engaged in the programme. Hannah Beckerman noted that:

> There is undoubtedly part of the audience who like just being told stuff. I think that part of the audience is rapidly decreasing, erm I think I feel that people want presenters, or contributors, or talent however you want to look at them, I think people genuinely want to feel that there is a response and a reaction and an experience happening that goes beyond a very kind of static kind of I'm here and you're there, that you're actually getting an emotional or a kind of visceral response from someone.

The female historians we interviewed spoke specifically about the pressures of television performance and the kind of guidance they received from their producers and directors. For example, Maria Misra recalled that:

> David Attenborough was given to me as an example on which I should model myself, and I think they were always terribly worried that I would be too academic, and they were very anxious that I should appear extremely enthusiastic, enthusiasm was important. Which is fine because I'm quite good at seeming enthusiastic because I am feeling enthusiastic. But I think they wanted a kind of naïve enthusiasm, which I thought, you know, was odd, to want. On the one hand they seemed to want someone who was an expert to present it, but then they wanted you to present yourself as a non-expert.

She noted that many history programmes' structure is that of the voyage of discovery:

> You were going on a voyage of discovery, and I think that's actually quite a powerful model in many of these things. And I can understand that, because they want the viewers to identify with you. Yes, at times I think there was a falling between two stools really – was I there as the expert, or was I there as the viewers' friend? And so sometimes I think there were faintly absurd cases where I would be going to interview somebody who knew far less than I did about something, and doing it, yes, in the manner of a sort of, you know, breathless ingénue, you know, who desperately wanted to find something out.

This is what we would describe as an example of the logics of television which tend to undermine the authority of, in this case the female, historian, placing them in the ambivalent position of non-expert. As Misra recounted, '[I]n some of the reviews I was described as a journalist, you know, even though I have a tenured academic job. So I mean, as I say I think there is a downgrading of female authority.' In addition, 'I had a very, very, erm aggressively misogynistic review, saying "Who is this woman?", you know, "Is she a historian or is she a TV presenter?", you know. So yeah, something that as I get older I think I'll become more aware of the absolutely, you know, omnipresent low-level misogyny in the culture.'

Lucy Worsley's reviewer also commented on her presentation style:

> Through all of this, Worsley came across as essentially a bluestocking [a term Mary Beard recalled, in her response to Gill, as being used of intellectually gifted female undergraduates when she was at Cambridge] doing her gallant best to seem like a perky modern TV presenter. Some of the time she even succeeded – and, luckily, when she didn't, the effect was still somehow endearing.
>
> *(Walton 2011)*

Ralph Lee at Channel 4 expressed his concern about the lack of female presenter historians but also noted the response to them:

> But I also think that women respond to women on TV that isn't that easy to measure – they don't go 'oh, great, there's a woman on TV' they go 'oh, look at her hair'. I know that's a terrible thing to say but I genuinely think that is true – some of the harshest critics of women on TV are women viewers so that's quite a conundrum and I thought it was painful to see reviewers and critics write about Bettany, not as an intellect but as a woman and making comments in their reviews. Bettany is pretty thick skinned about it and she thinks that we're a bit wimpy about it but actually those programmes were – I'd be very interested to know if you'd made those programmes with Richard Miles or Paul Cartledge whether they would have been bigger – know what I mean?

As we go on to discuss in our chapter considering perceptions of the audience, here Lee seems to be drawing on an 'instinctive' rather than proven feel for the likely reception of female historians by women viewers. His comments on television reviewers, mostly male, are indeed borne out by the examples we have given.

The domestication of history?

We now turn to the topics and modes of history presented by female historians, arguing that the television imperatives of audience appeal and reliance on already established popular themes, for example, interior design, home-making and style come into play in fashioning the presentation of history.

It is not only the press critics and reviews which have foregrounded looks over authority – none other than David Starkey produced a typically barbed critique of female historians. Branding their work as 'historical Mills and Boon' he complained that female historians are 'usually quite pretty' and keen to show off their good looks onscreen and on their book covers.

Amanda Vickery responded to this attack, which also is aimed at the kinds of topics which are often covered by female historians:

> A hierarchy of critical value still prevails which devalues anything associated with the cloying concerns of women – even 80 years after Virginia Woolf, in

> *A Room of One's Own*, exposed the systematic privileging of masculine interests over feminine: This is an important book, the critic assumes, because it deals with war. This is an insignificant book because it deals with the feelings of women in a drawing-room. A scene in a battlefield is more important than a scene in a shop – everywhere and much more subtly the difference of value persists.
>
> *(Vickery 2010)*

Worsley too has taken issue with Starkey and others who have been critical of what has been described as the 'feminization' of history through popular books and television. Fellow historian Alison Light also took issue with this trend in television towards experimental archaeology or, as Worsley calls it, 'dressing up and trying things out', which, as we discuss in our chapter on historical reenactment, uses artefacts to channel a sense of the physical experience of everyday life in another era.

In September 2011 Alison Light appeared on BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme, and discussed whether period dramas like *Upstairs, Downstairs* (BBC One 2010 and 2012) and the wildly popular *Downton Abbey* (ITV 2010–) romanticize the past, saying:

> I just want to say one thing, which is that I'm not in a sort of moral panic about these programmes. I'm much more alarmed and exercised about what's happening to serious history programmes on the television, you know, where the whole heritage interest in objects and costume has kind of taken over the show. And historians are under pressure to get in carriages and wear bonnets and careen around the country.

Worsley responded with a piece in the TV section of the *Daily Mail* (15 October 2011) in which she commented wryly that 'Instead of having fun with social history, I should apparently have been exploring big, serious ideas.'[22] Worsley has been accused of participating in 'history lite' programmes for television and has become something of a campaigner for the popularizing of history through television. She told members of the National Trust at their 2011 annual general meeting that 'for the future of our heritage, we can't afford to cater only to well-educated, historically aware, sophisticated people like you!'. She continued, 'I don't feel my job will be done until history is as popular as *The X Factor*' (Howie and Sawer 2010). Worsley's reference to *The X Factor* places her firmly within the discourses of popular television and she is determined to adopt whatever is necessary to popularize her subject.

Here we have a deeply contradictory state of affairs. As Worsley has acknowledged, the BBC have suddenly woken up to the fact that there are not enough female historians on television. Given the content of most female historians' programmes, this is good news for the much neglected social histories and histories of women which many feminists have called for over the years. However, as the shows are presented on television, often drawing on existing genres of make-over shows and certainly requiring some performance from the presenters, the subjects and the presenters run the risk of having their significance, authority and legitimacy undermined. The 'naïve

enthusiasm' interpreted as girlish, impish and delicious lays them open to the kind of criticism levelled by David Starkey, and in this way we can see the logics of television compounding the logics of gender in a way which seems to make it impossible for gender-blind presentation in factual programming to become a reality.

This chapter has outlined and interrogated the changing context within which history programmes are commissioned, produced and scheduled in the UK. It has drawn attention to the changing nature of public service broadcasting, especially in its continued commitment to education and asked how history content has found its place in hybrid genres. The terrestrial channels have responded to increased competition in a multi-channel environment by developing their own digital platforms and, especially in the case of the BBC, history programming has been put through the 'branding' process in terms of channel identity. Strongly linked to these identities are the television personalities who either already are or who become familiar to intended audiences. As we noted of the rise of 'celebrity culture' in our introduction, these personalities are critical across all areas of television but they have also become an important part of history programming. We argue that issues of legitimacy and authority can be undermined by the requirements of producers and broadcasters for 'informality' and that this is particularly poignant in the case of the female historian.

2

LANDMARK AND FLAGSHIP TELEVISION: HERITAGE AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

Since Kenneth Clark's *Civilisation* appeared on British television screens, arts and history programming, along with natural history and drama, have formed the flagship programmes for terrestrial channels. These programmes perform useful functions in channel identity and its commitment to 'serious' programming and are often referred to as examples *par excellence* of 'quality television'. Many have a life beyond television transmission, directly through DVD distribution and indirectly through accompanying books, and as such perform a particular role in the understanding of television as public history. This chapter will examine the history of such programmes during the period under consideration, especially that of the 'landmark' documentary, raising questions about form, aesthetics and heritage, and its renaissance in the late 1990s to the development of the 'blockbuster' and 'super-event' history programmes riding on the crest of the history boom. It is important to note that the labels 'flagship', usually referring specifically to channel identity, and 'landmark', to more specific programme examples, are often self-identified by broadcasters and especially in the discourses of promotion and marketing. In the main the examples we have selected have been described as 'landmark' television. It is relatively rare for a history series to be claimed as the 'flagship' for a particular channel. An exception to this is the BBC history format *Who Do You Think You Are?* which we consider later. Thus, we do not use these categories uncritically but rather examine them as significant operational strategies within the media industry, our purpose being to analyse those history programmes and series that have been elevated to this level within media discourse. Given their high internal and external profile these programmes and, in particular, their presenters, elevated to the status of 'celebrity' public intellectuals, become powerful agents in the currency of public and political exchange and debate about the significance of history and, especially, in the education of the young. These debates, underpinned as they are by discourses of national identity, heritage and belonging, along with the politics of pedagogy are evidence of the role of the national broadcasters in public and political life.

Thus, we seek to address all aspects of the production of history programmes for television and to pay simultaneous attention to the production aspects, including economics and funding, the complex institutional contexts which at any one moment may well influence and shape the programmes commissioned and produced as well as the actual programmes or texts themselves. What emerges from our analysis of the development of 'landmark' and 'flagship' history programming are tensions created by public versus commercial especially, but not exclusively, in relation to BBC programming, and the ways in which broadcasters have developed the genre within the changing contexts which were outlined in the previous chapter. The responses to changes and challenges brought about by digital technologies and especially increasing competition from satellite channels can, we argue, be understood in relation to these different pressures. The period upon which we focus could also be characterized in television terms as a move from programmes produced predominantly for a national audience to an increasing pressure on broadcasters to produce programmes that reach international and global audiences. This has major consequences for our understanding of what history programmes are doing and, indeed, what kind of past they are constructing. However, although the international scope of some programmes and especially, for financial reasons, the 'landmark' programming can be identified, there remain, as we saw in the previous chapter, significant numbers of programmes which are primarily aimed at the national audience and specifically, in the case of the BBC, for particular channels.

Throughout this chapter we highlight programmes and series which represent significant shifts in landmark history programmes. These are predominantly British with the exception of the work of Ken Burns in the US whose work, we argue, played a significant role in giving history programmes a 'new lease of life'. We will approach our analysis by addressing the aesthetics of these forms of high profile programming which, we will argue, invite a range of modes of 'gaze' from the viewer. In all cases our examples will be placed within the relevant aspects of their production context in order that these pressures, imperatives and logics can be examined. As we argued in the previous chapter, the form and type of presentation of history programmes is an important factor in the shaping of the programme itself for the audience but also for channel identity. In this chapter we consider briefly the branding of particular historians in the period between the late 1990s and early 2000 and their role as public intellectuals 'speaking for' the presence of history in contemporary society.

As we said above, landmark programming is commonly and increasingly aimed at an international market, and through specific examples we will examine how historical content has been employed in large budget co-productions.

Early 'landmarks'

A primary role of public service broadcasting is to 'speak to the nation' but, as Benedict Anderson reminds us, to address a community is to construct that community (Anderson 1983). Thus national audiences for television in the UK from the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953 onwards were an imaginary collective of citizens

sharing the cycles and rhythms of the national calendar. At the centre of these representations were state occasions with a focus on the Royal Family at its beating heart. Of interest to us is the role that history programming has played in actively constructing the nation and national identity and how particularly those flagship products of the BBC and ITV, the major UK terrestrial channels, have drawn the nation and developed a master narrative. This is especially notable in much of the commemorative programming that we discuss in the following chapter. Historical narratives played out on national television mediated through professional presenters and employing 'state of the art' television techniques are powerful forms of public history. Television itself and the BBC in particular claims for itself authority and the legitimacy of 'truth telling' – stories are told by people whom viewers come to know and trust. For example, as noted in the previous chapter, in the UK these include David Attenborough, David Dimbleby and others we discuss later, through their household name status. In addition, the very domesticity of consumption of television as it takes its place alongside the chaos and clutter of everyday life naturalizes and normalizes its outputs which are seamlessly inserted into the texture of everyday life. Thus the modes of reception and the place of television within domestic and other environments, patterns of use are a significant aspect of the consumption of history and knowledge about the past. This is a potent and effective combination which is intensified when the 'landmark series' are afforded high production values and given heavy marketing muscle, both of which have been, and continue to be, important for the BBC in constructing its own place within national identity.

In order to identify the characteristics of the self-imposed categories of 'landmark' and 'flagship' programmes we first consider two examples, *Civilisation* (BBC 1969) and *The World at War* (Thames 1973–74), giving brief accounts of the formation of each and indicating their influence in later developments in programmes bearing the label 'landmark'. In different ways each series laid the ground for institutional and formalistic approaches to history programmes and demonstrate the range of pressures which can motivate the commissioning of the television product. In addition, the particular programmes or series can be motivators for further developments and thus can be regarded as groundbreaking in the extent that they lead to new developments in the field.

Civilisation

Although strictly speaking an 'arts' programme, the example of *Civilisation* remains a telling one for many reasons of relevance here. Jonathan Conlin has provided an excellent institutional and textual analysis of the series (Conlin 2009) but here we draw attention to David Attenborough's autobiography *Life on Air* and an interview conducted with him that appears on the DVD of *Civilisation*. Clearly both texts should be approached with caution as 'reliable' sources given that they are 'memoirs' constructed and presented for general consumption; however, Attenborough provides testimony to his role as the first Controller of BBC Two in the establishment of this style of documentary series. In addition, this kind of reflection by a still influential member of the broadcasting elite provides an example of the way in which some

programmes become part of the mythology of broadcasting institutions. The crux, according to Attenborough, was the fact that the newly launched channel, with 625 lines, was to be the first in the UK to transmit in colour. He describes the general disdain for and suspicion of colour television held by senior staff at the BBC. This was in the main because of the US experiment with colour television that had been an acknowledged disaster. According to Attenborough, the colours were 'staggeringly garish' and the concomitant US programming exploited colour in a 'crude' way (Attenborough 2002: 212). Once the technical capabilities required to produce 'quality' colour were in place at the BBC, it fell to Attenborough to find a way of convincing the 'opinion formers' inside and outside the BBC that colour was worth having. His idea was to 'survey the most beautiful and influential works of art created by European artists in the last two thousand years and examine them accompanied by the loveliest music composed at the time they were created' (*ibid.* 213). He and Huw Weldon, Director General of the BBC, engaged the then Sir, later Lord, Kenneth Clark who was, as Attenborough claims, the obvious choice for presenter. Clark had been director of the National Gallery during the war and had published scholarly books. Furthermore he, as the first Chair of the Independent Television Authority, was interested in television. Clark would produce his *personal* history of the ascendance of 'European Civilization'. This was just as well as he found it impossible to include Spain and its culture in his strong narrative of Europe's long march towards civilization.[1] Attenborough's anxious obsession with the quality of the pictures and his lack of confidence in 16mm film led to his decision to shoot on 35mm which effectively doubled the budget.

The account of the development of this kind of scholarly authored, picturesque historical narrative form of television is revealing of its patrician roots in its fusion of high culture, quality and refined comportment and taste. It is also a testament to the way in which institutional pressures and technological possibilities can shape the form and style of programming and, by extension, an understanding of the past. The recycling of *Civilisation* via DVD (released 2005 by the BBC) is also testament to the series' continuing power both in terms of the history of BBC television itself and as a defining text of the development of European 'civilization'. The original version had been an important export to the US and, as Jonathan Conlin points out, *Civilisation* was significantly important beyond British television and its audiences. It was first seen by American audiences as part of a series of highly successful screenings at the National Gallery in Washington before being shown on the newly established Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) which had replaced National Educational Television (1952–70) in October 1970. It is a non-profit-making public broadcasting service with currently 354 member TV stations in the US. It is the main provider of television programmes to these public television service channels and is perhaps best known in the UK for its *Masterpiece* series, mostly transmitting drama, because of its strong Anglo-American relations. Conlin suggests that we should consider *Civilisation* an important stalking horse which paved the way for other series developed (and partly US-funded) by Attenborough, e.g. Alistair Cooke's *America* (UK 1972, US 1973) and Jacob Bronowski's *The Ascent of Man* (UK 1973, US 1975) (Conlin 2009: 102).

The World at War

In the following chapter we look specifically at 'commemorative' television in the period of our study, but here we wish to acknowledge the importance of 'military history' to the development of 'landmark' history television, and in particular how two remarkable examples broke new ground in modes of representation. The BBC commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War with the transmission of its twenty-six-episode series *The Great War*. In addition to newsreel, archive[2] and narration the producers added eyewitness accounts to the mix, a convention well suited to the domestic and intimate address of television and described by Steve Humphries of Testimony Films as the beginning of oral history on television (Humphries 2008: 100). This series, Taylor Downing argues, proved that television history could be 'serious, powerful and popular' (Downing 2009). In the UK this commitment to remembering and commemorating the nation's past formed a large part of the public service ethos for the BBC as well as marking key events in the nation's history. The BBC followed this template for big-scale feature programming with *The Lost Peace* (1966) and *Grand Strategies of World War II* (1972). However, the most successful and long-lasting series[3] about the Second World War is undoubtedly ITV's contribution to the genre in the form of *The World at War* (Thames TV 1973). In 1971 Jeremy Isaacs, then Controller of Features at Thames began the three-year project with a team of fifty people which was to become the twenty-six-episode series (Thames UK 1973–74). Isaacs had produced the series *All Our Yesterdays* for Granada. *The World at War* was remarkable for many things and is well documented (e.g. Chapman 2001, Isaacs 2006) but perhaps particularly in its involvement of eyewitnesses who were not confined to politicians and commanders or even soldiers and airmen but which included civilians. Isaacs felt that the time was right to approach such witnesses as the thirty-year period since the start of the Second World War would provide sufficient distance from the often traumatic events which were recalled and recounted for the camera.[4] It is also notable for the fact that it was made by an ITV company, albeit financed by a reduction of the government tax levied on all the ITV companies with the proviso that this should be ploughed back into programming (Isaacs 2006: 150). Indeed, at the time, ITV was under pressure to demonstrate that it was capable of producing 'quality' broadcasting but Isaacs also recognized the *commercial* potential for *The World at War* in securing rights to all film archive for future sales.

These examples therefore highlight key aspects of the television process which are useful organizing categories for our investigation into how we get the kind of history on television we do, with particular reference to the self-consciously high profile outputs which can be summarized as follows:

1 Aesthetic, style and genre (especially the long-form and series documentary).
2 The significance of social networks and reputations of personnel involved.
3 The technological capabilities and investments.
4 The role of the flagship or landmark products in:
    a institutional ethos
    b international value and reputation for institution and nation

c its public service provision for the national audience
d its commercial potential for international and national sales.

We will, through further specific examples of programmes within the life of our project, trace some threads through the texts back into the institutional and production context, but first it is important to address the aesthetics of the production of 'history'.

The aesthetics of the past in landmark programming

One of the prime elements of 'landmark programmes' are the high production values employed which signify 'quality' and carry with them a stamp of authority and legitimacy. The notion of a television aesthetic has been overlooked in previous studies, if not denied as a relevant and legitimate object of study (but see Caughie 2000, Geraghty 2003, Cardwell 2006). Helen Wheatley's analysis of the BBC's *Blue Planet* is one of the rare examples of a close analysis of the aesthetics of non-fictional programming (Wheatley 2004). If we look beyond television we can identify a broader aesthetic of the past that has been generated and developed historically. David Brett (1996) has looked at the significance of the visual in the understanding of the past and while he focuses on the 'heritage industries' many of his insights are applicable to history on television. Among the visual tropes central to 'heritage' and tourism sites are 'picturesque', 'sublime' and 'authentic', and these are folded into a particular kind of historical narrative, that of the chronicle. Colin Divall (2002), a transport historian and museum professional, has similarly drawn on tourism studies in his study of how and in what ways transport museums position the visitor and what quality of experience this affords. He developed the notion of the 'historical gaze' in order to understand the relationship between visitor and exhibit/museum experience. We argue that this is a good starting point for the analysis of 'landmark' factual television history programming. However, the historical gaze is not unified, but multiple. For example, we may draw on John Urry's (1996) distinction between those tourist sites and heritage 'attractions' which invite the romantic gaze, solitary and aiming at personal enlightenment, and the collective gaze which is more involving and, for Urry, carnivalesque. These positions resonate with Bourdieu's notions of the bourgeois aesthetic and the popular aesthetic, thereby enabling an understanding of class distinction in the mode of address and 'look' of programmes and the assumptions about the audience that these imply. We hope to demonstrate that history programming falls into these modes, but also that the categories themselves can be more finely tuned. Thus we will see the changing nature of the historical gaze certainly across different history genres but also within the 'landmark' programmes themselves, inviting audiences to look at the past in different ways.

In order to demonstrate the distinctions between and within genres we can conceive of the historical gaze as multiple in offering nuanced modes of looking and positioning in relation to the past. Within the 'landmark' and 'flagship' categories we broadly identify different styles which offer a range of historical gazes indicated below. Throughout the examples selected we examine how nation and heritage are represented through visual codes of landscape, art and material objects while identity

and belonging are carried through testimony via narrative and emotional arcs. Certain programmes in the 'landmark' category engage the viewer in reflection, both in terms of the subject matter and visual style.

Programmes examined in this chapter have thus been selected for the significance of their contribution to the development of this category of history television in recent decades, as follows:

People's history:

The empathetic gaze

The Civil War (Florentine Productions for PBS 1990)

Authored history:

The civilizing gaze

A History of Britain (BBC 2000)
A History of Scotland (BBC Scotland 2008)

The inquisitive gaze

Elizabeth I and *Monarchy* (Channel 4 2004–6)

The colonial gaze

Empire (Blakeway Productions for Channel 4 2003)

The flagship format:

The personally reflective gaze

Who Do You Think You Are? (Wall to Wall for BBC Two and One)

Event history:

The reflective gaze

Auschwitz
Hiroshima

The gaze of the spectacle

Pompeii: The Last Day (BBC/TLC 2003)

Although they represent an extremely diverse range of topics and chronological periods, all were heralded as landmark television and have served as flagship series for the commissioning channels.

We argue that in the UK the expansion of history programming on television began in 1995. However, we would concur with Gary Edgerton that an influential event for history programming more broadly was the screening in the US of Ken Burns's eleven-hour documentary series *The Civil War*, telecast across five nights on PBS between 23 and 27 September 1990, which averaged 12 million viewers. It was a surprising success and established the documentary mini-series as PBS's prototype of 'event TV' (Edgerton 2001: 170). According to Edgerton this event was the 'lightning conductor' for public and academic attention to history. In 1993 a conference entitled 'Telling the Story: the Media, the Public and American History' was hosted by the New England Foundation for the Humanities sparked, according to JoAnna Baldwin Mallory, then director of NEFH, by the enormous public response to *The Civil War*.

The popular historian: Ken Burns's empathetic gaze

Ken Burns has developed an identifiable style and form of history programming through his own production company Florentine Films in the US. During the 1980s PBS sponsored productions for made-for-television history which were based on and told compelling dramatic stories with strong national identification, such as *The Statue of Liberty*, *The Congress*, *Thomas Jefferson* and in 1990 he completed the series for which he remains best known, *The Civil War*. As referred to above this was a huge commercial and critical success that astounded PBS and UK broadcasters. However, it was not without its controversy and academic or professional historians pitched in, strongly criticizing its oversimplification and tendency towards consensus and the production of self-serving myths, in particular those which justified the moral right of the US military. His supporters, however, recognize how Burns used television to encourage US audiences to reflect on what an investigation of the past might tell them about who they are and who 'we' (the American nation) are. Gary Edgerton, a great supporter of Burns's work, defines popular history, in contrast to professional history, thus:

> the much older legacy of popular history is far more artistic and ceremonial in approach. It is usually consensus-oriented, narrative and biographical in structure and intended to link producers and audiences in a mainly affirming relationship based on immediate experience they are sharing together around characters and events of their cultural past.
>
> *(Edgerton and Rollins 2001: 171)*

For Edgerton, television is where most public history and, for him, the best kind of public history is to be found and Burns has become its key proponent. The main elements of his technique are biography and the notion that people can change events. In the absence of film archive and surviving witnesses, Burns uses documented testimony and eyewitness accounts as well as photographs and paintings of events.

The intimacy and immediacy of television creates the sense of 'being there' for the audience, inciting David Grubin, producer of historical documentaries (*LBJ* (1992), *FDR* (1994)) to say 'You are not learning about history when you are watching. … you feel like you're experiencing it' (Edgerton 2001: 3). Burns is now well known, thanks, in part, to Apple iPhoto software, for his 'Ken Burns effect' technique of panning and zooming across still imagery thus giving it movement and 'life'. He employs familiar actors to read the documents (letters, diaries, etc.) and lays a powerful and evocative music soundtrack. The sense of immersion and experience potentially engages emotionally with viewers, a phenomenon that, as Edgerton points out, is antithetical to conventional professional historians' practice.

One of the critics of *The Civil War,* Jean Attie, takes issue with all Burns's techniques, arguing that the series lacked context and thus dealt with none of the causes of war. The use of witness statements through letters and diaries, she argues, allows these to be interpreters of events, rather than providing a broader and more considered analysis. She is also critical of the use of photographs and 'romantic' paintings and the ways in which they manipulate the audience into emotional responses. The military events are portrayed at length to the exclusion of other aspects of the Civil War, the impact on families and women for example. The outcome for Attie is that the building of the nation through the Civil War is resolved within the narrative that, as she points out, glosses over slavery and, further, delivers justification for the military and endows the US with the moral right. Thus, according to her, a self-serving myth is produced through the series. In the light of Attie's critique it is worth noting here that the dominating voice in Ken Burns's *Civil War* is that of writer and popular historian, Shelby Foote, although the academic historian Barbara Fields is a talking head in a number of the episodes. Burns makes it clear what he requires from contributors to his programmes – they should know how to tell a story and give the kind of detail which explains what they are saying. He also wants passion and 'feeling' to come through rather than the distanced analytical assessment offered by academic historians (Cripps 1995).

Attie's criticisms, although specifically directed at *The Civil War*, find echoes in many historians' suspicion and unease around television history. We, like Edgerton, take issue with some of this criticism in that, in the main, it does not engage with the specific characteristics of television. However, the overarching sense of consensus, of shared values and of the 'naturalization' achieved by using the testament of 'ordinary' people is ideologically powerful and should be taken into account when analysing these programmes. This is especially significant in the 'nation building' narratives so loved by producers and broadcasters, something to which we will consider throughout this book.

It is important to note that Ken Burns is a public historian but describes himself as 'a film-maker first' with an 'absolute undying love of my country'. He engages what he calls 'emotional archaeology' looking for the 'mystic codes of memory' (*ibid*.). His declared purpose is to remove the perceived arrogance of professional historians and to make the past accessible to everyone, 'get in there and shake that old photograph alive'.[5]

The fact that US audiences responded to a programme about their own past was an important eye-opener for media producers. Although history programming had been a staple of broadcasters in the UK and to some extent in the US, it had never been regarded as a draw for a popular mass audience; rather, as public service output and worthy programming compliant with the demands of regulators (in the UK). Here was evidence that there was a large appetite for the past.

BBC: the return to presenter-led programming

Martin Davidson, currently History and Business Commissioning Editor at the BBC, confirmed that our 'starting' point of 1995 was indeed a key year for history programming at the BBC. In that year the BBC established its History Unit under the leadership of Janice Hadlow, now controller of BBC Two. She had worked, along with Davidson, on the arts and cultural series *The Late Show*. Hadlow and Davidson are married and provide one example of the closeness of personal and professional ties in the media industry. Hadlow was referred to by every media professional we spoke to as the most influential individual who had shaped history programming in the last decade in the UK and she has clearly encouraged and inspired a number of highly creative individuals who are now in key positions as broadcasters and as independents.[6]

In our interview with Martin Davidson he identified the series *A History of Britain* as one of two 'big subjects' that began to take shape in that year. The second was the revisiting of the Nazis by Laurence Rees with Professor Ian Kershaw of the University of Sheffield to produce *The Nazis: A Warning from History*. According to Davidson:

> Those two projects kick started what I would call a step change in the seriousness, the ambition of what history could achieve and a difference in its relationship to the academy. I would say … 1995 was the moment those two landmarks arrived and what they did, I think they achieved two very different kinds of successes.

Ann Gray has written elsewhere in more detail of the significance of the year 1995 for the BBC in the development of history programming and the coming together of a group of professionals who had existing personal contacts, who had worked together on a number of projects, mainly arts programming, and who found themselves at the BBC two years after the Producer Choice scheme had been launched (1993) and within the period of charter review (Gray 2010). *A History of Britain* was a blue-chip 'high quality' programme for the millennium, constructing a history of the nation as only the BBC knows how. Arguably, it also laid strong foundations for the careers of those working on the programme. Of three people who worked on it one is now Controller of BBC Two and two are in senior commissioning roles. We asked Martin Davidson, producer on the series, how the idea came about:

> Michael Jackson who was then Controller of BBC Two said: 'I want History of Britain.' I remember first hearing that and thinking 'you're insane, who will

> watch that?' And we suddenly realised that it was the elephant in the room – nobody had ever done it because the great emphasis in TV was what was a sideways look at it – the whole of Arts television up to that point absolutely prided itself on never being front on – it was lateral, it was hybridised, … so doing something that smacked to us of … it was the worst kind of naivety, just chronologically structured linkage.

We asked him if Michael Jackson explained why he wanted this kind of programme:

> Yes. He was curious. I think he'd read books on Cromwell and said 'I don't know when the Civil War came in'. His idea was it was just going to be a road map that would link all the moments that we knew about that nobody could put together, they all existed in these little hermetically sealed bubbles and he was also a great one for the benefits of landmark scale.

In spite of Jackson's enthusiasm for the idea, the BBC was clearly taking a risk by producing a relatively conventional programme with high aspirations for 'landmark' status. However, on Channel 4 David Starkey (lampooned by the BBC satirical programme *Dead Ringers* as Schama's arch rival) had achieved a regular audience of 3 million for his presenter-led *Elizabeth*, thereby setting a precedent for this style. Although in terrestrial broadcast television terms this is not a huge audience, nevertheless programmes of this type afford what is known in the industry as 'profile'. One of Georgina Born's interviewees at the BBC described it like this: 'It means getting a lot of newspaper coverage, and winning awards. It means being like *The House*[7] which only got 1–2 million, but which nonetheless became a focus for the chattering classes' (Born 2004). Interestingly, Attenborough describes a similar kind of professional 'feel' about *Civilisation* which he claims 'brought *lustre* not only to BBC Two's reputation but to the Corporation as a whole' (Attenborough 2002: 214 [our emphasis]). Arguably these pressures were elements in the process of arriving at the aesthetic style of the series.

The authored documentary I: the civilizing gaze

A History of Britain[8]

One of the major problems in producing history programmes in which the period predates film archives is how to furnish the necessary visual material. Ian Bremner, a producer on *A History of Britain* and director of episode 4, *Nations*, has written on the problems of producing history programming without archives:

> How do you fill an hour of television just with a 'man outstanding in his field', populated by characters for whom we have no contemporary visual representation?
>
> *(Bremner 2001: 64)*

As Bremner points out, only the final two episodes out of the total fifteen use film archive. Echoing Davidson, Bremner also speaks of the weight of responsibility of producing a BBC 'landmark' documentary which is 'supposed to be a worthy successor to those classic series, *Civilisation* and *The Ascent of Man*' (*ibid*.). He goes on:

> [O]ur series seems a very old fashioned way to make landmark television; shot on film with one author and lots of locations. It is a bold step by the BBC when even its own recent products in this field – *The Human Body* and *Walking with Dinosaurs* – have depended heavily on massive US co-production money and state-of-the-art graphics: both things that *HoB* is lacking.
>
> *(*ibid. *65)*

The address of *A History of Britain* is that of the authoritative author/presenter which offers and positions the viewer within a *civilizing gaze,* solitary and aiming at personal enlightenment. The presenter is a known expert and is produced as a 'knowledge brand'. In this newly revived genre of history programming the presenter is essayist or lecturer. Schama is at great pains to insist that this is a subjective view and that it is *A* History of Britain and not *The* History of Britain, arguing that the most compelling history is unapologetically engaged and not objective. However, the general tenor of the series, its style, aesthetics and high production values (shot on super 16mm film with specially composed music[9]) as well as the accompanying book and DVD are all packaged as if they are presenting the definitive history of Britain. The DVD and book also extend the shelf-life of the programme, removing it from the flow of television and making it available for use in domestic and educational contexts (Wheatley 2004). In addition, Schama's presence as a white, albeit Jewish, male striding around the locations explaining events, situations, causes and consequences is a familiar style of television which, while it predates him, as we have seen, certainly carries an unquestionable authority and legitimacy. The series has a televisual aesthetic which is recognizable from similar texts which are presented as 'landmark' programmes. It exudes 'quality' programming and what the BBC 'does best'.

Schama is, predictably, a champion of television history and espouses a progressive view. For example, he argues that it is a *different* way of communicating history and should not be compared directly with print and scholarly tracts. Indeed he argues in his 2002 BBC History Lecture[10] that history as written text is a relatively recent phenomenon and points to a long tradition of history as story-telling and performance, a practice which he relates directly to television. In this lecture he also argues that images in themselves are powerful carriers of meaning.

In another public address, Schama[11] details four components which are his aims and intentions in his approach to television history. These are *immediacy*, *imaginative empathy, candid moral engagement* and *poetic connection*. Here we have a rare example of a historian talking publically about this practice as a television historian and how knowledge about the past can be communicated through this medium. While these categories could well be retrospective it is worth providing some examples from the series which he claims exemplify his four approaches.

Immediacy. Here, Schama has attempted to provide access to contemporary voices as directly as possible. This affords the viewer direct access to the past. Thus, contemporary documents may be read by actors (who do not appear) and in later episodes newsreel and radio archives are employed. Throughout the early part of the series heavy reliance for the flow of images is placed on contemporary portraiture. Countless portraits are used, in many cases repeatedly, with clever dynamic rostrum techniques to add movement and pace. According to Karen Lury this mode 'relates to the tactile, sensual approach television has to such material': it allows the image to be 'pored over' (Lury 2005). However, the origins of the portraits, and indeed much of the archive material used, is not identified. Our access to the past is, therefore, through him, the conventions of 'direct' access rarely being used.

Imaginative empathy. Here, Schama talks about moving between the past as familiar (good) and unfamiliar (bad) so as to avoid wallowing in a comfortable version of the past. This movement, he argues, keeps the viewer at a distance, and therefore provides some critical space. For example, in the episode *The Body of the Queen* we are given access to the rage and frustration felt by Mary Queen of Scots at her imprisonment through montages of portraiture, stylized reconstruction and emotive music. These reconstructions, as in the rest of the series, are impressionistic and restrained rather than aimed at realism. Shadowy figures, objects and events flicker across the screen, always with the voice-over to explain what is happening and to anchor meaning.

Candid moral engagement. This is to return to Schama's insistence that his is a passionate point of view of history. He rejects the idea of a balanced debate, but rather wishes the viewer to engage with the narrative through his story-telling. In this way, he suggests, arguments can be submerged into the narrative plot. He calls this 'debate by stealth'. Justin Champion is also convinced of the value of this approach, noting Schama's refusal to engage in debate, or weigh up alternative accounts of different events. Champion suggests that:

> In this format this is a good thing. There are the odd allusions to 'some historians' or the fact of the existence of considerable debate about particular events or processes … The overriding character of *A History of Britain* is to submerge these arguments and issues into the narrative plot.
>
> *(Champion 2003: 153–74)*

Poetic connection. Here, Schama indicates the importance of imagination and the use of oral and visual modes to their maximum potential. Imagination, poetry, allegory and metaphor are used in his programmes. Animals and birds stand in for characters. For example, a portrait of Elizabeth I is juxtaposed on a number of occasions with shots of a male peacock displaying his tail feathers. As the story moves on to her period of high charisma and cultish popularity, images of an albino peacock are intercut with a portrait which represents her almost other-worldly glamour and excessive display.

It must be said that the primary factor from Schama's schema, and the one which all others follow, is his 'candid moral engagement'. The narrative and, above all, the story-teller is fundamental to each episode and provides cohesion to the entire series. Thus, all images, sounds, music, actors' voices and reconstructions are pulled in through his narration. The fit is seamless.

The civilizing gaze is offered, then, through the performance of an authoritative, knowing presenter who guides the viewer through (usually) his version of the past. The supporting images are drawn from high culture, portraiture, references to heraldry and the use of animals as metaphors. The music is specially composed by John Harle, a saxophonist, consisting of six pieces: *Sanctus, Immortal (Cathedral at the Edge of the World), St. Godrick's Song, Farewell, Lady of the Light* and *Chanterai Pour Mon Courage*. The overarching musical genre is that of plain song with some Jan Garbarek-like improvization and computer-synthesized effects. The mood is that of the sacred, the melancholic and unworldly. *Sanctus* accompanies the opening titles and is used repeatedly throughout the series, especially over the endless sea- and shore-scapes. The sensibility, therefore, is one of reverence and, strangely, of timelessness. The landscape and seascapes are the leitmotifs of imagery in the series as the camera sweeps across moorland, mountains, shorelines, cliff tops and endlessly crashing waves. The picturesque, even sublime, images are supported by the ponderous soundtrack, albeit sung, in parts, by the wonderful soprano Emma Kirkby. This beauty and solemnity strikes a very particular elegiac tone inviting a gaze of awe and wonderment. The viewer is in the presence not just of a gifted, articulate and brilliant narrator, but of the sacred beauty of the island landscape. While Schama claims to have presented a 'warts and all' history of Britain, there is no doubting the overall celebratory and, of course, patriotic tone of the series. The appeal, then, is to viewers who can inhabit the civilizing gaze offered, who share this sensibility and, indeed, who themselves feel a part of the land and nation. Schama aims to provide moorings for the contemporary viewer, an access to what came before so that they can make this history theirs. We need to ask for whom the series provides moorings and who might be alienated by its aesthetic and left afloat without an anchor. Schama insists that his is a declared subjective view and one (among many possible) histories of Britain. However, the visual and aural style of the programmes and their ethos of quality and legitimacy, resonant of previous BBC history products with 'charismatic' presenters, does not invite questions. The historical is a 'given knowledge' which remains firmly with Schama. The viewer is swept into a comfortable and for some pleasurable but unchallenging hour of television and we have considered the implications of this further elsewhere (Bell and Gray 2007a).

A History of Scotland

As the national broadcaster required to produce and broadcast programmes which are 'particularly relevant to the distinctive culture of Scotland', BBC Scotland has placed history programmes within this remit, which is also considered in the following chapter on commemorative programming. Here we briefly highlight a recent example of 'landmark' programming. In its statement to the press in 2008 BBC Scotland announced

its new multi-platform project, Scotland's History, which was 'to bring the country's history to life on screen, the internet and radio'. The press release also announced the 'spearhead' of the project, 'a new landmark ten-part television series', *A History of Scotland*. The series was co-produced with the Open University, which also provided the interactive website alongside the series. BBC Scotland's Controller, Ken MacQuarrie, made much of the high production values of the series as well as its academic credentials, which he claimed would be a 'visual feast but also a cornerstone of reference for years to come' (BBC Scotland 2008). The series was to be presented by the Scottish archaeologist Neil Oliver, who would be easily recognizable to viewers of *Coast* (see previous chapter) both north and south of the border. Oliver claimed that the new series would aim at 'exploding the myths of Scottish popular history' and asked 'what better time could there be to look again at Scotland's past, with people openly questioning the future of the Union and Britain?'. The programme, shot in high definition and employing sweeping landscape imagery familiar to *Coast* viewers, also had strong elements of the 'landmark' aesthetic. Dramatic photography of 'iconic landmarks', monuments and historic architecture emphasized the significant cultural heritage and Scotland's major characters and influences. The series was a mixed success and especially came in for criticism from some Scottish historians who were angered by what they saw as the Anglocentric nature of the history and the fact that Oliver and not a historian with expertise in the history of Scotland had been selected as presenter. Neil Oliver has continued to present high profile history series, most recently *A History of Ancient Britain* for BBC Two (BBC Two 2011–12). In this example we see the claim from the national broadcaster of its strategic importance in a critical period in revisiting and reconstructing the history of the nation. The BBC in Scotland, in collaboration with the Open University, employed all the features of 'landmark' programming evidenced in *A History of Britain*.

Channel 4 presenter-led programming

Ralph Lee, the Commissioning Editor for Specialist Factual which includes history and science gave us the Channel 4 view of their kind of history programming:

> At C4 we are obsessed with originality. It is kind of one of our absolute credos – we are only going to survive if we are going to surprise people … some people misinterpret C4 and think the BBC does the big subjects and C4 does the small subjects. I think that's rather wrong-headed. We shouldn't just consider ourselves shining a light on the dark little corners of history – we should be doing big history but from different points of view.

The authored documentary II: the inquisitive gaze

David Starkey

A significant series of history flagship programming for Channel 4 came via the figure of David Starkey. His first history series, *Henry VIII*, was broadcast in 1997,

and was produced by Chirnside Productions. David Starkey claimed at a public lecture[12] in 2009 that the then Head of Programmes at Channel 4, John Willis, was concerned that his children, then at school, were 'missing' out on classic history lectures. This was confirmed by one of Dafydd Sills-Jones's interviews carried out for his PhD (Sills-Jones 2009). The series was actually commissioned by Peter Grimsdale, then Commissioning Editor for history in the period after the 1997 Labour election victory. Starkey, according to Grimsdale, was in this new political climate, as an obvious 'Tory', and a sort of counter-intuitive 'alternative' to the BBC (*ibid.*). But it was perhaps Starkey's series *Elizabeth*, commissioned, again by Grimsdale and transmitted in 2000, that secured Starkey as a high performing and successful presenter of history on television. *Elizabeth* was the life story of Queen Elizabeth I which, true to Starkey's specialism, focused on the life and politics of the royal court. The series used a range of visual codes including dramatic reconstruction, portraiture, documents and interviews as well as Starkey's direct address to camera. While Starkey addresses the camera directly he is formally dressed and does not, in this series, become engaged in any of the narrative action. He thus maintains an authoritative and 'donnish' mode of delivery. The series attracted some 4 million viewers and was a significant part of Channel 4's portfolio of history programmes.

Monarchy consists of four series which were transmitted on Channel 4 between 2004 and 2006. The series was also aired on PBS throughout the US via PBS member WNET. It was also shown on ABC1 in Australia. In August 2011 it was broadcast on the Discovery Channel and advertised thus:

> Renowned historian and presenter David Starkey reveals the complex and intriguing world of England's royal rulers in the critically acclaimed television series, *Monarchy*. Family drama and constitutional history are shown to be inextricably linked, with what happened in the bedroom and on the battlefield changing the political institutions that govern us to this day. In his own inimitable style, David Starkey brings these tales of power, lust, treason and murder to life to examine just what the English monarchy has meant, and the legacy that can still be felt not only in Britain, but also across the world today.

In 2002 David Starkey signed a £2 million contract with Channel 4, which earned him the title of 'the highest paid TV presenter in Britain', perhaps a rather more distinguished title than the *Daily Mail*'s 'the rudest man in Britain', a title Starkey had won largely on his combative appearances on the BBC Radio 4 discussion programme *The Moral Maze*. He had made *Six Wives of Henry VIII* for Channel 4 in 2001, followed by his highly successful *Elizabeth*. Taking Ralph Lee's definition of the Channel 4 approach, Starkey specializes, as the Discovery publicity suggests, in the domestic and 'behind the scenes' gossip and the kind of detail of the daily life of the court, the rivalries and warts and all version of history. Already a controversial figure, he had the right kind of persona to carry a number of Channel 4 series. He has since, perhaps, become rather too controversial in his comments on female historians (2009) which we consider at greater length in our chapter on the business of television, and

what were considered by many commentators as racist comments about the causes of the August 2011 riots in London.

The authored documentary III: the colonial gaze

Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World

Channel 4's tendency to court controversy was once again in evidence when Janice Hadlow approached the then relatively unknown young history don, Niall Ferguson, to consider presenting a programme challenging the dominant view of the British Empire. The result was *Empire*, authored by Ferguson, produced by Blakeway productions and transmitted in six episodes in January and February 2003. Denys Blakeway, the executive producer, spoke of the challenges in making television history programmes which must be 'factual yet entertaining'.[13] Blakeway sees Ferguson as a public historian challenging accepted orthodoxies, making contentious claims and presenting a new slant on ideas of the British Empire. Ferguson was decided upon to front it as, although with a PhD in the economic history of the Weimar Republic, the period and topic are not his areas of specialism, he was felt to make a better presenter than a non-historian. He is now an exponent of this period of history and topic, thanks to the prompting of TV history. His follow-up series *Colossus* considered the USA an empire of the present, clearly signalled in the final episode of *Empire*, and he has moved to become a polemicist of the present, writing regularly for the broadsheet press.[14] Denys Blakeway said he tried to avoid didacticism by giving *Empire* and *Colossus* a sense of 'movement, an off the cuff – seat of the pants feeling'.[15] The producers also wanted to use 'as much archive as possible'. Although the programme eschews reconstruction that requires actors, much was filmed on location to compare and contrast the present with the past.

The visual style of *Empire,* subtitled *How Britain Made the Modern World*, is a mix of archive footage, still images and location filming with Ferguson presenting to camera at 'significant' sites in his history of the British Empire; inside buildings, libraries and occasionally sitting at a Steenbeck ready to roll archive footage. We travel with Ferguson using many modes of transport as he narrates stories of the building of the Empire. Much of the location filming images 'exotic' peoples and places and as such falls firmly within the tradition of travel or anthropological and ethnographic imagery. This text is deeply imbued with the kinds of representations and tropes that speak of colonialism. For example, in the Africa episode *Maxim Force*, indigenous Africans are imaged in undeclared locations, simply 'Africa', from a distance, through high waving grass, voyeuristically with a sound track of bush insects and the breathless Ferguson describing an incident in the past. We are then told about Rhodes's desire for the land belonging to the Matabile tribe and an image of African men walking through long grass fades into black and white. The unwitting individuals stand for figures in the past, that is, as Matabile warriors who attempted to resist Rhodes. Cut to an etching of the Matabile Chief Lubengule, followed by an etching of a group of cartoon-like stereotypical African warriors, one of whom becomes the target for what

was Rhodes's 'secret' weapon, the Maxim gun. A gun which a young Winston Churchill, war correspondent for the Morning Post at Omdurman in Sudan, described as 'mechanical scattering death'. Several bullets are fired into the depicted face of the warrior. The entire scene evokes the *Boy's Own Paper* which, Graham Dawson reminds us, presented 'imperial ideas in all their nationalist, racial and militarist forms' (Dawson 1994: 146). Ferguson then appears in Zanzibar where contemporary footage of fishermen provides the backdrop for his explanation of how the province became a pawn in the struggle for European dominance in Africa. Moving on to South Africa, Ferguson drives through Mafeking, describing it as a 'dreary sun-baked town' hardly worth fighting over. While Ferguson presents a moving account of the 28,000 Boers who died in concentration camps constructed by the British under Baden-Powell's command, the overall aesthetic of the series, according to Jon Wilson, renders the colonized peoples as part of the geography, as inhabitants of the landscape, but without history or agency. 'The rapid succession of "exotic" imagery avoids any sense of the specificity of the African, American and Asian places that Ferguson speaks about' (Wilson 2003: 177). The desire for spectacular and often beautiful images upon which the producers and directors have based the programme's aesthetic has overtaken any kind of critical judgement as to the meanings of the images and the power relations which are once again reproduced precisely through this imagery. These images, combined with Ferguson's endless movement through and across the landscapes of empire, draw on a mixture of natural history and anthropological codes. The viewer then is positioned with a colonial, and indeed its close relation the anthropological gaze where the narrator invites 'us' to look at that which is not 'us'. This aesthetic effectively evacuates the colonized peoples from this history of the British Empire.

We could therefore see *Empire* as a 'double' re-telling of the mainstream narrative of British colonialism and empire building and, as historian Maria Misra notes, a 'yearning for an imperial past'. As she says, 'delivering lectures on "nation-building" was one of the favourite hobbies of 19th-century imperialists' (Misra 2001).

Telly dons: intellectual brands

One of the most remarkable consequences of the renaissance of history on television has been the rise to prominence of the history television celebrity. Schama, Starkey and Ferguson have become (for some) household names and their careers have been shaped by their performances and appearances on television. In addition to their re-commissioned series for BBC and Channel 4 and the accompanying books, all three are now consulted outside their expertise on subjects such as US politics, baseball and cooking (Schama), money-markets and advice to the US administration (Ferguson) and contemporary royals (Starkey). All three have not been backward in coming forward to comment about and offer advice on history teaching in schools and universities. Schama and Ferguson have been appointed at different times as advisers to UK governments and ministers of education, and Ferguson's 2011 book *Civilization: The West and the Rest* is, according to him, 'partly designed so a 17 year old boy or girl will get a lot of history in a very digestible way' and is an implicit

critique of the way he claims that history is currently taught in British schools. The phenomenon of 'television celebrities' becoming public experts is not restricted to historians, for example, Jamie Oliver has advised on school meals and Mary Portas on saving the high street. However, the authority and legitimacy afforded through television appearances with reference to public knowledge about the past extends the sphere of influence of the so-called 'telly dons' beyond television and, potentially, into matters of public policy. Janice Hadlow referred to the enormity of the challenge of fronting these programmes which required in their presenter a 'larger-than-life' personality and total commitment. Now in her role as Controller of BBC Two Hadlow continues to believe that 'academics "touched by charisma" are an underused television resource'.[16]

Martin Davidson spoke about the 'three big telly dons' as all being (of course) 'global scale egotists' with different characters. Schama wants to move us to tears, Starkey to impress us with his superior knowledge and Ferguson's driver is hubris.

> so when Simon's on song, you are enraptured by it, they are requiems to history and art. David just makes you feel you're so close to the gossip and you are right down to underwear. With Niall you just think: he's talking here having briefed Colin Powell this morning! And those three, kind of touchstones, for history are so powerful and that's why they are the great telly dons. Three particular 'attacks' and that's why they are all so phenomenal.

The demands of high profile television clearly include the choice of a 'charismatic' presenter who can carry such series. It is the case that Schama, Starkey and Ferguson have functioned as part of the 'history branding' for BBC and Channel 4, but unlike the 'televisually skilled' presenters referred to in the previous chapter, the power of their brand as 'vocationally skilled' presenters travels beyond the discourses of television and into the wider public sphere. Prior to their television exposure all three were eminent exponents of their fields within the academy. Arguably their television careers have not impaired their standing within the academy. Although Starkey left his post at the London School of Economics in 1998 in order to pursue his television career, Schama continues as Professor of Art History and History at Columbia University and Ferguson has moved to the US as Laurence A. Tisch Professor of History at Harvard University. This runs parallel with his 'part-time' job as independent television producer. All are 'brands' and 'celebrities' whose powerful personae operate within commercial and public spheres.

The landmark format

Who Do You Think You Are?*: the personally reflective gaze*

An extremely successful series combining celebrity, identity and history, the BBC's *Who Do You Think You Are?* (WDYTYA; 2004–present) made by the Wall to Wall production company demonstrated, in the view of the corporation's then Director-General

Mark Thompson, BBC Two's rediscovery of its ambition to offer compelling factual programming (BBC 2005a: 4). This followed his assertion five years earlier at the Banff Documentary Festival that BBC One and Two should aim solely at mass audiences, leaving ostensibly niche interests to the niche BBC channels. However, as media commentators including Jeremy Isaacs have noted, this went too far and too fast, concluding that 'it's the function of public service to display greatness boldly in the mainstream, not stash it away in a corner'. As Isaacs suggests, there was a change of heart and an outcry against the 'dumbing down' perceived to have taken place in the years following Thompson's announcement. As he wryly adds, the change of heart was particularly apparent when Thompson in the 2004/5 Annual Report led with comments on Beethoven Week (Isaacs 2006: 419–20). Outlining the purpose of BBC Two as 'mixed-genre … combining serious factual and specialist subjects … to bring challenging, intelligent television to a wide audience', its particular successes in the period 2004/5 were those which reflected the strategy approved in 2003: that it should have a distinct public service role and offer challenging output, especially its factual core (BBC 2005a: 25). These included Laurence Rees's *Auschwitz: The Nazis and the 'Final Solution'* (2004), but *WDYTYA* was also identified in the corporation's annual report as an exemplar of the renaissance of BBC Two as an intelligent, yet popular, channel; its first episode garnered the highest viewing figures of the channel in 2004 and offered additional insights across a variety of platforms, not least the BBC website and the digital channel BBC Four, demonstrating the corporation's largely successful response to the challenge of new media (de Groot 2009: 77, 81–82). However, the précis of the first series' role, that it succeeded by offering tools and training for potential family historians and by appearing, via its empiricist historiographical approach, to make the past appear to be 'easily appreciated with the right tools' (BBC 2005a: 25, 55; de Groot 2009: 82) underplays its achievements in representing histories of groups absent from *Great Britons* (see previous chapter) and many other national historical accounts to a wide audience. In 2006 the series moved to BBC One and in 2010 was included by the corporation among those with worldwide significance, and which were 'enriching people's lives' (BBC 2010b: 50). We give below an extended discussion of what is arguably the most significant history television format produced in the last two decades.

Who Do You Think You Are? offers a celebrity interest, with actors, sportspeople, politicians and comedians, among others, either seeking to perform research and visit places of historical and familial significance for a family member still living, such as author and broadcaster David Baddiel's journey to Germany and Russia due to his mother's belief that the people who had brought her up after she and some other members of her Jewish family had fled Germany in the late 1930s may not have been her birth parents; or to consider in greater depth a family myth or legend, such as in the case of the then BBC Radio 1 DJ Chris Moyles, who visited Ireland in order ultimately to realize his family's error in believing in the apparently heroic meaning of his Irish family name. The first series especially emphasized the research techniques used and highlighted the series' links to British institutions such as the National Archives, interpreted by some scholars as demonstrating the democratic

potential for the audience to undertake similar research (de Groot 2009: 80). Later series, though, while directing viewers to the BBC's website and, from its launch in 2007, notifying them of the existence of the *WDYTYA* magazine and related website, increasingly focused upon the often-emotional response of the individual involved, usually upon learning of the material conditions of life in the past for their ancestor. Perhaps most famously the otherwise indomitable presenter of BBC's nightly current affairs series *Newsnight* Jeremy Paxman wept upon learning of his great-grandmother's death in the late nineteenth century of TB and exhaustion, orphaning his grandfather at the age of ten. It is telling that his onscreen tears following this revelation, rather than the fate of the poor barely a century before the series' broadcast, was the source of significant press coverage as well as some scholarly comment on the role of emotion as part of the 'performance of personality' in the series (Bennett and Holdsworth 2006), although perhaps that he had declared that he had no interest in his ancestry before this point offered greater opportunity for empathy on the part of the audience; they too might in some cases be moved to consider their ancestry further, or indeed, as Paxman does onscreen, reflect on how historical statistics made personal have a much more profound effect, even if it is, as Elke Weissmann suggests, 'distanced, though perhaps not rational' (2011: 207). Writing of film and museums, Alison Landsberg's theorizing on prosthetic memory may be useful here; upon considering, for example, his great-great-great-grandfather's need to seek poor relief, Paxman reflects 'I expect if it had been me, I would have hated it and felt humiliated; it's quite humbling really', both putting himself in the shoes of his ancestor albeit drawing upon contemporary ideas of selfhood with serious limitations when applied to historical interpretation, while simultaneously acknowledging that he had not had to undergo the same privations. Instead, and as Landsberg suggests, those who acquire such senses of the past 'are led to feel a connection to the past but … to remember their position in 'the contemporary moment' and hence conditions for ethical thinking are created: 'people feel connected to, but also recognize the alterity of, the "other"' (Landsberg 2004: 9). While for Paxman his ancestors are 'other' to him in terms of social status and culture, for viewers this may additionally necessitate contemplating those of another nationality or ethnicity. That the series succeeds in doing so may be seen in the especially high viewing figures for the Jerry Springer episode, in which Springer discovered the fate of family members who had been unable to flee wartime Europe and died in concentration camps: as one viewer commented in an online discussion immediately after the episode aired, drawing upon an idea of the series, or at least this episode, as fundamentally educative, and also upon that of an 'other' who nevertheless needs to be considered in the present: 'I am mixed with feelings of sadness, hurt, anger and despair … The sickening thing is that in parts of the world ethnic cleansing still takes place.'[17]

As this comment demonstrates, the distancing identified by Weissman is not always apparent. Knowledge and experience are gained of such traumatic histories in the series not, or not only, through distanced, reflective empathy but also through emotional response. Indeed, it could be argued that by drawing on the practice of genealogy as a means to outline aspects of such histories, a close, rather than distanced, form of

empathy is being encouraged. Although some audience members may well respond primarily to the aesthetics offered by the series, identified by Weissmann (2011: 208) as reflecting middle-class tastes and ideas of 'quality television', it seems likely that still more find it a rather closer experience. Indeed, a return to familial histories which link personal and national genealogies has also been traced in, for example, recent literature, where there is also a surging interest in family narratives seeking to recapture '20th century collective and individual histories … at the beginning of a century where a more integrated Europe faces new challenges' (Eigler 2005: 17). The potential of such series to enable viewers to position themselves as ethical consumers of the past is significant, as we discuss further in the final chapter. In addition, while historical events such as the Holocaust are represented on television often at crucial anniversaries as part of the wider phenomenon described by Guido Knopp, among others, as 'event television', considered in the following chapter, *WDYTYA* offers a more regular opportunity to engage with sometimes traumatic pasts revealed to individuals living today, albeit celebrities. Here Landsberg's assertion of the 'ruptures and discontinuities' of migration, which 'underscore the necessity of genealogy' for immigrant groups is particularly pertinent (2004: 70–71), as is Amy Holdsworth's analysis of the series. Citing Kerwin Klein's work she notes how the series emphasizes memory, using it sometimes as synonym for 'history' in order to soften the account offered and make it more accessible. The use of family photography additionally enables relatively recent family, and global, histories to be geographically and genealogically placed by audience members as well as the celebrities concerned, albeit after, as in David Baddiel's case, additional research into the fate of his uncle Arno. Such developments run alongside those in other arenas of public history, including the literature studied by Friederike Eigler as well as genealogy more broadly and museum exhibitions,[18] making Harald Welzer's analysis of the ways individuals experience affective and cognitive memories separately, for which he uses the metaphors 'family album' and 'encyclopaedia', significant to developments in public history more broadly, as well as to specific examples such as this series (Eigler 2005: 21). In Welzer's model, both volumes appear on the same bookshelf in households, although individuals are often aware of family history, but not how this relates to broader historical events. Both forms of memory appear in *WDYTYA*, which reconciles the personal, family album view of the past, using photographs as a starting point, with broader, often traumatic, historical knowledge. As Sontag asserts, 'Nonstop imagery … is our surround, but when it comes to remembering, the photograph has a deeper bite'; it makes such events conceivable, if not comprehensible, to a wider audience (2003: 22; Bell 2010: 84–87). 'We are family', an episode of another Wall to Wall series, *The Genius of Photography* (BBC Four 2007), also outlined 'how the medium translates personal relationships into photographic ones', suggesting that when some programmes have been successful, this may lead not only to imitations but to creative developments.

Scholars and media professionals we interviewed commented on the series' success, but also drew upon their own experiences of work in television. One scholar, who had appeared in and been more broadly involved with Open University

programming, noted how the Open University's involvement with the series, albeit limited to provision of online resources, reflected the 'divorce settlement' agreed by the university and the corporation at around the same time that the first series of *WDYTYA* was in production and to which we have referred in our previous chapter.[19] Due to its success both in terms of audience figures but also as a mode of representing the past, he believed, archivists and librarians were particularly willing to assist, one commenting that:

> What interested me was they had all sorts of people working [on it] … probably all doing it because this was *Who Do You Think You Are?* … And they do show the process of research, this is the key to it, that you do actually have to go, get off your own chair and go and look things up, you know they start off on the internet, ok, but in the end they have to go and do some work, which is good, that's the real reality.

Indeed, the BBC viewed the demonstration of 'the process of research' as a crucial aspect of the series' success: viewers saw onscreen historical sources which demonstrated the veracity of the claims made by the narrator (Dabboussy 2009). Clearly the programme makers were keen to ensure that, broadly, the series was historically accurate while also seeking, understandably, to maintain a compelling narrative with which an audience might empathize. However, for several scholars, the reduced potential for university-based historians to act as public intellectuals due to the celebrity focus of the series was problematic and to some extent reflects the comments of other scholars contemplating continuity and change in history programming (de Groot 2009: 22). Despite public assertions by some historians that history programming such as *WDYTYA* heralds the demise of television as a conduit for nuanced public history, it is telling that other professionals working in archives and libraries were less condemnatory of a series celebrating their often-unsung efforts, as were independent historical researchers.[20] One, who had worked on *WDYTYA* from its earliest days, remarked on the importance of the series in marking a change in factual history programming, both to democratization in the sense of viewer interaction, but also in seeing otherwise hidden experts, in this instance archivists and librarians, onscreen. He lauded Wall to Wall, seeing their work on the series as a groundbreaking example of production driven not by the desires of commissioning editors (Gray 2010) but by trying to offer the audience what they want to see. By drawing upon an already popular hobby Alex Graham, the company's Chief Executive Officer, successfully merged existing public interest in family history with insights into celebrity lives, although Graham has repeatedly asserted that part of the success lies in the way that the ancestors of the famous are usually rather less well known and therefore, we might extrapolate, offer more opportunity for empathy on the part of an audience member who also had a grandparent who worked in a similar type of job. Graham has commented on his failed attempts more than a decade earlier to have a genealogy-based series commissioned but his persistence allowed a rare example of a

factual history series based on many viewers' existing, and personal, interests in the past to become a success both in terms of viewing figures but also the format's dissemination worldwide.

Event television: the reflective gaze

The programme director and producer Laurence Rees was a key mover in the BBC TV History Unit referred to above. He notably collaborated with Professor Ian Kershaw on the first of three series, *The Nazis: A Warning from History* (BBC Two 1997) referred to earlier by Martin Davidson. This was composed of archive and interviews and informed by the 'history from below' movement in Germany, for example, the 'Bavarian project' and the *Alltagsgeschichte* – the history of everyday life. This was an important shift from the existing institutional and structural histories of this period to an examination of everyday life and a break with the dualism of the 'motive' vs. structural explanations for the Nazis which had dominated historical interpretation. Bringing these shifts in thinking about the past to the screen was a considerable achievement, but one which was arguably only possible within this broadcasting climate. Ian Kershaw's involvement with Rees was close, to the extent that he was present at each stage of the production process: research, treatment, script, filming and editing/post-production. Kershaw drew our attention to the length of time the relatively large budget allowed. In television terms this was extensive with *The Nazis: A Warning from History* taking two years to produce. 'So in TV terms these are quite long lead in times, and the budgets are also very considerable':

> [F]or instance with *The Nazis: A Warning from History*, we took the view there, right at the beginning, and I think that was my suggestion, rather than Laurence Rees's, that we wouldn't use historians speaking unless it was necessary to clarify some point of dispute or interpretation. Because otherwise you've got very powerful film footage and very powerful interviewees, and a talking head historian diluting the programme. So that was a conscious decision. This intervention in dealing with a subject that had dominated history programming invited viewers to reflect on events and ask 'could this happen again?'.

Within the period of the project Laurence Rees and Ian Kershaw worked on another 'landmark' series to which we now turn.

Auschwitz: The Nazis and the 'Final Solution'

A 2005 BBC radio and television season marked the liberation of Auschwitz, most notably with the documentary series *Auschwitz: The Nazis and the 'Final Solution'* (broadcast in the US as *Auschwitz: Inside the Nazi State*). Written and produced by Laurence Rees and co-produced with the US public service broadcaster KCET, with

whom the BBC had worked relatively regularly for at least the previous decade, the series offered both commemoration of the sixtieth anniversary of liberation but also represented a development from Rees's earlier productions on similar topics. Indeed footage from Rees's earlier series *Nazis* (1997) also appears in *Auschwitz*, which won a Grierson award for Best Historical Documentary later in 2005, and the overall project including the accompanying book represented for Rees the culmination of fifteen years 'of writing books and making television programmes about the Nazis' (2005: 8). It was lauded for its production values and choice of witnesses, and for most convincingly demonstrating 'evidence of quality, integrity, creativity, originality and overall excellence' (Gardiner 2006: 28). It aired in January–February 2005 to an audience of more than 3 million, which was maintained over the four weeks of its transmission not least due to positive press coverage and the original insights – claims that the series would 'unravel the secrets' of Auschwitz and reveal its 'untold story' – emphasized before its broadcast (BBC Press Office 2004b).[21]

In the months before its broadcast, the series was advertised on television and radio, but the 28-page press pack itself, available through the relevant press release page of the BBC website, also offered a form of commemoration. With the first page in dark grey and black tones and with the stylized silhouette of barbed wire on the front and back covers, this was considerably more detailed and incorporated a themed design to a much greater degree than other releases. It included references to the BBC website and to Rees's book of the series, as well as referring briefly to the other televisual and radio events to be broadcast. The series is discussed episode by episode, with quotations from the interviews with eyewitnesses opening each summary, and timelines of the war and of Auschwitz in particular. The day before the detailed overview of the series was released, the BBC released a brief press release to emphasize to viewers the national lack of familiarity with the Holocaust which was outlined by a viewer a few weeks later and is considered below (BBC Press Office 2004c). Claiming that the audience research, undertaken in early 2004, informed the series and its book (Rees 2005: 8 fn1), a conclusion rather at odds with Kershaw's comments discussed below, the release also emphasized the 'sensitively shot' nature of the dramatized sequences, a point which had probably been raised by the scholars involved, as the interview material suggested.

In the interview with Kershaw, further insights can be gleaned. Clearly, given the subject matter and existence of Holocaust denial, issues of authenticity and veracity were considered particularly by those working on the series. As the series was produced by the BBC, this allowed, in his opinion, a bigger budget, which in turn meant that greater time could be spent on production; more than two years was spent on the production of *Auschwitz*, and at least the same for the earlier *Nazis*. In his experience, the funding levels offered by the BBC and the German ZDF for history documentaries were not entirely different, but the 'way of proceeding' in terms of planning and organization was less similar. For the German-originated documentaries he had been involved with, a large group of historians would come together to share ideas for the production, in something akin to a seminar or academic conference. In contrast, Rees's productions would engage a single historical adviser after deciding

what the series should include, and he noted how he had been initially contacted by Rees and had not been entirely convinced by the initial ideas for a series on the entire Holocaust, but he was taken by the suggestion to focus solely on Auschwitz, which would make the series original: as he concluded, 'in a way I suppose I declined the initial idea, and out of it came a better one'. As was the case for the other series he had worked on, he became one of the series consultants, while individual historians with specific expertise were involved in other segments of the series. This clearly contrasted with his experience of German television productions, and perhaps a greater wariness on the part of some German television professionals can be seen: to wish to be seen to engage as many scholars as possible as early as possible in the plans for the production, and in so doing garner a range of information and insights on key events of twentieth-century European history, is hardly surprising in a nation still dealing with its national historic guilt for crimes against humanity and with the ethically complex problem of how to represent such aspects of the past onscreen.

That is not to suggest, though, that scholars have not criticized German representations of aspects of the Second World War, as we have already briefly considered (e.g. Ebbrecht 2007a). However, while Ebbrecht is highly critical of aspects of several German-produced series, especially those which rely to a great extent on dramatization, the BBC series, including its restrained use of CGI in order to depict the changing role of the site, is applauded and indeed has been more widely feted. As Ian Kershaw remarked, CGI offers viewers

> a sense of life to maybe a set of ruins, and gives an indication [of what they had looked like], which I think is very valuable … [Television] is an inordinately powerful medium … it's not good at analysis [but] … it's good at depiction, and description.

While this may seem a rather surprising comment from a scholar engaged in the complexities of discussing the Holocaust, his later comments clarified his position, despite caveats relating to the possible manipulation of sources:

> on the other hand, the use of, in particular for the twentieth century … film footage and the use of contemporary eyewitnesses is very powerful … a history book can't really convey that … television has undoubtedly served a purpose in opening up history to vast audiences now which aren't going to sit down and read a thick book on some topic of history … it opens up perspectives.

This certainly chimes with the views of some audience members; self-selecting contributors to the Digital Spy website noted their appreciation for the series, and the trailers for the series and the season as a whole on the BBC radio channels, noting the apparent ignorance of the British population of such events. One viewer, 'tinminer', commented as part of a longer discussion that:

> I think this documentary should be made compulsory viewing in all secondary schools … we cannot allow anyone to forget what happened in WWII, even if

> it will become 100, 200 years down the line. It is too horrific, too barbaric to be forgotten.[22]

Considering another aspect of history on television as a whole, and the representation of the Second World War in particular, Kershaw expressed his discomfort at the potential for dramatic reconstruction to mislead or otherwise misinform a potentially large and diverse audience, and noted the potential problems raised by what he perceived as a growing tendency in television series to reconstruct scenes but make them appear to be original footage. Due to this, reconstruction based on authentic records in *Auschwitz* was

> the only way I would allow them [reconstructions] … I said 'ok, you can have an SS man standing in the background there, not saying anything, or "Heil Hitler" … but nothing more than that'.

Even then he was not entirely content, as 'you don't know that that is precisely how it was said at the time. That's actually a modern actor reconstructing that.' These areas of concern, in contrast to many other series which have also utilized dramatized sections, underscore the continuing significance and ethical obligations of media professionals and historians engaged in depicting pasts that lie within living memory and are highly traumatic, and because of this will doubtless continue to be sensitively considered for decades to come.

The six-part series charts the development of the camp from Polish prisoner-of-war camp to a site of the murder of millions. Beginning with the bird's-eye, or possibly God's-eye view of the camp in the present, the haunting orchestral score, specially composed by Tim Rabjohns, encourages a feeling of disturbance and alienation from the earliest minutes, while a male narrator, the Shakespearian actor Samuel West, intones: 'This is the site of the largest mass murder in the history of the world. Auschwitz.' Contemporary film footage of the site then turns to grey, while CGI is used to 'rebuild' row upon row of buildings which have been razed to the ground, offering a sense of the huge scale of the events to be discussed. The narrator continues: 'this is a story of the evolution of Auschwitz; of the mentality of the perpetrators' as a dramatic reconstruction of Germans standing around in uniform reading maps is shown, underlining the culpability of individuals for the events. But even during the sombre notes of the beginning of the series, the audience is reminded of its originality, and specifically that the series includes material from Eastern European archives recently opened. The inclusion of the testimony of former SS members is also quite unusual and places the series alongside much earlier and groundbreaking work such as Claude Lanzmann's epic film *Shoah* (1985), in which he, often secretly, interviewed perpetrators. That such testimony is not subtitled but is dubbed into an upper-class English accent, as is that of Rudolf Hoess, one of the Polish political prisoners, similarly serves to disturb and discourage a passive viewing experience, as such clipped tones might also be heard in British films from the period, still often aired on television, as well as later dramatized representations of the British armed forces. Also unusually, the first voice, after that of the narrator, is

granted to a perpetrator: some minutes later the first survivor, Dario Gabbai, speaks of his memories of the gas chambers. At other points in the first episode the use of CGI leads directly away from a sense of chronology: as we are informed of the sites previous existence as a Polish army barracks, the well-known gate with 'Arbeit macht Frei' disappears, the buildings change, and we are shown the site as it was when Rudolf Hoess arrived as Kommandant in 1940. Stripping the events of the inevitability often imbued to them through the closed narrative of many documentaries, which can also appear to strip perpetrators of their free will, this move backwards rather than forwards in time is similar to that undertaken by Martin Amis in his *Time's Arrow* (1991) and in so doing, the potential for viewers to consume passively the account is reduced further. The use of photographs throughout the series, as has been discussed elsewhere (e.g. Bell 2010) and above with reference to *Who Do You Think You Are?*, additionally maintains both empathy and alienation, positioning the viewer as compassionate but also, ultimately, unable fully to comprehend. Arguably this works against the stated goal of the series to enlighten the large proportion of the population with little or no knowledge of the Holocaust.

However, offering material which encourages a range of affective responses is also, we would suggest, a form of knowledge. The final episode of the series includes an account of a visit in the 1990s by the Auschwitz survivor Thomas Blatt to Izbica, where he had grown up, and specifically to his former home. The then occupant accused him of visiting in order to find money, and in the following years the occupant tore the house apart to find the non-existent 'treasure'. As the series draws to a close, the narrator asserts: 'This ruined house symbolizes how long is the shadow cast by the Nazis' persecution and murder of the Jews, and how real still today is the prejudice of anti-Semitism.' Further shots of the derelict house follow, before train tracks – a central symbol of the Holocaust in the work of Lanzmann – are shown, and the existence of Holocaust denial is acknowledged. The former SS guard Oskar Groening asserts that his testimony exists in order to refute the deniers, but his own role at Auschwitz he describes as something he 'witnessed' rather than something in which he participated, making his testimony a form of denial of free will on the part of perpetrators. Giving the final testimony to a survivor of Auschwitz rather than a perpetrator, the series ends with Alice Lok Cahana talking about a photograph taken at Auschwitz of her aunt and cousins, minutes before their deaths.[23] The shattering feeling she describes cannot be experienced in the same way by someone without her experiences, but it does more broadly represent the repulsion for the events encouraged, albeit in a measured way and with scholarly input by the series and reflected in the slow and measured tempo of the closing music of every episode, Handel's 'Sarabande'. Both audibly and visually, then, the series aimed and largely succeeded in offering an educational and commemorative account of the Holocaust appropriate to the BBC's remit. As Rees noted, and confirming Kershaw's experience working on *The Nazis: A Warning from* History,

> only the BBC would have given us the necessary support to pursue [the] enterprise. The research period for these projects was so long that only a public service broadcaster could have made such a commitment (Rees 2005: 10).

A further example of the 'reflective gaze' came from the BBC with international co-funding which provided the necessary resources for the high production values required for the proposed *Hiroshima* to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the bombing.

Hiroshima

The ninety-minute Emmy- and BAFTA-winning drama-documentary *Hiroshima*, broadcast on BBC One to an audience of more than 4 million combined archive footage, computer-generated graphics, reconstruction and eyewitness testimony in order to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the bombing of Japanese cities, and was written, produced and directed by Paul Wilmhurst, whose previous projects included drama and documentaries. Made by BBC Science, the influence of which may be seen in the greater-than-usual emphasis upon the technological aspects of the atomic weapons, the film was a co-production with French (TF1), German (ZDF) and US (Discovery Channel) broadcasters and was made in association with Canadian (CBC) and Japanese (Tokyo Broadcasting System) broadcasters. It was aired in thirty countries to mark the anniversary.[24] Beginning with dramatized footage of soldiers in jeeps driving in the dark, representing, as we later discover, aircrew travelling to the aeroplanes prior to take-off, the narrator, the actor John Hurt, intones: 'This is the story of the first ever use of a weapon of mass destruction', a particularly well-known phrase by the time of the film's broadcast due to ongoing debates over the existence of such weapons which had served to justify or question the invasion of Iraq by the US in 2003. Moving between colour or black and white footage and reconstructions, the narration continues: 'The target was an empire with its own secret weapon [pause] the suicide bomber.' An elderly, as yet unnamed Japanese man, Shuntaro Hida, is seen confirming that he had trained himself 'to die at any time'. Colour footage of Japanese cities and civilians is then seen, before computer-generated footage of the dropping of an atomic bomb onto Hiroshima, and its explosion. The film sought to offer 'the story of the air crew' but also that of 'the people of Hiroshima, who were the first ever victims of a nuclear attack'. Given relatively recent national debates in the US over the representation of the crew of the *Enola Gay* in the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum exhibition planned for 1995 to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the bombing (see e.g. Linenthal and Engelhardt 1996: *passim*), it seems unsurprising that the crew, and their justification of the attack as saving lives overall, is privileged over that of Japanese civilians, and of those who do appear in the earliest minutes of the film, an acceptance of suicide is emphasized, returning the audience to the present and to fears relating to ongoing conflicts in the Middle East. Over reconstructed scenes of the ruins of the city and of injured civilians, the narrator continues: 'The bomb brought the Second World War to an end, and it marked the beginning of a new chapter in human history.'

Using techniques commented upon by Ebbrecht, for example the combination of dramatized segments, photographs and eyewitness testimony, a former doctor, Shuntaro Hida, is seen in the present as an old man, and in the past through a black-and-white photograph, but is also represented by a Japanese actor of a younger generation;

he talks openly onscreen of training soldiers to strap explosives to their bodies and climb under tanks. While this does not necessarily serve the same purpose of creating empathetic links across three generations as Ebbrecht notes of German history programming, it may do so for a Japanese audience contemplating the motivations of their grandparents' generation in the light of the bombing of Hiroshima; certainly, though, the reiteration of the phrase 'suicide bombing' several times in the first ten minutes of the film may lead audiences outside of Japan, and in the US and UK especially, to draw parallels between the enemies of the Allied forces in 1945 and 2005, somewhat in contrast to other programming relating to anniversaries of the Second World War, which implicitly questions the legitimacy of later conflicts (see e.g. Chapman 2007). However, the changing use of grammatical tense avoids positioning the bombing as inevitable. Relating to the final hours before the bombing, the narrator asserts: 'Two hours later, the *Enola Gay* met up with the scientific and photographic planes. They were now three hours from Hiroshima.' The testimony of one of the pilots, in the present tense, breaks the historic sense of the narrator's account and pulls it into the present: 'dawn is breaking … a beautiful, beautiful morning … we all remarked on what a beautiful sunrise it was.' The narrator follows the eyewitness's return to the past tense, but in the incongruous moment of describing the aesthetics of the morning on which the bomb was dropped, which is heard in part over dramatized footage of the men looking out of the aircraft windows as the sun lights up their faces, the viewer may be able to step back from viewing the events as inevitable or somehow a natural disaster; rather, the editing involved in this section of the film allows the possibility to conceive that choices to undertake the bombing were made, rather than viewing them as a natural extension of the Allied response to Japanese military aggression.

The dropping of the bomb is represented through computerized imagery of the nuclear reaction at the centre of the weapon, with reconstruction of the actions of the aircraft's crew, and their testimony. Then, the film moves in the main to the testimony of the Japanese survivors; with some black and white footage of damaged buildings, their accounts are used alongside dramatized reconstruction emphasizing the physical injuries they had endured, although the ethical decision is made, for example, not to depict Kazuko, the daughter of Shige Hiratsuka, who could not be rescued from the collapsed family home before fire consumed it. Instead we hear her voice calling for help and her distraught mother, played by the well-known British Japanese actress Naoko Mori, a familiar face for UK viewers, whose appearance arguably acts to narrow the geographic and chronological distance of the events depicted, as Shige's autobiographical account is read in translation by an unseen woman.[25] Similarly, the first fatality seen by Shuntaro Hida is viewed only peripherally, either through greenery or at a distance, as the impossibility of depicting such serious injuries in a way respectful to the deceased is acknowledged. In addition, the representation of the effects of the bombing on civilians and soldiers alike counters Harry Truman's speech, heard over colour footage of preparations for further campaigns, in which he asserted that the bombing of Hiroshima had been an attack on a military base, implicitly encouraging viewers to consider similar claims made in more recent warfare; similarly, his assertion in the same speech that the bomb would 'shorten the

agony of war' is belied by an earlier reference to the long-term effects of radiation poisoning. Indeed, the concluding ten minutes of the film, after a brief reference to the end of the Second World War and footage of public celebration in the US, focuses upon the aftermath for survivors and the reception of accounts of their suffering, particularly the effects of radiation sickness, represented as a 'shocking surprise' even to the perpetrators. One of the Japanese eyewitnesses offers the observation that the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were an experiment; an American involved in the decision to drop the bomb offers the counter that the Japanese rejection of surrender was to blame, asserting that the bomb saved further lives. Ultimately, though, the last word is given to the need for commemoration, with footage of the annual ceremony in Hiroshima at which a candle is lit and is floated down the river for each departed soul.

Overall, the corporation's governors were impressed by coverage of the 2005 anniversaries in contrast to broader concerns in the period over falling audience figures for BBC One and BBC Two. That *Hiroshima* garnered an audience of more than 4 million would no doubt have been viewed with approval, alongside its wider commemorative role (BBC Press Office 2005). International co-funding was a significant element in this example of 'landmark' television. We now look further at the nature of international developments and their impact on history programmes of this type.

International developments

Since the screening of *Civilisation* in the US in the late 1960s there have, of course, been enormous changes in the character of the internationalization of television, as the above examples testify, both within the US and in the transnational relationships between the BBC and US networks. Within the US, as Stavitsky and Avery note, the character of PBS has changed, in the main due to commercial channels adopting what was previously PBS output. For example, television for children and historical or science documentaries are now to be seen on Disney and Nickelodeon and the History Channel and Discovery, for whom history and science documentaries deliver their target audiences. In this way the US audiences have been 'demassified' (Stavitsky and Avery 2003). In the UK case, following the 1994 White Paper: The Future of the BBC published by the then Conservative government, the BBC was encouraged to become a more international and multi-media enterprise which should be 'building on its present commercial services for audiences in this country and overseas' (quoted in Steemers 2004: 84). In 1995 BBC Worldwide, was formed, replacing the existing commercial arm BBC Enterprises, and was encouraged to develop and enter into international markets. As Conlin has reminded us, the BBC has a long history of international distribution and sales of its programme output but the aim of BBC Worldwide was expanded in order to develop their most popular television programmes into 'international brands'. Key to their activities in the US was their partnership with Discovery formed in 1998. This covered the co-production of television programming, the development of subscription channels and the US

distribution and marketing of the television channel BBC America. In factual genres general history programming and the history strand *Timewatch* are included in their co-productions and have clearly provided valuable and marketable content for Discovery and BBC investment.

In addition to the boost the partnership gave to the BBC's commercial arm and therefore sources of funding for programme content, the BBC's already strong position within the international television market has been improved by the partnership's introduction of what Mjøs in his study of cross-national partnerships, refers to as the 'blockbuster logic within factual television' (Mjøs 2011: 186). A major early success of this partnership was the 1999 production *Walking with Dinosaurs* which, according to the BBC is one of 'the most successful factual programme[s] of all time, with an estimated audience of 375 million viewers' (BBC Press Office 2004c). BBC Worldwide, BBC and Discovery were able to raise funding for these 'factual mega-projects' and consequent critical brand recognition for the *Walking with. …* formula. Each programme was accompanied by merchandise such as books, magazines, DVDs and CDs. In addition to this brand, natural history series such as *Blue Planet* and *Planet Earth* were subject to the same commercial approach.

History as content was also afforded the 'super event history' television treatment, largely in the form of docudramas. The first and highly successful *Building of the Great Pyramid* was a co-production between BBC, Discovery and NDR. Once more this coincided with internal changes within the broadcasting organizations, the BBC in particular, and with technological developments that have had and will continue to have enormous impact on the ways in which historical data and representation can be made available and constructed. The digitization of archives and the increasing sophistication of computer-generated imagery shaped the continuing expansion of the history documentary. In October 2000 the BBC established its new Factual and Learning Division which incorporated science, natural history, arts, business, religion and ethics, and history under one controller, Glenwyn Benson. Benson was keen to develop 'cross disciplinary' projects to produce what she described as 'event' or 'immersion' television. Thus large-scale productions such as *Pompeii: The Last Day* (2002), *Pyramid* (2002) and *Colosseum: Rome's Arena of Death* (2003) pulled in personnel from different areas of production and CGI special effects. The resulting output can be described as 'history as spectacle'.

Following these productions, commemorative 'historical event' programming once more provided the BBC with a national platform in 2004, with their productions of *D-Day* and *Dunkirk*, considered further in the following chapter. These programmes broke new ground as 360°[26] projects which combined dramatic reconstructions, archive footage and eyewitness testimony for the television screen with an interactive facility, 'press the red button' which linked to a special website with access to digital sources as well as the 'People's War' chat room which invited recollections from viewers. According to Bennett (2008a) these programmes and their digital facilities were demonstrations of the BBC's role in 'building digital Britain' and re-emphasized the BBC's remit to public service broadcasting in a period of difficulty. *D-Day* was a co-production with, among others, the Discovery Channel, a relationship which has

now been extended to 2014 and which will, according to Jana Bennett, then of BBC Worldwide, enable the BBC to continue to produce the 'most ambitious and creative landmark factual programming for viewers until 2014'.

The *Walking with* … series was not received well by all. David Attenborough, a key figure in the BBC both as presenter and as a professional 'insider' with an institutional track record was highly critical of the use of CGI and, as Helen Wheatley notes, in press interviews at the time he described it as 'being rather tacky, as being about entertainment rather than education', contrasting the *Blue Planet's* 'old money' expenditure (on an orchestral score and the very best filming *on film*) with the high concept computer-generated *Walking with Beasts* (Wheatley 2004: 330). As Wheatley argues, Attenborough's disparaging remarks about such populist products must be understood within the context of what defines 'quality' television. The notion of what constitutes 'quality' television has been the subject of lengthy and long-running debate that is related to the notion of public service broadcasting, which is expected to provide programming that reaches quality standards. Wheatley highlights the fact that although a co-production with the Discovery Channel, this fact is suppressed to a large extent and in particular for the UK market. It is possible, therefore for the 'blockbuster logic' to be resisted for particular projects produced by the partnership. Wheatley produces a persuasive analysis of what she calls the visual and aural splendour of the series, emphasizing the filming and the specially composed music, and argues that it operates within taste codes so beloved by the educated middle classes. This appears to be confirmed by a small-scale audience study conducted by Wheatley (*ibid*.). Like many examples of BBC/Discovery partnership products *Blue Planet* has had a long shelf-life through DVD and CD sales and gained considerable kudos for the BBC in its politically fraught home market. However, the most salient point here is that the series draws on a quality aesthetic which is identifiably that of the BBC and evident in previous series such as *A History of Britain*, discussed above. Natural history programmes, as Cottle has pointed out have a distinct advantage as international commodities in that they appear to transcend linguistic and other, for example, cultural, social and political, boundaries which is clearly not the case for much history programming (Cottle 2004). However, we can point to examples other than those of the blockbuster genre which draw on traditions and codes similar to the natural history product.

One of our interviewees, an independent producer and director of his own company, formerly of the BBC, gave some insights into the attitudes of those within the BBC to the co-production agreement with Discovery. He suggested that there were strong feelings against the commercial nature of Discovery and a deal of resentment at being required to join forces in these ventures.

> [I]t [the Discovery partnership] has become a terrible burden because while the money is very important to the BBC, they can't find enough programmes that they agree on to spend that money – so the BBC are saying we want to make this, and Discovery say that's not a good story for us, what about this? And they say that's not really …

and, referring to the BBC/TLC (Discovery) co-production *Egypt* (2005) he said:

> A show like *Egypt*, for instance, which was regarded and laughed openly at by BBC drama department ('did you see that nonsense?') did hugely well – they didn't like it because they didn't make it and to an extent it was not good drama. My attitude to that is, well get involved in it, make it better – make it work better. As a commissioner, if you've got these departments, factual and drama, get them together – Egypt people love Egypt – make a good Egypt drama, you know, and you can sell that.

We explored BBC views on the Discovery partnership with Martin Davidson:

> For six or seven years we were plugged into an international market for history programmes whose emphasis is on, quite rightly, lots of drama and that's brilliant when it works but when the formula is repeated once too often it collapsed in on itself. I mean at its best things like *Pyramid* and *Pompeii* were genius because what they brilliantly did was, well … you know you can't fail to be fascinated.

Revealingly, and confirming Davidson's views, in a BBC planning document 'History Strategy 2009' the Discovery partnership was considered under the heading of 'Business needs', rather than any other strategy criteria, and Discovery and other collaborators were referred to as 'commercial partners'. The joint programming plans between Discovery and the BBC have, for reasons given above, borne more fruit in the science and natural history programme genres.

Channel 4 were also concerned about the impact of high budget programmes on content as Ralph Lee confirmed:

> It is expensive to make these programmes and when people get these, ambitions get higher and higher and your expectations get higher, e.g. *Pyramid* – audiences take that for granted, the base line – we do quite a lot of co-production which drives you into particular subject areas because history is so culturally specific so you end up with more Egyptians, Romans and Nazis on TV than you would if we could fully finance everything … that's a factor in the last few years. So you get a lot of 'ancient discovery', 'secrets of the dead', things that are driven by … the further back in history you go the easier it is to find common ground. I guess it's much harder to look at the twentieth century with different points of view.

We will now turn to consider one of the exemplars of this kind of programming.

Blockbuster history: the gaze of the spectacle

Pompeii: The Last Day

According to the 12 September 2003 BBC press release (BBC Press Office 2003), 'The Romans are coming to BBC ONE':

> *Pompeii: The Last Day* (BBC 1 2003) tells the heart-rending story of the last hours of both Pompeii and Herculaneum. Their story is told first-hand by those who witnessed the disaster. Based on archaeological evidence and the writings of Pliny the Younger, the film utilises drama reconstruction and state-of-the-art special effects to take viewers back in time.

In their discussion of *Walking with Dinosaurs* Karen Scott and Anne White (2003) draw on Bolter and Grusin's notion of re-mediation for an understanding of the form and aesthetic of the BBC's 'blockbuster' event television. This suggests that new technological possibilities and techniques draw on existing or older forms of media for style and expression rather than drawing on completely new codes. Bolter and Grusin (2002) distinguish between codes of 'immediacy', a more traditional media trope, and 'hypermediacy' that draws attention to its mode of representation. Gunning further reminds us that the history of early cinema is an 'aesthetic of attractions' (Gunning 2000: 36) in which spectators do not get lost in the emotional draw of the characterization and narrative but remain aware of the 'act of looking'. The pleasure in this act, according to Gunning, is that of the satisfaction of curiosity and fulfilment of interest in itself. The rise of the blockbuster in cinema began during the 1980s and 1990s with products as vehicles for special effects technologies.

As Scott and White point out, 1999 was not a good year for the BBC in general: their audience share was down and there was some highly publicized losses of talent to other networks. However, they fail to mention the 1998 signing of the Discovery partnership which provided the desire and the finance for the BBC to move into blockbuster television and thus regain some of their reputation. Large investment in the website also demonstrated the BBC's ability to create multi-platform TV in a digital environment as well as producing something which was highly attractive to Discovery and TLC. Caldwell had noted the increasingly excessive 'visuality' employed by ailing US television networks as early as 1995 and analysed excessive imagery and special effects. The BBC's Natural History Unit's outputs developed this to great success and indeed the showcasing of new techniques of filming and editing had historically been in the domain of natural history programming, the camera taking us to places we would never see.

Terrestrial television in the UK was under threat of increased competition, with ITV the major victim of the move to digital technology and multi-channel households. Thus the desire to develop more 'special event' television for terrestrial channels, especially the BBC, can be understood in this context. An additional factor was the heavy marketing of home cinema technologies, e.g sound systems, plasma screens, etc. which worked well for screening of movies from DVD (Rodan 2009). It was therefore important for television to provide more spectacular and visually exciting products that took programming out of the ordinary and the everyday.

As we understand from the press release for *Pompeii* quoted above, the BBC insists on its academic and scholarly credentials; it is 'based on archaeological evidence and writings' with state-of-the-art technology. It also adds the familiar melodramatic or family dramas of fiction. Visually it inhabits three planes: the archaeological

remains of Pompeii/Herculaneum filmed along with the surroundings and the looming presence of Vesuvius above the Bay of Naples; the setting for the drama which includes reconstruction of the original town with characters in 'authentic' costumes; and computer-generated images both of the general views of the town as it would have been and, eventually, the erupting Vesuvius. The press release claims the programme's state-of-the-art technology will 'take viewers back in time' and the programme seeks to establish its authenticity when the narrator tells us that the events are drawn from 'the writings of a young man' (Pliny the younger, a character in the drama). In addition, the film cuts between the archaeological site and the set reconstruction. In the press release the various characters in the dramatization are given 'sources', most of which are skeletons that were excavated on the site. As Mary Beard points out, the 'characters' have been sources of speculation by many historians in the past (Beard 2003). The series, therefore, repeats these myths and stories for its dramatic reconstruction. The dramatization is, however, visually rich and a great effort is made to paint a picture of a rich and settled society and, although it is clearly not a lavish budget for this section of the film, the street life, markets and food-stalls lend a pleasing everyday-life authenticity. Julius Polybius, the politically aspirational and relatively wealthy family man discusses improvements to his house as we look at the remains and hear an archaeologist's interpretation of the site. We are introduced to all the characters who offer a 'soap-opera' cast with a range of gender, age and class, from the rich family, the enterprising young 'laundry owner', the young gladiators on the lash and the slaves. We learn from the narrator their significance and the various activities are explained. There is, therefore, a didactic strand that runs through the programme. However, the acting and the emotional development as the devastation approaches draws the viewer in and, as Alisa Orr, the producer, says, the story is told largely through the lives of ordinary people. The climax, of course, like all disaster movies is the volcanic eruption itself. This eruption was not witnessed by the inhabitants of Pompeii and Herculaneum, nor by us the viewers and we are stuck with the characters in what we know were the last hours of their lives.

Arguably the 'blockbuster' history programme, of which *Pompeii* is one example, was a relatively short-lived phenomenon for the BBC Discovery partnership. The huge success of *Building the Great Pyramid* (BBC/Discovery/NDR 2002) was followed by *Colosseum: Rome's Arena of Death* (BBC/Discovery/France Deux and NDR 2003), *Pompeii: The Last Day* (BBC/Discovery/TLC 2003) and *Rome: the Rise and Fall of an Empire* (BBC/ZDF/Discovery 2006) and *Krakatoa: the last days* (BBC/Discovery/RTL/France Deux 2006). From 2008 the drama-documentaries produced by the BBC tended to concentrate on personal narratives or social history with little or no CGI in part because of perceived strong competition over the CGI territory from Hollywood in 2006–7. However, Martin Davidson more than hinted in our interview that the genre had grown tired, saying 'they were great but then when it ended up being just … next week *Genghis Khan*, you know, just kind of brain dead ancient bollocks, well … '. Davidson did, however, say that he wanted to 'rescue the shock and awe stuff', wishing to avoid the almost inevitable slide into parody but re-tell less familiar stories in this form. As he said, 'I want to put the mind back into history'. The last of

the BBC History's attempt at 'blockbuster' history was *Atlantis* (BBC Northern Ireland/Discovery/ProSieben/France Deux 2011) which certainly delivered the promised 5 million audience but was less enthusiastically received by reviewers: 'curiously unengaging' commented Zoe Williams of *The Guardian* on 8 May 2011. From what Davidson says, the BBC is trying to find a way of preserving the 'shock and awe' while ensuring that the integrity and quality associated with BBC 'landmark' series is maintained.

We have highlighted the significance and role of 'landmark' and 'flagship' programmes for broadcasting reputations and audience share, including within these categories a wide range of programme styles. Along with our analysis of key examples of this history genre, we have demonstrated how the changing contexts of the media environment in general and television in particular can be discerned in the topics, form, aesthetic and presenter styles of the programmes and series actually produced, and by extension their contribution to public history. Perhaps one surprising choice is *Who Do You Think You Are?*, but our reasons for defining this as 'landmark' history programming is that it genuinely broke new ground in a format which manages to combine many of the unique strengths of television to produce popular, affecting and informative history programming. It also became the BBC One 'flagship' popular history programme, reflecting the BBC's public service remit and, as we shall see in our chapter 'Who do "they" think "we" are?', broadened the audience for history on television. All of the examples we give offer something original to the representation of history on television but, as we hope we have demonstrated, they are themselves the products of highly complex and fluid production environments.

3

COMMEMORATIVE AND 'HISTORICAL EVENT' TELEVISION: MEMORY AND IDENTITY

As we have identified in our introduction and the previous chapters, issues relating to gender and social class, ethnicity and race are crucial to our analysis of the representation of the past on British television. Nowhere is this more significant than in commemorative programming, which seeks both to represent a historical national identity, but in so doing, to create a sense of community within a culturally disparate nation. Indeed, the comparisons drawn with other European nations in this chapter also serve to underline the ways in which changes in the political and economic structure of the continent since 1990 have led to explicit and implicit reflection upon individual national identities and their relation to a shared past; the significant global events of the last century in particular.

Both in the UK and other parts of Europe the rise of commemorative and historical event television has been noted by a range of scholars, and undoubtedly forms part of a wider desire manifested across sites of public history. Anniversaries provide the opportunity for programme makers and national broadcasters to create and air material which offers knowledge of nationally and internationally significant past events, and also attempts to cement the position and reputation of a particular broadcaster, as in so doing they also demonstrate their own role as part of national history. For public service broadcasters such as the BBC, commemorative programming emphasizes their role in creating and maintaining a memory of the past, while it also satisfies audience expectations that such events should be marked nationally, whether on television, radio or through other commemorative events. In addition, as Roger Smither of the Imperial War Museum has suggested more broadly of the tendency of history programming to represent war rather than other events, programming to mark such anniversaries may be watched by those with direct experience of what is depicted, but also their extended families, reminding later generations of the importance of such memorialization (Smither 2004: 62). The significance of such programming at a national and transgenerational level cannot be overemphasized and throughout this

chapter we consider how and why particular types of programming have been chosen to undertake this task. Certainly, the particular forms taken by commemorative programming are very varied, which has been ascribed by some scholars to the desire of production companies, when seeking commissions, to find a particular 'angle' for a programme; 'a new, topical development regarding a well-known issue or an anniversary of a historical event that offer[s] reason for a re-examination' (Zoellner 2009: 524). However, through consideration of a range of case studies, it is evident that the choice of 'angle' is informed by wider national, even international, cultural, social and economic factors.

Such programmes, then, employ a range of textual strategies such as interviews, archive footage, quotations of diaries and other texts and dramatic reconstruction and, increasingly, supporting website material inviting audience engagement beyond the broadcast. This chapter examines examples of this kind of programming, raising questions about memory and identity, testimony and trauma, and how the drama-documentary has become a common genre in this category. Inevitably, perhaps, this kind of programming has focused on the Second World War and has led to criticism of a bias towards this period at the expense of other significant events, although recent changes at the BBC suggest that in future the history focus will be moved away from war to a broader canvas and so the commemorative seasons of 2005–10 marked key moments for history programming of this type. Our consideration of the audiences of history programming deals further with this in relation to Channel 4 and Discovery. Case studies considered in this chapter therefore include seasons of programming to commemorate the ninetieth anniversary of the end of the First World War and various key events of the Second World War. The chapter also considers the representation of such programming in the published accounts of media professionals, and interview material collated in recent years, in order to draw out the motivations of scholars and media professionals involved in creating such programming.

As Alison Landsberg has noted, press coverage of the anniversaries of internationally significant events such as the liberation of Auschwitz may be surprising in their scale and duration. Remarking particularly on the fiftieth anniversary special edition of the US periodical *Newsweek*, she notes how on its anniversary the coverage exceeded any previous story about the Holocaust, and in the week of the liberation in 1945 there was no article on the subject. This, she suggests, demonstrates how it continuously 'achieves its status only in retrospect'; it is now 'representable on a mass scale' (2004: 114), and this is no less the case on television. While this chapter will not focus solely on representations of the Holocaust, Landsberg's insights reveal the power of the media to commemorate and maintain, or perhaps silence, public discussion of major events in the national and global past.

In Europe, Sonja de Leeuw has noted that Dutch televised dramatizations of the Second World War until around 1990 often took the form of 'historical event television', alongside other commemorative events (2009: 145). Citing the work of Tobias Ebbrecht (2007a), de Leeuw reminds us of the place of television in broader 'contemporary memory culture'. Both Ebbrecht's work and that of James Chapman (2007) emphasize the significance of televisual commemoration of the Second World

War, and particularly through drama-documentary. Ebbrecht, for example, compares British and German programming in 2005, the sixtieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War. As part of his analysis he outlines its importance politically, socially and to the nations' media, and considers how rituals such as speeches and reports, but also television programmes, 're-dramatize' history and so become part of collective memory. Using docudramatic modes of representation, the viewer is encouraged to identify with the events depicted onscreen, which Ebbrecht sees as problematical in their tendency to exonerate 'ordinary' citizens while failing in some respects to distinguish between victims and perpetrators (2007a: 40–41). For example, *Die Letzte Schlacht* ('The Last Battle'; ZDF 2005), sought to portray the last days before Berlin's defeat and used recreated scenes with well-known young actors alongside testimony and original footage, with the actors simultaneously playing their grandparents' generation while also representing that of the third generation after the war. Reflecting how stories of German experiences of Nazism are passed down the generations, it offered, in Ebbrecht's view, 'a sensual and emotional space to empathize with the perpetrators' (2007a: 42, 49). 'Event TV' may, then, offer controversial interpretations of the past, as well as those which memorialize in more conventional ways. James Chapman's analysis also highlights the subversive potential of commemorative programming; however, his interpretation emphasizes how such representations may draw parallels to events in the present. Discussing *Blitz: London's Firestorm* (Channel 4 2005), which he sees as offering an 'overt ideological intervention', he considers how the programme emphasizes the immorality of bombing civilians, whether in 1940s London or twenty-first-century Baghdad, and views it, as Ebbrecht comments of German series, as commemorative history, yet 'shaped by the ideological and cultural conditions of the present' (2007a: 28–30). The programme makers or commissioning editors of *Blitz* may well, as Chapman posits, have reflected the view of the producer-director or of the channel and certainly, as Anna Zoellner suggests, new angles are often sought.

Commemorating the Second World War

We begin, therefore, by examining programming marking the anniversaries of other events of the Second World War, as it is the regular focus of interest on the part of programme makers, and is within the living memory of many audience members, and therefore a range of styles of programming are created and broadcast. They will be considered in their historical order, but so that developments in the televised representation of the past may be considered, the commemoration of, for example, the beginning of the conflict at its sixtieth and seventieth anniversaries will be considered alongside each other. In addition, as many of the historian interviewees commented on a number of the examples of 'event television' considered in this chapter, and provided insights into both the creation and the reception of the programming, their responses will be considered alongside the examples. Some had been involved in relatively small-scale commemorative work for local television, offering insights into museum displays, while others, as we have already seen, engaged in internationally recognized

series memorializing aspects of the Second World War. Many of the scholars, perhaps surprisingly, favoured commemorative programming: *Auschwitz* was especially well respected, in part because of the status of the historical advisers to the series but also because its scale and register were perceived as appropriate to the subject matter. Others, though, commented upon the BBC's tendency to focus upon programming at the expense of other sites of remembrance, such as websites, noting that the BBC 'People's War' [Second World War] website is no longer active and has become an archive of submissions, demonstrating, in the respondent's view, a tendency to see such events and memories of them as relevant only at the time of anniversaries. However, audience responses to such programming, which are also drawn upon in this chapter, instead point to their continued significance in the present.

The most significant commemoration events in the UK in recent years have related to the Second World War. Anniversaries of the beginning of the conflict (1939), the Battle of Britain and Dunkirk (1940), the Blitz (1940–41), D-Day (1944), the liberation of Auschwitz and other camps, VE Day and VJ Day (1945) were marked to different extents in public, and in some instances through history programming. Relatively little televised material marked the sixtieth anniversary of the beginning of the conflict, although the BBC continued to commission programming created by the author, documentary maker and sometime Creative Director of BBC History Programming Laurence Rees, discussed earlier, who had edited the BBC *Timewatch* series for a decade from 1993 and whose 1997 series *The Nazis: A Warning from History* had been critically acclaimed for its account of the rise of the Nazi party in Germany in the decades before the war. His later series, *The War of the Century*, was broadcast on BBC Two in October 1999 and offered, like *Nazis*, previously unseen footage mainly from East German archives newly accessible after the end of the Cold War, with eyewitness testimony, also more accessible in the post-Cold War era, and an unseen narrator, in this instance relating to the war on the eastern front.

In the same year, ITV produced *The Second World War in Colour*, which aired in September 1999 and garnered audience figures of 6–8 million viewers per episode, possibly due to Carlton TV's billboard campaign in London and the Midlands (Minter 1999), and rather more than *The War of the Century*'s 3–5 million, although both series gained substantial audiences for their respective channels. As Dafydd Sills-Jones has suggested in his analysis of *The Second World War in Colour*, citing Kevin Williams, such series may mark a privileging of visual spectacle over 'academic empirical analysis' (2010: 117) and while we do not wish to rehearse his arguments here, he notes that the decade had seen a decreased used of archive material due to cost issues, as film archives lost external funding in some cases and were forced to charge higher rates to documentary makers. Historian interviewees too noted the limitations this has caused, with fewer series using archive material released to DVD and fewer 'repeats' of such series if the copyright limitations relating to the use of archive material meant this would have accrued additional costs for the film maker or broadcaster, in contrast to earlier series such as *The World at War*, considered in our chapter on landmark programming, for which Jeremy Isaacs secured world rights to the archive used. This underlines the significance of both series in their use

of previously unaired material; they represented 'a resistance to the prevailing trend' (Sills-Jones 2010: 121, 123) while the ITV series stemmed criticisms of the broadcaster's documentary output as populist. In both cases, as was noted at the time, 'freedom created by the fall of communism [was] exploited by documentary makers' (Brown 1999). Indeed, some of the footage appeared in both series, and personnel were shared: the then Director of Archive Development at the production company TWI, Adrian Wood, advised on both series and claims the credit for originating the 'in colour' archive-based programming.[1] In addition, the significance of 1999 as both an anniversary year but also the eve of the millennium meant that, in the eyes of some commissioning editors, programming considering the Second World War in particular was desirable as it offered insights into the past century but was also within living memory (Steve Hewlett in Brown 1999). We return to such themes in our chapter on the history audience.

This latter factor certainly coloured later programming aired to mark the conflict; the 2009 season, although dominated by Radio 4 programming, also included daytime BBC One series (for further discussion of daytime television see our chapter on the business of television) such as *Land Girls* and *The Week We Went to War*, broadcast 7–11 September, suggesting the likely audience for such programming (retired) while the BBC launched an archive collection dating from 1939, seeking to 'illustrate the reality of war for ordinary people' which, returning to Turner's discussion of the demotic, is an example of the increasing presence of apparently 'ordinary people' in television in recent years and offered, through the inclusion of radio announcements, 'the opportunity to experience first-hand what it was like for those tuning in as the nation went to war in 1939'. In so doing the corporation reiterated its position at the heart of British broadcasting and national identity: as the archive's executive producer Julie Rowbotham noted, the archive 'shows how important the BBC's role was in keeping the country informed during wartime' (Rowbotham quoted in BBC Press Office 2009b). In addition, with respect to its remit to offer educational insights, the same press release noted that part of the season would include a 'BBC History-hosted academic seminar examining broadcasting in war-time'. Given the ongoing and sometimes criticized coverage by the corporation of conflict in the Middle East (e.g. BBC Trust 2009), the seminar may have attempted, implicitly, to offer an historical context for its correspondents' accounts.

The Week We Went to War similarly drew, through its title and content, on ideas of a national 'we' facilitated by the BBC, linking viewers, with direct involvement in the past represented onscreen, to the corporation. The series aired on weekday mornings and like much daytime television it combined celebrity-presenters – Michael Aspel and singer Katherine Jenkins – with interviews with other celebrities, and in this instance their eyewitness testimony is used in addition to that of lesser-known people, linking the series to the rise of celebrity culture noted in our introduction. But as well as offering a commemorative account of events for those alive during the war, the inclusion of Katherine Jenkins, a mezzo-soprano regularly feted as the 'forces sweetheart' for her work entertaining British troops, offered parallels between past and current wars, especially the need to maintain British morale and a shared sense of identity. This was

particularly underscored in the first episode, aired on 7 September 2009, which opened the week's programming with an account of the bombing of Sandhurst School in London in January 1943. Opening with black and white footage of the rebuilt school dining room and playground, and in so doing showing the greater cultural and ethnic diversity of the school's pupils in the present, the children 'represent' those attending the school decades earlier, yet they do not necessarily stand in for their ancestors. However, they do legitimate the 'we' used in the title; irrespective of family links to the events, 'we' as Britons today should respond in like fashion to the account given by those involved both within the segment and in the studio-based discussion directly afterwards of the bombing of the school, deaths of children and teachers, and its significance today to those who lost family and friends. There was not, though, a comparative account offered of the British bombing of German civilians, or of those opposed to the Allied bombardment campaigns (see e.g. Clayton 2005: 37). By focusing on such events and offering a more complex, although no less emotive, account of civilian suffering, viewers of the episode may have been more likely to consider how such acts have been undertaken as part of British military policy in the recent past and present. However, the nature of the series, with its celebratory, patriotic approach did not seek to undermine well-known myths (Calder 1991), unsurprisingly given the commemorative aspect of the programming, as well as Ann Gray's insights into the caution demonstrated by commissioning editors in recent years (Gray 2010), so a more subversive version in Chapman's sense, which suggested links to contemporary warfare, was not offered explicitly. The absence of any such material from the schedules of Channel 4, which continues to argue for its central role in public service provision, may reflect problems in relating it to the broadcaster's desire for a younger demographic for the channel; certainly, the BBC's material was aimed at an older group of viewers; those for whom, as Roger Smither suggests, the events resonate in their memories (2004: 62).

Commemoration in 2009–10: the Battle of Britain, Dunkirk and D-Day

Unsurprisingly, then, given the BBC coverage of the start of the war, similar levels of programming throughout the period 2009–10 accompanied the anniversaries of the Battle of Britain, Dunkirk, to some degree the Blitz, and to a lesser extent D-Day. The liberation of Auschwitz, however, although undertaken by Soviet rather than British forces had been marked in 2005 with a significant documentary series, *Auschwitz: The Nazis and the 'Final Solution'*, through which in many ways both the purpose – in retrospect – and the approaching end of the conflict, including the role of Britain in liberating other camps, may be seen to have been commemorated. As for the autumn 2009 season, in May 2010 the corporation launched an archive collection based around the Dunkirk evacuation, 'one we found particularly enthralling to put together … because of the incredible personal stories that were captured in the archive and that we have been able to release'. Indeed, the corporation went on to claim that this 'explains why people hold a special place in their hearts for

the BBC's heritage … Since September 2009, almost every month has brought another 70th anniversary of some aspect of World War II', with related BBC archive material (Wheeler 2010), again placing themselves firmly at the core of British commemoration. In addition to online commemoration, the BBC aired live programming such as *Battle of Britain Sunday from Westminster Abbey* on 19 September 2010, a service of thanksgiving in the Anglican tradition, but which also included interviews with former pilots such as Sgt Tony Pickering and utilized a combination of eyewitness testimony, unseen narrator and photographs of those interviewed, but also images of artefacts – in one instance, Pickering's pilot log book, and in another his medals – and also a Hurricane aeroplane, and we are shown Pickering visiting a hangar housing the aircraft and gazing up at it, as he describes his first flight. Through spatial movement – we know he must have travelled to visit the plane – we are given a sense of temporal movement, which is confirmed when his interview concludes with the words: 'I can remember it [Churchill's 1940 speech in honour of the pilots] as if it were said yesterday.' Thus even as part of media coverage of a commemoration primarily sited outside of television, the modes of constructing commemoration echo recent developments in history documentary making, often in relation to the First World War, as we discuss shortly.

Other aspects of the corporation's Battle of Britain season drew upon successes in history programming. For example, the attention given to celebrity family history in *Who Do You Think You Are?*, discussed further in the previous chapter and a form of celebrity culture noted in our introduction, was touched upon in *Battle of Britain*, produced by Lion Television and aired later on the same Sunday, in which actor Ewan McGregor and his brother Colin, an RAF pilot, learned to fly historic planes and met veterans, eliciting further eyewitness testimony, which was used to elucidate aspects of the programme, such as the experience of flying a Tigermoth, but also, as in some of the series discussed in the previous chapter, allowing the brothers to give limited testimony at least on the mechanics of flight: indeed, the programme was similar in this respect to *Dangerous Adventures for Boys* (Five 2008) and offered an element of 'reality history' which appealed to a wide demographic and a substantial audience of more than 4.5 million, a large audience for history programming and surpassed in the main by soap operas and *Who Do You Think You Are?* Similarly successful, relative to the channel it was aired on, *Battle of Britain: The Real Story*, produced by Michael Wood's Maya Vision International, was broadcast on BBC Two and offered a celebrity-driven account led by the popular historian and author James Holland, reaching more than 2 million viewers. Unlike the daytime series *The Week We Went to War*, Holland's series sought specifically to consider the German experience of the battle. It included interviews with former Luftwaffe pilots and represented the battle as two-sided, moving from the mythical status it had developed in the decades following the conflict – the account 'we have all grown up with', Holland's words at the beginning of the film. Indeed, at points in the film Holland seems to be retracing the movements of German rather than British pilots, particularly in their journey from the point at which they had been shot down, to be taken as prisoners of war to Trent Park. Holland goes on to assert that the transcripts of secret

recordings of the men's conversations changed his understanding of the battle; the need to consider the role of such men, and their status as human beings rather than folk devils, is the most significant aspect of the programme and arguably of the season as a whole. As we have discussed elsewhere (Bell and Gray 2007a and b) Wood's series often view the past from a range of perspectives, drawing in previously unused material and discussing the findings with those involved to some degree, and the influence of the production company is apparent in the documentary.

Coverage of the battle was undertaken in other formats: *First Light*, based on the autobiography of, and with some assistance from, Geoffrey Wellum, who joined the battle as an extremely young pilot, was a drama-documentary which aired on BBC Two and offered additional forms of knowledge to viewers, drawing on emotive and dramatic material to reach almost 3 million viewers and give a sense of the physical but also psychological dangers of relentless conflict. Certainly, the director Matthew Whiteman later claimed that Wellum 'felt the film perfectly caught the mood and emotions he felt at the time, both on the ground and in the air' (Whiteman 2010). *Spitfire Women*, produced by Love Productions, represented BBC Four programming during the season, and considered the role of women in the Air Transport Auxiliary, and their experience of patriotism but also prejudice, and was one of predictably few series dealing to any great extent with the experiences of women. The production company's main output, series such as *Young Mums' Mansion* and *Underage and Having Sex*, has some links to the emotive themes and human interest of the programme. Again, as with Maya Vision, the influence of the production company on the form of the programme is apparent and it reached an audience of more than half a million, a respectable figure for the channel. In this respect it resembled *The Wellington Bomber* which aired on the same channel and which sought to reunite the men and women who in the early 1940s had built a plane in less than a day, and drew on the testimony of those who built the aircraft and archive footage. That it was yet more successful than *Spitfire Women* may reveal a great deal about the BBC Four audience: with viewing figures of more than three-quarters of a million, the desire to be educated and informed by material not usually considered on television, by viewers for whom BBC Four seeks to offer a 'home', is certainly apparent.

In contrast to the BBC, the financial crises which had affected ITV throughout the first decade of the twenty-first century led to a dearth of programming to mark the 2010 anniversaries and indeed to a decline in the number of history documentaries overall (Sadler forthcoming). The drama *Joe Maddison's War* was one of few productions relating to the anniversary of the events of 1940 to be aired on ITV nationally. By considering the war through the eyes not of a soldier but a member of the home front, it drew upon a longer televisual tradition, most notably the comedy series *Dad's Army* (BBC 1968–77) still well known to many viewers. Indeed, it received audience figures of more than 6 million, and formed part of a wider 'Autumn lineup' which focused on drama, related by some media journalists to the aspirations of the Chief Executive Adam Crozier to gain greater overseas sales as part of a 'Transformation Plan' for the following five years (Midgley 2010). ITV's choice

of drama rather than factual may then be explained in this context of internal politics; its search for ratings at home and sales abroad.

Unlike the programming newly commissioned to mark the Battle of Britain, much of the material that aired a few months earlier, in May and June 2010, to mark the allied evacuation from Dunkirk was in the form of 'repeats', perhaps because it offers a narrative of, at best, valiant behaviour in the face of defeat, 'England's saddest hour', as one eyewitness interviewed in *Dunkirk: The Soldiers' Story* suggests, and in contrast to the Battle of Britain's valiant behaviour and ultimate success, which was to be covered in far greater length a few months later. Repeated programming included the BBC Four documentary *The Other Side of Dunkirk* (BBC Four 2005), which considered myths surrounding the evacuation. *Dunkirk: The Soldiers' Story* (BBC Two 2004) was an in-house production and won a Grierson award for Best Documentary in 2004, was later screened in the Imperial War Museum in April 2005, and offered a traditional historical documentary approach of eyewitness testimony, narrator and original colour and black and white footage. However, by opening the documentary with Bill Weeks's interview, in which he talks about joining the army as a teenager as a respite from the poverty in which he had grown up, an alternative interpretation of the past to the 'good old days' is immediately proffered: as Weeks states: 'The good old days? I don't think they were.' In addition, the drama series *Dunkirk*, which like its accompanying documentary first aired in February 2004, sought in three consecutive nights to offer the perspectives of all involved and was largely based on personal accounts from the National Archives and gathered from survivors interviewed by the series' makers. Co-written by Neil McKay, who had been involved in other factual series such as *The Murder of Stephen Lawrence* (BBC 1999), his rationale for making the series was very similar to that for other twentieth-century histories: 'that the survivors of Dunkirk are in their eighties or older' so that '[i]n 10 or 15 years the people who went through this extraordinary experience may be gone and the opportunity will have been lost for ever'. That many of the survivors may not have lived to the seventieth anniversary may have been an additional reason for the re-broadcast of the series in 2010.[2]

Despite the lack of new programming on BBC channels, however, Yesterday commissioned a new series, *Dunkirk: The Forgotten Heroes* as part of its 'Spirit of 1940' year-long season, often of original programming, to mark the major anniversaries of the year. Indeed, the channel's idents for the season depicted key images from the period such as aircraft silhouetted against a summer sky, in keeping with its branding as a channel 'where the past is always present'. At this point it is useful to refer to Yesterday's own history, considered in our chapter on the business of television: in brief, its programming incorporates BBC material alongside some original productions. Testimony Films, referred to in our introduction, have a history of making series based around oral testimony, especially relating to less well-known events or groups of people, and in this example those troops left behind at Dunkirk who, if they survived, became prisoners of war. As well as repeating the drama *Dunkirk* in the last week of May, then, the season also included this new material, and garnered a respectable audience for the channel arguably of those viewers who would also watch the

material offered on BBC Two. As we discussed at greater length in the previous chapter, Yesterday's commissioning of new programming and airing of BBC material demonstrates the changing nature of the British broadcasting landscape, and specifically has implications for commemorative programming, standing in some ways as a rival to the massive History Channel brand.

The Blitz: BBC and Channel 4

The commemoration of the Blitz across terrestrial channels was rather different and reveals broadcasters' and individual channels' alternative ways of offering ostensibly the same past to their audiences. The BBC and Channel 4 both offered programming, and in terms of the personnel onscreen and the modes of representing the past, their offerings reflect channel and broadcaster remits and identities. Part of Channel 4's 2010 Programme Policy was to engage and challenge audiences by offering 'original formats engaging audiences in serious subject matter' and *Blitz Street*, a four-part series which aired in April 2010, was specifically offered as evidence of its attempts to maintain its status as the 'main source of competition to the BBC' (Channel 4 2010). Drawing especially on 'its ethos of innovating, experimenting and providing alternative viewpoints', *Blitz Street* alongside the channel's other programmes sought to offer impact and greater public engagement. Like many of the BBC's seasons, a website accompanied the series, giving a range of additional perspectives on the Blitz such as eyewitness testimony, original footage and links to museum exhibitions, tying the series in to other forms of public history, as we discussed in our introduction and discuss further in our concluding chapter. Maintaining the myth of the Blitz, in Angus Calder's sense (1991), the series and accompanying material online perpetuate the idea of a united British resilience during the bombing campaigns. Simultaneously, though, the format of the series attempted to offer alternative forms of knowledge to those frequently presented in televised histories of the home front and may be related to the channel's relatively frequent commissioning of 'reality history' series, as discussed in the following chapter on reenactment; indeed, the 2001 series *1940s House*, which included the Blitz, may perhaps be seen as an example of 'reality history' commemoration a decade earlier. In this instance, however, the reenactment was not attempted by individuals – the criticism levied at series such as *The Trench* in particular may have made the combination of warfare and reality history unpalatable – but instead those experiencing what it was to endure the Blitz were buildings, constructed to resemble the housing which was bombed, and so it was possible, it was asserted, to gain deeper understanding of the effects of the attacks in this manner.

Given the presenter Tony Robinson's ongoing appearances on the channel's long-running archaeology series *Time Team* (1994–present), discussed also in our consideration of the business of television, which moves around the UK to work at various sites, an element of experimental archaeology is apparent. While in *Time Team* this is attempted on a small scale – metal might be smelted and moulded into a particular Iron Age object, for example, in order to elucidate the skills and materials required – in *Blitz Street* the experimental aspects were drawn to the fore and formed the crux of the

series, with Ministry of Defence scientists engaged in designing and recording the life-size experiments. However, unsurprisingly given the period of time and events depicted, the series also incorporated eyewitness testimony, with interviewees seated in front of a large black and white photograph of a bombed street, positioning them and their testimony within the dramatic context of the Blitz and of the series' historic reenactment of the effects of bombing. This aspect of the series was justified by Robinson in an online interview, in which he discussed how it offered for those like himself, with no memory of the Blitz, an opportunity to 'recall what happened'. Indeed, drawing upon the recent death of Harry Patch, the last British veteran of the Great War trenches, he asserted that as 'we've lost the final firsthand memories of the First World War … we're beginning to be in a situation where we're going to lose those firsthand memories of the Second World War … we should get as much … recorded as possible … because it's such a central part of our history.'[3] But like *The Week We Went to War*, there was little recognition of the bombing of civilians by the Allies, or of the aerial bombardment of cities other than London, which positions the tone of the series firmly within the myth of the Blitz discussed by Calder and, once more, arguably left little room for 'subversive' interpretation in Chapman's sense.

While BBC programming to mark the Blitz had some aspects in common with the Channel 4 series, its differences in part reflect the corporation's changing priorities and structure. 'Blitz: The Bombing of Coventry', a special episode of the long-running BBC Two history series *Timewatch* produced by Blast Films, aired in October 2010 to mark the seventieth anniversary of the November 1940 bombing of Coventry. Rather than relying on the Blitz myth, it considered the panic and low morale of the city's population in the immediate aftermath of the bombardment through the use of footage, photographs, eyewitness testimony and some dramatic reconstruction. Opening the programme with a panning shot over a tea table with a cup and saucer, dominoes, slices of toast on a plate and an apple, the destruction of domestic spaces through the attacks is underscored, encouraging viewers to empathize when, for many, the events lie decades out of their lifetime; more broadly, the reconstruction offered throughout the film, which in the main focuses on the experience of children, also seeks to engage the audience at an emotional level. The production company more broadly seeks to create 'emotionally compelling' material[4] – and in so doing to share something of the terror of the raids in a period when, as Robinson noted, those able to give such accounts are a rapidly decreasing group and those who do describe the events on occasion refer to the limitations of language when trying to do so, and are reduced to tears and a state which reflects the trauma suffered, despite the assertions of the narrator at the beginning of the film that such bombing campaigns did not lead to the mass psychological disturbance predicted by government agencies. 'For a moment', one woman states, 'I was really back in that cellar', while for a man 'it still comes into my mind without me thinking about it'. Another concludes that 'it personally damaged you', suggesting that post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) may well have been developed by some of those involved, yet silenced as part of the construction of a national myth of solidarity and strength. The inclusion of the testimony, with its long periods of silence, is very significant in pointing to unvoiced trauma

which lasted beyond the 'collective nervous breakdown' apparent in the first hours after the air raids, with, in the words of the Mass Observation staff, some left 'practically speechless in many cases', much like some of the elderly eyewitnesses interviewed decades later.[5] The first eyewitness, Eileen Bees, then describes her memories of the terror of the first raid; the myth of the indomitable spirit is punctured through the testimony and its accompanying dramatic reconstruction, although some of the later testimony does move the narrative onto the more familiar ground of British resilience. Further linking the series to eyewitnesses through its website, the marked absence of reference to any sort of Blitz spirit among those writing in the 'Memoryshare' section of the BBC's website is significant, and points to the role of such programming in contributing to historical debates over the impact and significance of such events in the past and the present; this is emphasized when in the closing minutes, black and white photographs of parts of the city are overlaid by images from the present. However, ultimately the documentary offered a redemptive narrative of an immature nation, embodied especially in the children who as adults describe their experiences, who faced trials of faith – in the legitimacy of the conflict, in the government, and in their own capacity to survive the attacks – but which ultimately triumphed and was 'resurrected', in the words of the narrator. Resurrection of a different sort was intended through the drama *The Night Watch*, adapted from Sarah Water's novel set during the Blitz, which aired in July 2011 and sought, according to the Controller of Series and Serials Kate Harwood, to reject 'the clichés of the Blitz spirit' and in so doing, demonstrate the channel's 'commitment to re-establish its reputation as the home of intelligent and ambitious drama reflecting the new strategy and investment' (BBC Press Office 2010b), again pointing to the role of commemorative programming in cementing channel and broadcasters' identities and self-representation.

A further two programmes aired on the channel offered interpretations of aerial attacks but importantly also originated from the BBC 'nations and regions', specifically BBC Scotland and BBC Northern Ireland; examples of programming by the former were discussed in our previous chapter. Both broadcasters have considerable autonomy, although they are part of the wider corporation, and both have broadcast television since the 1950s, although in recent years the volume of programming produced by BBC Scotland and Northern Ireland and aired throughout the UK has risen considerable. This is no less the case for history productions, and *Belfast Blitz* (Hardy Pictures for BBC One Northern Ireland 2011) and *Clydebank Blitz* (Finestripe Productions for BBC One Scotland 2010) both aired on BBC Two after their initial broadcast in their respective nations. In this respect, then, the increased autonomy of the channels, running alongside their increased political autonomy, and the ability to fund such specific history programming which stems from this, may be seen as part of the wider BBC commitment, outlined in 2009, to have half of the BBC's network output produced outside of London with targets set for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. By 2009 the proportion of spend on network production in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland had risen from 6.4 per cent to 7.9 per cent with the three nations' share of network commissioning similarly expanding (BBC Press Office 2010b). Both documentaries presented an account of the Blitz which for viewers in the respective nations offered a

national history and related to a specific identity, while for viewers elsewhere in the UK it offered the opportunity to appreciate the experiences of those outside England, whose sufferings were rarely acknowledged in history programming. Both used, as for *Blitz: Coventry* and indeed earlier, groundbreaking series such as Thames Television's *The World at War* (1973–74), which was rebroadcast on BBC Two in 2009 in part to mark the anniversary of the beginning of the conflict, a combination of eyewitness testimony, footage and photographs. In both cases, as for *Blitz: Coventry*, those who were children during the conflict made up the majority of eyewitnesses; the sense of unexpressed grief was not as apparent, although the search of one man for the grave of his brother, who had been killed in the attack, concluded the film and perpetuated a sense of the unfinished grief of those involved. The lack of a grave marker stood for the lack of recognition of the suffering of the living as well as the dead.

Parallels to German representations of aerial bombardment, most notably Guido Knopp's *Das Drama von Dresden* (ZDF 2005) may also be drawn, especially between the eyewitnesses, most of whom had been children at the time of the attacks and open the narrative with accounts of the significance of their respective cities to their childhood, and the profound effects of destruction on their inner as well as external worlds. However, unlike the British series, *Dresden*, which was subtitled into English and broadcast on the History Channel in December 2007, Knopp's series offered an account of the attacks which may be fitted into a wider public history in Germany. Broadcast initially to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the bombing of the city by the Allies, its dramatized passages serve, in Ebbrecht's (2007a) understanding, to create empathy between the current generation of young Germans and their counterparts in the 1940s. In so doing, significant elements of the conflict as a whole are ignored, while those which are considered – specifically, the suffering of non-Jewish civilians – fit into a wider German discourse of the last decade and led by scholars such as Jörg Friedrich, whose *Der Brand* (2002) aimed to focus solely on the destruction of German cities through Allied bombardment and offered a history of the war with the destruction of Jewish property by Nazis entirely, and notoriously, unexplored. While that is not to suggest that the air war is considered from all possible perspectives in British programming, and indeed, this analysis has suggested its limitations, comparison with German accounts, which in the case of Knopp's film include the disturbing sight of a Jewish woman who had hidden in the city with her parents, asserting that its destruction was too great a price to pay to save a few Jewish lives, highlights the potentially exploitative and emotive nature of the subject of aerial warfare, but also the potentially exploitative and emotive nature of the use of eyewitnesses in history programming.

Commemoration of the D-Day landings 1994–2009

Coverage of the anniversary of the D-Day landings differed considerably between 1994, 2004 and 2009, pointing to the changing priorities of broadcasters and a recognition of the dwindling pool of surviving veterans able to contribute to programming. In 1994 the BBC aimed to broadcast a remembrance concert on the *QE2* led by

the Second World War 'forces sweetheart' Dame Vera Lynn, yet failed to do so due to a lost satellite link (MacDonald 1994). In later years and especially at the sixtieth anniversary of the landing a far greater amount of material was broadcast both on BBC channels and on Channel 4. In the latter case, relationships with former colleagues were central to the commissioning of commemorative programming, as Gray has asserted more generally based on her interviews with a range of media professionals (Gray 2010). For example, Jobim Sampson, the former deputy history editor of Channel 4, joined the independent production company Flashback Productions in early 2003 and produced a number of commissions for the channel including *D-Day: The Lost Evidence* (2004) which was co-produced with the History Channel. *D-Day* considered twenty-four hours of D-Day through aerial photographs of the beaches rendered into three dimensions, enabling the campaign to be tracked in a visual manner previously unseen on British television alongside the well-respected use of Allied and some German eyewitness testimony, garnering a significant audience. That individual accounts could be related to the photographs, with dramatic reconstruction linking the two, offered a depth of authenticity surpassing either source alone, bolstering the authoritative narrative of the unseen narrator: for example, Dick Winters' account of parachuting into Saint-Pierre-Eglise in Normandy, and then locating it on his map, is accompanied by dramatic reconstruction undertaken by members of reenactment groups, until finally the camera pans out and upwards to fade into the three-dimensional map of the area. In another example, which comes at the close of the final episode, the use of the present and future tense in the narration, a common trope in history documentaries, sees the narrator assert that Winters, among thousands of other men 'will fight on through the long months of war ahead', as a photograph of Winters in military uniform is screened, until he himself is heard and seen. As for many of the child eyewitnesses to the Blitz, the gap between past and future, we are encouraged to believe, is transient, even non-existent in the memories of many of those involved.

The nature of the accounts themselves, some of which covered issues such as the frequent loss of all equipment as they parachuted down behind enemy lines, may perhaps be seen to direct viewers away from a mythical view of the conflict to consider less well-reported aspects; alternatively, it may offer the more common narrative of victory despite apparently unsurpassable obstacles. Further, the limitations of eyewitness testimony are acknowledged to some degree at the end of the film, as they are similarly in the *Time Team* episode considered shortly, by the inclusion of the comments of one man, who notes the large number of young men who did not live to see their twentieth birthday, or a jet or a microwave oven, 'some of the things we take for granted'. The absence of their testimony and of their experiences of injury and subsequent death echo wider comments on the limitation of oral history (see Smith n.d.), and yet such reflections on the part of survivors also serve to reinforce its legitimacy. As we consider in our chapter on the perceived audience of history programming, the success of the programme led to further commissions, although while many of the programmes which developed from the original commemorative documentary were successful, by late 2006 there was in the US, and arguably also the UK, a sense of 'World War II fatigue'. A careful balance is

sought, but not always achieved, between recognizing anniversaries relating to a nation's history and identity, and saturating the schedules to such a degree that audience members no longer wish to watch.

Perhaps in order to avoid such a response, other material offered by Channel 4 drew on existing, successful formats. *Time Team*, a long-running archaeological series, regularly offers 'specials' that, in some cases, mark anniversaries. In June 2004 the special, made with the assistance of, among other bodies, the Imperial War Museum, related an account of the D-Day landings. The National Trust simultaneously published a guide to British points of interest, those in which Allied troops had been accommodated until the raids, which was advertised and available to download on the channel's website, also marking links between the televised and more traditional forms of heritage being offered. While the use of photographs and original footage is common in representations of the relatively recent past, the on-site filming and interview with a former British soldier in the first few minutes of the episode allows for different forms of knowledge to be developed: as in several other examples in this chapter, spatial movement to the site of the landings and in the course of the interview to identify key sites such as that of a pillbox relates to chronological movement also, and to a sense that the past might be reclaimed to contribute to the understanding of those in the present, particularly through the use of archaeology to uncover 'the lost secrets' of the Dorset Regiment's experiences. Although also drawing on aerial photographs used in preparation for the raids, *Time Team* notes their limitations and the effects this had for troops who had expected a far more straightforward campaign, which also, of course, served to justify the use of archaeological methods in order literally to uncover evidence.

In contrast to the archaeology- and testimony-based approaches of Channel 4, the BBC offered dramatized accounts of the landings. *D-Day 6.6.1944* was the first production by Dangerous, directed and produced by the co-founders Richard Dare, Tim Goodchild and Peter Parnham, and was considered the centrepiece of the corporation's 'D-Day season' of commemoration which also include a dedicated D-Day website hosted by the BBC, and a number of programmes on BBC radio. When interviewed, Dare noted the desire of the BBC to reach a wide audience with the series. Certainly, the drama sought to appeal to all generations, and like *Time Team* included the transportation of men involved in the landings to significant locations; they were also filmed in the studio. Drawing together the themes of oral testimony and commemoration, Dare wanted all viewers to engage with the veterans:

> I wanted you to see these people and to feel that they are pouring their heart out to you as if you are the only person in the world … can you imagine where they are in their heads to be able to ignore the filming process? So for me that was a part of what I was trying to say about their lived experience [.]

This was a successful approach; as the production company assert, it was the second-most-watched history programme on BBC One since 2001.[6] Co-produced in association with Dangerous Films by the BBC, the Discovery Channel, ProSieben (Germany), France

Deux and TelFrance – France was one of the most prolific co-producers globally at this time (Baltruschat 2002) – this aspect of its production reflects industry-wide developments dating from at least the 1990s, and particularly in factual programming, which have seen pan-European, if not global, collaboration in order to create large-scale individual programmes or series. As the media scholar Doris Baltruschat noted at around the time it was commissioned, co-productions were increasingly likely to be 'popular genres, often simulating Hollywood productions, such as … shows that contain hybrid elements drawn from a variety of genre [sic]' (Baltruschat 2002). *D-Day 6.6.1944* fits this description, with its combination of dramatized and documentary elements and high production values, which included the use of serving Royal Marines as extras with authentic skills and responses, as well as 'a collage of different looks and feels' achieved by shooting using different cameras.[7] This latter aspect in part looked ahead to a period in which veterans would no longer be alive to interview. Despite this, the weighting of the conclusion of the film towards eyewitness testimony reflects perceived audience expectations and broader tendencies in the coverage of the anniversary, and arguably encourages empathy between audiences in the nations involved in the conflict and the co-production. Indeed, combined with the dramatized sections it was boldly claimed that '*D-Day*, the drama, is as close as viewers can get to living through the events of June 1944', which suggests, in contrast to Smither's (2004) consideration of the representation of war on British television, that none of those watching would have had direct experience of them.

Other programming offered by the BBC included live coverage of the veterans' march-past on D-Day and live reports from historically significant locations, which was then one of the corporation's most ambitious overseas broadcasting operations. Again positioning the corporation at the centre of national memory, the press release for the season asserted that BBC One 'celebrates the heroism, and remembers the sacrifice, of those who took part in the D-Day landings' (BBC Press Office 2004a). Despite its claims relating to *D-Day 6.6.1944*, the season also included reenactment; specifically, in *Destination D-Day: The Raw Recruits* young men were put through the training experienced by those preparing for D-Day, again with the assistance of the Royal Marines and with the support of D-Day veterans. In some ways similar in intention to *The Trench* (BBC 2002), as discussed in the following chapter, the series sought more specifically, as for much of the D-Day season, to offer insights for those of the third generation, a phenomenon noted by scholars such as Ebbrecht, of representations of the same period of history elsewhere in Europe and particularly Germany. The potential for such programming to increase interest in a career in the armed forces, at a time of conflict in the Middle East, should also not be overlooked and may have been a motivating factor leading to the Marines' involvement.

In contrast, the sixty-fifth anniversary in June 2009 was on a much smaller scale, and in terms of history programming, rather than coverage of remembrance services, mainly took the form of a four-part discussion series with episodes of fifteen minutes, broadcast on BBC Four from Normandy and hosted by the newsreader and presenter

Fiona Bruce, in which veterans and cultural commentators considered the legacy of D-Day. In addition, programming from the 1980s and 1990s was offered as part of a *D-Day Night*, again with Bruce and veterans, soldiers, writers and historians; Bruce had also presented the live coverage on BBC One. Again, links between past and current warfare were made implicitly through the involvement of serving officers, drawing perhaps on the general perception of the Second World War as a just war in order to represent later conflict in a similar light, in contrast to 'subversive' interpretations of more recent aerial bombardment of civilians.

Indeed, analysis of UK history programming commissioned to mark anniversaries of major historical events demonstrates the range of genres utilized and how television is placed within a wider broadcasting and commemorative landscape, yet still seeks 'new' approaches or insights into known events. While the bombing of civilians may have been represented in ways designed to encourage reflection on ongoing warfare, this was not the case for the Holocaust, the representation of which very much followed accounts which position it outside of any other historical events, past or present. While that is not to suggest that the BBC has a consistent position in this regard – *Congo: White King, Red Rubber, Black Death* discussed in our concluding chapter would suggest otherwise – it does highlight the ways in which corporations such as the BBC must negotiate expectations regarding the representation of particularly traumatic events. Further, as Smither suggests, such programming may be watched by those with direct experience of what is depicted, but may also remind later generations of the importance of such memorialization. A case in point is the 2005 BBC radio and television season marking the liberation of Auschwitz, of which the BBC One series *Auschwitz: The Nazis and the 'Final Solution'*, as an example of landmark television, was discussed in detail in our previous chapter.

In addition to *Auschwitz*, on digital BBC channels related memorial programming was aired. Perhaps the most significant was a televised discussion with Rees, *After Auschwitz*, and *Holocaust: A Musical Memorial from Auschwitz*. Although clearly very different forms of memorialization, both fitted into the corporation's broader remit to offer high quality, educational history or history-related programming. *After Auschwitz* allowed Rees and well-known university-based historians of the Holocaust such as Peter Novick and David Ceserani to debate aspects of historians' analysis and conclusions regarding the Holocaust and in this sense fitted both within the commemoration but also, tellingly, within the type of programming which the then BBC Director of Television Jana Bennett sought for the channel: unique, challenging, questioning and surprising (BBC Press Office 2004b). Along similar lines, *Holocaust*, a BBC/ZDF/CBC/TVP (Poland)/CT (Czech Republic) co-production won an international Emmy for its combination of musical performance and survivor testimony for producer James Kent and executive producer Peter Maniura, the BBC Head of Classical Music Television. Filmed on site at the museum at Auschwitz-Birkenau, leading musicians were allowed to perform in what might be seen as a form of testimony, alongside but by no means rivalling that of surviving members of camp orchestras. Arguably both offered, in differ ways, testimony on behalf of the members of orchestras no longer alive and therefore unable to discuss their experiences onscreen.

The ninety-minute film opens with a shot inside what we are soon informed through captions rather than a narrator is the Armaments Factory, 'built by the inmates of Auschwitz'. An elderly man, a survivor, is then seen inside the factory, before the camera returns to the physical environment. The captions again appear; random numbers, standing perhaps for the millions murdered in the Holocaust, turn into names such as Elijah and Jeremiah, before becoming the details of the first musical piece to be heard, the Introitus from Mozart's Requiem, an unfinished work part-written in 1791 which was first publicly performed to mark the composer's own demise, and in the film performed by the Sinfonietta Cracovia. Its unfinished nature is significant; it does not offer a sense of completion and therefore cannot be seen as contributing to a closed narrative representing, whether visually, verbally or musically, such events as inevitable or which an audience might passively consume, drawing on Ebbrecht's comments considered at greater length shortly. The movement of the camera, both within the building but also along railway tracks, draws the audience's attention and is also reminiscent of Holocaust documentaries such as Lanzmann's *Shoah*. As the musicians perform, the camera pans around the building but this is intercut with the railway lines and also still shots of survivors, either at home or walking at the site, and as the first musical piece draws to a close, the sense of alienation continues: the 'window' on Auschwitz offered by the camera gradually diminishes until all that can be seen are the programmes titles and a small segment of the railway lines, as if we are gazing at them from inside a carriage with only restricted access to views of the outside world, until this too gradually shrinks away into darkness.

Few other terrestrial BBC programmes were aired as part of the season: among them were *Songs of Praise*, a long-running Sunday series usually based in a different parish every week, which offers a potted history of the area and its current status. For Holocaust Memorial Day a special edition was aired, in which sixth-form students were accompanied on their journey to Auschwitz and discussed their reasons for wishing to visit. Returning to Smither's point about the significance of memorialization for later generations, the significance of the third generation, young people either with direct familial or other links to the Holocaust, are especially recognized through the work of the Holocaust Educational Trust, who were involved in the episode. Those with more direct familial links have been specifically discussed in recent scholarship (e.g. Perlstein 2010) and were considered in *Grandchild of the Holocaust*, in which the teenage grandson of a survivor, who herself was only a teenager when she was liberated from Belsen, learns of his grandmother's experiences and records them on a hand-held camera. Initially the tone is light, apart from both grandparents remarking that the recording will serve as a permanent record, and the grandson, Adrian, introduces himself as 'Adrian … thirteen and three-quarter years old', much like Adrian Mole in Sue Townsend's novels. But soon we are told that his grandmother is a survivor, and that she, her son and her grandson will visit Germany and Poland, via the Imperial War Museum's Holocaust Exhibition, to see 'where it all happened'. As in many recent documentaries, and especially those including family histories, most notably *Who Do You Think You Are?*, considered in our previous chapter, geographic travel relates to

temporal travel, allowing memories of events in earlier decades to be revealed. It is apparent in the opening section of the programme that only after fifty years did his grandmother Rene begin to talk about her experiences, and so Adrian's father Martin knew nothing about them until recently, whereas his son Adrian has grown up with some knowledge and wants her first-hand information, or in other words her eyewitness testimony, to be passed directly to him so that he can form the next link in the chain of remembrance. As in many documentaries considering the Holocaust, photographs are used: both those seen and commented upon by Adrian and his father in the museum, and those which Rene shares with the camera in her own home, of her own family, which had been somehow preserved by her parents' friends until they could be sent to Rene at the end of the war, although the absence of an image of herself as a child is particularly painful and is reminiscent of the feelings of rootlessness expressed by the children of Holocaust survivors and revealed in other BBC programmes (see Bell 2011). The still photographs of Jewish ghettos, and later of the camps, cause the museum visitors to pause and reflect on their family history, while at home Rene continues her description of being forced into a ghetto and then a camp. Once in Poland, they search for Rene's old home and upon finding it, she strikes up a conversation with an elderly man and then an elderly woman. The latter says that she remembers the ghetto, and the screams of Jews murdered by the cemetery, although Rene's determination to see the Poles as victims unable to assist as this occurred is questioned by her grandson, who asks if she remembers what non-Jewish Poles were like at the time, and she adds that, in her memory, a large number were anti-Semitic.

At this point it is pertinent to note that this aspect of the programme in particular led to some criticism from the British Polish community: one viewer with a Catholic Polish grandfather noting before broadcast that 'I hope that the Poles won't be portrayed as Jew haters', while several remarked after its airing that while they recognized the personal and individual nature of the account, such comments might ally Poles with their German oppressors. The particular sensitivity of Polish-identified viewers around the commemoration in January 2005 is also demonstrated in some of the responses to the erroneous description of Auschwitz, in a news broadcast on Channel 4 later in the same week, as a 'Polish concentration camp', rather than a Nazi concentration camp in occupied Poland, and to which the channel's Press and Publicity Manager for News, Fiona Railton, responded swiftly and with sincere apologies; indeed, the phrase was corrected by the presenter Jon Snow later in the broadcast.[8] Ongoing and understandable sensitivity to the representation of such aspects of the past when they were receiving a higher than usual level of media interest make the reasons behind such responses to the programme clearer and also draw attention to Britain's diverse audiences of such material.

For Rene the marketplace, where she last saw her sister, and the cemetery are particularly difficult places where the gap between past and present thins. The lack of a narrator throughout the film is particularly significant; differentiating it from *Auschwitz*, the absence also makes the participants, a survivor and her family, also seem to shape the narrative although of course the use of editing, not least the selection of film

footage, means that this is not the case. Indeed, the inclusion of unidentified footage means that well-known and recently identified film of a young Gypsy girl framed in the closing doors of the carriage of a train departing for a concentration camp (de Leeuw 2007: 83–84) is used to stand in for the experiences of Rene and her family. But in the main the film succeeds in offering an account devoid of easy answers; the ongoing significance of her experiences to Rene is mirrored when to conclude a service for survivors and their families at a local synagogue, attended by Rene, her husband, son and grandson is filmed, and the continued significance of such commemoration is emphasized.

However, it is also important to note the relative absence of memorial programming in earlier years, and this may be to a large extent because Holocaust Memorial Day was not marked in the UK until 2001 and therefore wider awareness of it was not common until the twenty-first century, and ran alongside a developing concern that as eyewitnesses died, the memory of such events would be entirely forgotten.[9] One of relatively few productions in 1995 to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the liberation of camps was the Academy Award-winning *Anne Frank Remembered*, which used eyewitness testimony and archive footage, written by Jon Blair and narrated by Kenneth Branagh and made by the BBC in association with Anne Frank House and Walt Disney Pictures. Blair is South African-born, and in an interview undertaken shortly after the film was made he referred to the experiences of his childhood as encouraging him to focus on social and political justice (Blair 1996). Filmed in part using motion-control cameras in the annex of the house in which the Frank family hid in order to give a sense of the 'essence' of the family remaining in the building, Blair sought in such ways, alongside eyewitness testimony and footage, to represent those no longer able to give testimony of their own experiences. The film was shown in US cinemas but was also broadcast on BBC Two, and re-broadcast on BBC Four in early 2009 to commemorate Anne's eightieth birthday and accompanied a BBC One drama series, *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Otherwise, however, significant attempts to memorialize the Holocaust on television in the period considered in this book relate to later years.

Commemoration of VE Day and VJ Day: 1995 and 2005

Closely related chronologically to the liberation of concentration camps by the Allies, VE Day was marked in 1995 and 2005 in ways which parallel other 'daytime' history programming discussed in our chapter on the business of television. The earlier televised commemoration included the BBC's *News 45: VE Day* which, in a form of reenactment, recreated the final week of the conflict in Europe, and in the first week of May daily broadcast on BBC One for fifteen minutes an account of key events as if it were a modern newscast. A similar series had been broadcast in September 1989, *News 39*, to mark the outbreak of the Second World War. The then *Antiques Roadshow*[10] presenter Hugh Scully and the BBC reporter (1988–) Jane Corbin participated in the 1995 series as unseen reporters,[11] and brought well-known BBC names to events beyond the memory of many viewers, as did the presenter Sue Lawley, a sometime presenter of news programmes on both the BBC and ITV. Directed by Pieter

Morpurgo, a well-respected BBC studio director of news and current affairs, among other programming, the series, like its 1989 counterpart, begins with graphics and a font which could be related by many viewers to the era, before Sue Lawley, sitting behind a news desk, opens the programme with 'Good evening, the headlines tonight, the [date] of May, 1945'. On the eighth of May, the final programme, broadcast on the VE Day Bank (national) Holiday, this was followed by 'Britain is celebrating victory in Europe'. The present tense is used throughout the series to underline a sense of immediacy and to position the audience, as well as the newsreader, in the 1940s, possibly aiming to encourage the 'mental reenactment' described by R. G. Collingwood and discussed further in our chapter on televised historical reenactment. Certainly, further reenactment was not attempted; Lawley is not dressed in 1940s styles and, of course, the series is broadcast in colour, and on television rather than radio. Shortly afterwards, as if moving to a live correspondent, Lawley introduces the King's speech to the Empire, and this is aired for around thirty seconds before the narrative moves to black and white footage of cheering crowds in London and a small segment of Winston Churchill's victory speech. Celebratory street parties elsewhere in Britain are also shown via colour footage, suggesting that the alleged problems relating to audience perception of colour footage of the 1940s as somehow inauthentic had been rejected, perhaps because the colour made the events seem, in this type of representation, less distant or alienating, and more comprehensible: this contrasts with the end of the 1989 programme, which had Lawley bring the audience back to the present with the words 'this was the news', a return to the past tense, followed by footage of various events during the next six years of conflict including the liberation of concentration camps and VE Day – a journey back to the present rather than the 1945/95 version, which allowed the audience to remain in the celebratory atmosphere offered by *News 45*.

Yet other myths, in Angus Calder's sense, are relied upon in *News 45*: by including footage of Churchill's broadcast to the nation, as he sits before shelves of leather-bound books, sandwiched between shots of cheering crowds, the most typical and acceptable images of the end of the war are recycled with less sense, for example, of the experiences of those who had direct involvement in the conflict, although in the second half of the programme this is considered to some degree. As the narration of the section focusing on Churchill ends with 'there is no doubt that this will be very much remembered as Churchill's day' provides justification for the approach by suggesting that it was apparent even at the time, justifying the emphasis placed on key figures of national history and later patriotic discourse. Only in the later minutes of the programme are images of dead bodies seen, although celebrations in the US quickly replace them, and details of the reception of VE Day in Germany, where footage of Lüneburg is seen and the report of the BBC correspondent Wynford Vaughan-Thomas, originally for radio, is heard as if he is a television reporter at the scene. Ending with a weather report, reportedly for the first time since the conflict began (due to censorship), the domestic nature of much news reporting is recognized – the events are literally brought home to viewers. Images of celebrating people close the series which was produced by London Weekend Television, one of the

regional broadcasters under the ITV umbrella, which, though, produced material for other channels.

In a rather different fashion, ITV nationally focused briefly on contemporary celebrations of the anniversary, rather than offering sustained historical insights.[12] While the BBC in addition had access to live events held at Hyde Park in London, ITV's *VE Day Celebrations* was a themed segment of *ITV News at Ten* on 6 May,[13] two days before the Bank Holiday, covering preparations in London for the fiftieth anniversary. Opening with the peals of the bells of St Paul's Cathedral and a shot of its dome, signifying the capital and its particular experiences during the war, the narrator, the BBC reporter and sometime news presenter Nicholas Witchell, who was also producer of the LWT series, notes the survival of the cathedral during the war years, before a memorial service at the cathedral is shown and the same narrator comments that 'bitter divisions of the past have healed' as footage of the then Chancellor of Germany Helmut Kohl is seen. Further shots of international dignitaries and of the inside of the building are shown, as the Archbishop of Canterbury's sermon is heard, giving thanks for the Allied victory and five decades of peace. A domestic scene, of sorts, is then seen, as the Queen is shown directing the international guests to their places at a dinner, and her elderly mother is seen being helped by her son-in-law, Prince Philip. But even the British royal family are shown as having problems; '[in] a rare appearance together, the Prince and Princess of Wales and their children' also attended, marking the, by this point, well-known schism between the couple and yet demonstrating how this had been set aside in order to focus on family events and, more broadly, those of national and international significance, the ceremony for heads of state in Hyde Park. As symbolic olive leaves were signed by the heads of state and placed inside an enormous globe, and doves and white balloons were released, the footage focuses upon the Queen in particular and then her meeting with veterans of the conflict, although their oral testimony is neither included nor referred to in passing. An increasingly criticized Conservative government led by John Major, who within two months was to have his leadership of the party threatened, did not feature at all in the royal family-centred account of ostensibly national commemoration: only towards the very end of the segment are the crowds of hundreds of thousands of people acknowledged. The absence of the voices of such people, alongside that of a male narrator, position the report firmly within a period in which male voices, in the main, indicated authority and veracity and drew on a well-respected presenter in order to underscore this.

Tellingly, however, on the Bank Holiday itself ITV did not attempt to rival the BBC and instead aired the 1954 film *The Dam Busters* and then, in the evening, *Live for Peace – a Royal Gala* attended by the Prince of Wales, and after the 10pm news *VE Day Celebrations,* 'sampling', according to the *Radio Times* of 6–12 May 1995, 'some of today's anniversary celebrations as well as the nostalgic memories of those who served in the last war' (p. 89). Even the live celebrations 'sampled' were not, in the main, centrally based events attended by the Queen but were regionally dispersed, reflecting ITV's self-representation in the 1990s as populist in contrast to the BBC's perceived elitism (Wickham 2003–10).

In contrast, coverage of the 2005 anniversary of VE Day was rather deeper and more prolonged. In part this may have been due to recognition of the dwindling numbers of veterans and the need, as for the First World War, to mark such events before all veterans died. Coverage of the anniversary, as a decade earlier, was undertaken by the BBC but also other terrestrial channels, in this instance Channel 5, which in the late 1990s, in its nascent form, had broadcast little more than American-made films and series, described by some media scholars as frequently 'sexually explicit and even exploitative' for which the channel was criticized. But by the early twenty-first century it regularly broadcast history documentaries in strands discussed further in our chapter on the business of television as part of a successful effort under Kevin Lygo, the channel's director of programmes, to re-brand the channel and move it 'upmarket' in order to win new audiences (see Sills-Jones 2009: 243–44). Appointing Dan Chambers controller of factual, public service content increased and the ongoing desire to reposition the channel in this manner can especially be identified in relation to commemorative programming. Involving the poet Simon Armitage, the anniversary was marked on the channel by *A Brief Period of Rejoicing*, a thirty-minute 'poetic film' with its title drawn from Winston Churchill's speech to the House of Commons on the 8th May 1945. Created by the independent production company Talkback Thames, the lyrics were commissioned from Armitage and performed by the actress Sheila Hancock, alongside eyewitness testimony and archive footage. As the then controller of history Alex Sutherland asserted,

> The idea was to do something a little different to mark the anniversary. Simon Armitage is an exciting poet whose work combines humour and realism but also critical seriousness.
>
> *(quoted in Deans 2005)*

Indeed, the manner in which the anniversary was marked formed part of Chambers's surprising plan to introduce philosophy and poetry to the channel in the mid-2000s. Although not reaching an audience of more than a few hundred thousand, the film underlined a departure from the earlier style of the channel, and the willingness of its personnel to offer experimental interpretations of the past on occasion.

Less surprisingly, the BBC too marked the anniversary with a concert held in Trafalgar Square and broadcast live on BBC One on 8 May. 'A Party to Remember live from Trafalgar Square' was organized jointly by the BBC, the Mayor of London and London Development Agency, and the Royal British Legion, the latter a charity working for the welfare of serving and former Servicemen and –women. Drawing together various figures from popular music, it was heralded by the BBC in a press release a month earlier as 'the cornerstone of a programme of VE and VJ 60th celebrations and welfare awareness raising activities organized by The Royal British Legion', as well as 'a key part of the BBC's V45 programming marking 60 years since the end of the Second World War' (BBC Press Office 2005). A form of reenactment as well as commemoration, 'do[ing] it all over again', in the words of the then Mayor of London Ken Livingstone quoted in the release, the release included the assertion

that '[i]n 1945, 8 May saw a chain of spontaneous street parties throughout the United Kingdom, with the largest and most exuberant in Trafalgar Square'. Indeed, the concert incorporated some film footage of the 'original and moving 1945 celebrations in Trafalgar Square', with 'special readings throughout the day by celebrity guests', drawing on the themes of authenticity but also celebrity increasingly significant to British and other televisions in the period considered. Access to the event was egalitarian, in keeping with the myth of Britain during the conflict; tickets were limited in number but available on a first-come, first-served basis and the whole nation could experience the event through terrestrial television, as well as its live relay on giant video screens in several other UK cities. In addition, the *Nation of Film* BBC series aired in BBC Four and later BBC Two, which sought to explore 'the use of film as an eyewitness to history',[14] included an episode on VE Day aired on the sixtieth anniversary. Perhaps most interesting are the links between the corporation itself and the events depicted: since 2011 the BBC website has offered a history of the BBC online which includes a great deal of material relating to 'the BBC at War', with links to various audio clips such as VE Day celebration reports from Trafalgar Square.[15] Although this was not available at the time of the 2005 celebrations, it reminds us of the close links between the corporation and wartime reporting, which were being celebrated at the commemorative events alongside Victory in Europe, while during the period of commemoration visitors to the website were asked to contribute their own memories of the events, underscoring the corporation's self-conception as having a role as the nation's archive. For example, the 'People's War' website[16] (2003–6) collated the memories of those living during the war although tellingly, by 2005 'storygatherers' were sought, those contributing on behalf of family members, indicating both the ongoing importance of the conflict to national memory and identity but also the fear of losing this imperative at the death of the last survivors. Again, such work relates both to Smither's assertion and to our own regarding the role of public service broadcasters as preservers and perpetuators of memories and national memorialization.

VJ Day is generally less well-marked in the UK, in part because the end of war in Europe marked the end of attacks on civilians in British cities, whereas the ongoing conflict in Asia had a less direct effect on most Britons. VE Day is also considered by most Britons as ethically uncontentious; news of the liberation of concentration camps in the weeks following the celebrations served to justify the conflict as a war against genocide, whereas the bombing of the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, a factor in the eventual allied victory in Japan (VJ), has been contentious for several decades and compared by some commentators to the Holocaust (see e.g. Fasching 1993). While we do not intend to engage with this debate it is appropriate to consider the reasons for a relative lack of commemorative programming in this area: that is not to suggest that no UK programming considers the bombing of Japanese cities, but rather that they rarely if ever form part of the celebrations of the end of the Second World War; rather, the BBC considered the bombings as if they were separate from the end of the war, an ethical distancing between legitimate conflict and much more problematic military acts. Using the common trope of a descendant speaking on behalf of their now-deceased relatives, the BBC website included an

interview with a young Japanese woman, Kayoko Iwanaga, whose grandmother was seriously disfigured by the attack while several of her children died; Kayoko's father, then 2 years old, survived.[17] Unsurprisingly, the inclusion of the interview encourages the reader to question the necessity of Allied actions and this may also explain the decision effectively to separate BBC coverage of the anniversary of the bombing from other material marking the end of the war. Television programming to mark the anniversary was restricted to the BBC One drama-documentary *Hiroshima*, discussed more fully in our chapter on landmark programming, an international co-production including Japan, and again, for Japanese audience members, transgenerational understanding may have been encouraged through the representation of a traumatic past within living memory.

Overall, the corporation's governors were impressed by coverage of the 2005 anniversaries in contrast to broader concerns in the period over falling audience figures for BBC One and BBC Two. That *Hiroshima* garnered an audience of more than 4 million would no doubt have been viewed with approval, alongside its wider commemorative role (BBC Press Office 2005). Both the VE and VJ Day commemorations formed part of the V45 season, on television and online but also on radio, and visitors to the BBC website were asked 'What does VJ/VE day mean to you?' Perhaps unsurprisingly, in part given the tendency of some programming such as the co-production *Hiroshima* to use conflicts decades earlier to reflect upon current conflicts, some respondents noted how the two related to each other, in one case commenting on both the Blitz and the 2005 terrorist bombings in London, perceived to relate to British action in Afghanistan:

> I was a little kid on VE day and VJ day born in London and now living in the US. I will never forget it and the war, the bombing of the tubes in London was a horrible reminder. We ran down in the tubes when the bombs were dropping so this terror is so terrible for me. … I hope … London can go back again to normal[.][18]

While as Ebbrecht and also media professional interviewees based in mainland Europe have noted, there is a tendency in Western Europe for event television to mark the anniversaries of events relating to relatively recent wars. In the words of one of the latter:

> They always try to sell it like that … you try and say it was so many years ago that that happened, [for example] it was [seventy-five] years since the Nazi party in the Netherlands … It's very limited, in terms of times but in terms of periods as well: lots on the war, lots on the twentieth century, but nothing before that.

Moving between 'they', the channels, and 'you', the creator of such programming, he reiterates the point made by Zoellner's British respondent, that in order to have certain types of programming commissioned, it may be beneficial to relate them to

anniversaries. Therefore, this can arguably lead to a diverse range of programming offered in such periods, with a variety of interpretations offered by the broadcaster. A particularly good example of this on British television is the BBC's 2008 Great War season.

Perhaps also because of its greater distance from the present, a yet more varied range of commemorative representations of the Great War may be seen. Such programming includes the BBC's 1964 series *The Great War*, feted by Sir Jeremy Isaacs as bursting comet-like into the ken of the television audience (Isaacs 2004: 37–39; 2006: 148–49) and marking both the beginning of BBC Two and also the fiftieth anniversary of the conflict's beginning, and the BBC season marking the ninetieth anniversary of the end of the conflict in 2008, which included the celebrity family history series *My Family at War*, the found-footage and found-images *The Great War in Colour* repeated to mark the anniversary and the oral testimony-based *What Did You Do in the Great War, Daddy?*, as well as BBC Four's programming which included acknowledgement of the contribution of Black British soldier Walter Tull. Overall, emphasis was placed on individual and familial experiences in an increasingly distant conflict with, at the time of broadcast, only a handful of remaining eyewitnesses. However, it should not be overlooked that decades earlier, audiences of *The Great War* responded in ways which acknowledged the affective nature especially of the visual material offered, a point on which we concur with Smither (2004: 62) and to some degree with Max Hastings, who worked on the series from its inception and has noted the centrality of visual material to television (2004: 106). As Emma Hanna (2007) notes, responses to the series included requests for copies of the photograph of a soldier from the opening credits, one viewer commenting that he would put it in his photograph album alongside his friends. Although too young to have been directly involved in the conflict, he may have had familial links to it; certainly, as Smither comments, such documentaries, with a large proportion of oral testimony, 'resonate in the memories of a large part of the audience, and with the family tradition of most of the rest of it' (*ibid.*).

Despite the potential for such shared responses, televised commemorations in the early twenty-first century varied, and included dramatized productions, drama-documentaries and documentaries. On occasion they have been directly related to other annual televised events such as Remembrance Sunday, the Sunday closest to Armistice Day (11 November), upon which the armistice agreement signed at the end of the Great War, in 1918, is commemorated. In 2005 Remembrance Sunday was on 13 November, and the following day Channel 4 aired *The Somme*, a drama-documentary directed by Carl Hindmarch and by Darlow Smithson Productions. The production was made with the assistance of the British historian and former BBC producer Malcolm Brown, demonstrating links between personnel within the media industry of the past decade (see Hanna 2010: 109, 118). The Historial de la Grande Guerre in Péronne, a major museum of the Great War which represents, as the film does, the conflict from French, German and British perspectives was also involved, demonstrating links and parallels between the representation of key events in different forms of public history, as we discuss further in later chapters. Indeed, from the timing of its broadcast it is apparent that the film sought to commemorate not the anniversary of

the beginning of the battle in July 1916, but the conclusion of the entire war. Achieving around 2 million viewers, the account was, in the opening words of the narrator, 'told through the letters and diaries of those who were there' – as later productions by Hindmarch such as the 2010 *The Untold Battle of Britain* have done. The choice of written sources and a small amount of original footage rather than eyewitness testimony may have also been due to the lack of surviving eyewitnesses but arguably also in the hope of garnering a younger audience, who in addition to having some pre-existing knowledge of the war garnered from school history lessons and other media representations, may have drawn parallels between the deaths of those close to their age as depicted in the film, and those of other young people in contemporary warfare. Thirty minutes into the film, the march of British soldiers to the front, including its filming, is reconstructed; original footage of the real march then replaces the actors, encouraging empathy in a manner discussed by Tobias Ebbrecht (2007a), albeit in relation to drama-documentary representations of the Second World War. Indeed, as a whole the channel's peak-time share of the 16–34 audience did increase significantly in 2005 from 8 per cent to 14.8 per cent, a year in which 'innovation at 11pm', the time of the programme's broadcast, was sought, alongside 'scale and contemporary resonance' in history programming. Described as the channel's major autumn event in History, it ran alongside a project to create an online war memorial in partnership with the Imperial War Museum (Channel 4 2005).

Refuting absolutely the 'forgotten victory' thesis of scholars such as Gary Sheffield, and indeed, by focusing on the disastrous first day of the battle alone there was little need to consider revisionist scholarship. The programme utilizes individuals' extant diaries or letters, with their authors played by actors, seen standing in a trench, awaiting orders to go over the top, in the opening credits; later some are seen writing the accounts. Each is identified by a subtitle giving his name and rank. However, despite this shared experience, they are also differentiated through the use of different regional and class accents, which also relate to their status in the army. Senior figures, such as Lt General Henry Rawlinson, are identified by the narrator after a brief dramatized section in which he discusses the terrain with another officer; then the voice of the 'real' Rawlinson is heard through his account, written prior to the battle, of its probable success. Focusing on the Twenty-Second Manchester Battalion and to some extent the Second Devonshire Battalion, allows a sense of more in-depth insights into a particular group that might stand for British, or certainly English, Great War soldiers as a whole. As well as the French and an American nurse, German soldiers are represented in the figures of Private Eversmann and his comrades. While the first segment of the film ends with German soldiers in a trench at the Somme toasting the lack of warfare they have experienced so far, the next section begins with British soldiers being trained to bayonet the enemy; unlike series such as *The Trench* (see our chapter on reenactment), *The Somme* did offer the names and faces of those who were to kill, and be killed by, the British, and indeed, a DVD version of the film was later released in Germany as *Die Schlacht an der Somme* and in the Netherlands as *The Somme*.

By focusing primarily on Rawlinson rather than General Haig, a folk devil of the Great War for his apparent lack of regard for the welfare of his men and for his

strategies, the film avoids repeating some clichés of the war. However, the absence of Haig does not remove other televisual tropes of the Great War, not least that of the military commander's map on which pieces, representing battalions, are moved in a manner suggesting a failure to conceive of the loss of human lives. This was apparent, although it may not have originated in, the BBC comedy series *Blackadder Goes Forth* (1989), in which the eponymous anti-hero attempts to devise ways to escape trench warfare and in which figures such as Haig as well as fictionalized generals treat the war as a game. However, the ethical dilemma of the treatment of captured enemy soldiers was relevant also to contemporary conflicts at the time the film aired; that one soldier sought to allow a German to be spared while another is seen shooting all captured Germans on sight was particularly resonant during debates over photographic evidence that initially emerged in 2004 of the abuse of prisoners by US troops; Chapman (2007) makes similar points in his discussion of parallels drawn between the bombing of Iraqi civilians and representations of the Blitz in British docudrama also aired in 2005, and it may be that *The Somme* offered a version of the events less obviously shaped by the present, yet its airing after Remembrance Sunday rather than its anniversary in July arguably encouraged such comparisons.

However, more commonly anniversaries of the start or end of the conflict have been marked with themed programming. In 1974, *Women At Work: What Did You Do in the Great War Mummy?* directed by Suzanne Davies aired on the BBC, possibly in response to the male-dominated account of the conflict offered in the 1964 series and certainly as part of her wider corpus of work in the 1970s considering the role of women in historical and contemporary society. Hanna offers a comprehensive analysis of the 1976 BBC documentary *Battle of the Somme*, marking its sixtieth anniversary, and repeated in 1986, noting in particular the use of letters and diaries rather than oral testimony. Malcolm Brown, the director, specifically sought an alternative approach to *The Great War*, and therefore also influenced *The Somme* (Hanna 2010: 109, 118). In 1994, when there was relatively little history programming on British television other than *Time Team* (1994–present) and *Timewatch* (1982–2011), the eightieth anniversary of events leading to the conflict was marked with the *Timewatch* episode 'Seeds of War', aired in June 1994 to mark the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand. By 1996 the production of history programming had begun to increase, and *1914–1918*, a BBC/KCET co-production is evidence of this; broadcast to mark the eightieth anniversary of the Battle of the Somme, despite criticism from Corelli Barnett, one of the *Great War* historians for its apparently 'downbeat' view of the war, it won an Emmy (Barnett 1997; Bell 2008: 198; Bond 2002: 81).

Moving into the twenty-first century, and alongside the general increase in history programming, the ninetieth anniversary of the end of the conflict witnessed a far greater number of programmes, especially across BBC channels. A year previously, in November 2007 ITV aired *My Boy Jack*, a drama based on the author Rudyard Kipling's search to discover what had happened to his teenage son at the front to commemorate Armistice Day, which gained a substantial audience of around 6 million. On 11 November, BBC Four aired as part of a broader Fatherhood season a documentary produced by Steve Humphries, *What Did You Do in the Great War,*

Daddy?, which used interview material, footage and a narrator in order to consider the impact of the conflict on the children of those who died. Although it garnered an audience of less than a million, relative to the channel's average audience figures these were respectable viewing figures, and the final section of the programme, in which the elderly participants travelled to France to visit their fathers' graves, reflects an increasing tendency to relate spatial and temporal movement in representations of the conflict, as we suggest elsewhere (Bell 2008) and as material broadcast the following year demonstrates.

Given its public service remit the majority of 2008 programming was broadcast on BBC channels. Beginning in spring 2008, the BBC Four series *The Great War* broadcast four episodes of a documentary about photographs taken on behalf of the French philanthropist Albert Kahn and currently preserved in the Albert Kahn museum near Paris, which was closely involved in the series. A related series on the same channel, *Edwardians in Colour: The Wonderful World of Albert Kahn* had aired in April 2007 and in both cases the series utilized a combination of visual material drawn from the Kahn archives and narration. Although to some degree similar to the ITV *In Colour* series, which broadcast colour footage of major events from the early 2000s, often claiming it was recently discovered or never-before seen, the Kahn series brought still images to the screen. Through the use of long shots lingering on colour photographs of Great War soldiers, including the injured lying in hospital beds, the viewer is encouraged to respond to the visual material in ways similar to that described by Roland Barthes, possibly offering, for some, a *punctum* whereby a detail 'pierces' the distance between the viewer and the events depicted in the photograph.

However, while such a meditative response might have been expected from a BBC Four audience, the approach of the broadcaster's other channels was rather different. 'Fronting the campaign', in the words of the BBC press release announcing the contents of the season, and drawing very much on the success of *Who Do You Think You Are?*, *My Family at War* was in many ways representative of developments in history programming, drawing together commemoration, celebrity and human interest (BBC Press Office 2008). Although produced by BBC Productions rather than an independent production company, the four-part prime-time BBC One series investigated the wartime experiences of the ancestors of eight celebrities, reflecting a broader media interest in celebrity culture. As we have suggested elsewhere (Bell 2008), in the final episode, broadcast on 11 November 2008, well-known TV celebrity Rolf Harris mentally, and to some extent physically, reenacted the journey of his father and uncle from Australia, where they had only recently emigrated from Wales, to train in England and then to fight in battlefields in North-West Europe, where his uncle died. The importance of spatiality in the series was complemented by embodied experience, as in *The Trench* (see our chapter on reenactment): when visiting a museum near one of the battlefields, Rolf recognizes the significance of a damaged helmet preserved by his father when he reads of the head injury his father received, which without the helmet may have been fatal. The helmet, like letters from ancestors on the front in the series and also in *The Trench*, represents a tangible physical and emotive link to a familial, a national and a global past: the television journalist Kirsty

Wark, known for her confrontational interviews with politicians, and like her male counterpart Jeremy Paxman, who appeared in *Who Do You Think You Are?*, gained additional press interest in the series because she wept at the fate of her ancestor (MacDonald 2008). Overall, the series emphasized, through the use of individual case studies, that aspects of well-known historical events such as the Great War were not inevitable, although commemoration in the present, especially on key anniversaries, may make them appear almost preordained. However, in other ways the series did not stray far from the standard representation of the conflict; as in *The Somme*, military commanders, in this instance the great-grandfather of the presenter-historian Dan Snow, Lt General Thomas D'Oyly Snow, was condemned for his involvement in the Battle of the Somme and described by his great-grandson as 'one of the most maligned men in British history' although in newspaper interviews published shortly before the broadcast he refuted the 'lions led by donkeys' thesis of popular history which would condemn all senior officers during the war (Smith 2008). The tension between commemorative television mirroring the view of the majority of viewers – although some criticized the historically and politically imbalanced interpretation they saw the series as offering, one describing it as a 'typically BBC left-wing production'[19] – and the conflicting views of some historians, including Snow, underscores the status of televised history programming as publicly accessible history if not public history in the sense understood by some scholars.

Perhaps the most unusual example of programming to commemorate the Great War in 2008 was the documentary *Walter Tull: Forgotten Hero* and the accompanying drama *Walter's War*, both of which aired on BBC Four. Very little programming on British television considers Black history, and the two programmes about Tull were a rare example. Such programming, considering Black and Asian histories, as well as women's, social and particularly contentious histories, are considered in our concluding chapter, relating as they do to pasts rarely represented on British television. Certainly, though, commemorative programming can, perhaps surprisingly, allow broadcasters to consider these less well-covered pasts to some degree, even when – perhaps specifically because – the commemoration relates to anniversaries of national significance, which serve to reflect contemporary concerns in British society such as the level of participation of Black and Asian Britons, or of women, in the public sphere; the legitimacy of current conflicts; or the ethical requirement to find new ways to remember across generations both domestically and as a society, while the number of survivors of major events of the twentieth century continues to decline.

4

REENACTMENT: ENGAGEMENT, EXPERIENCE AND EMPATHY

As audiences' appetites for the past apparently increased during the 1990s, producers and broadcasters were keen to develop new genres, hybrids and formats for the novel presentation of history, and this chapter will explore their range, reception and recognition at institutional, national and international levels, taking into account the significance of gender and class, ethnicity and race, as well as regional identities to the historicized and contemporary identities offered through such programming. Here, contrary to Turner's assertion that the media is constitutive of narrow identities, we demonstrate the potential of these forms of history programming to open up possibilities for audience members to reconnect with pasts, familial, ethnic and regional. As we discussed in greater detail in our consideration of landmark and flagship programming, *Who Do You Think You Are?* is a significant example of such hybrid programming, which has also been extremely successful to the extent that it may be termed part of the BBC's flagship output while also being sold overseas. Another key example of the new formats developed in the 1990s is reality or living history, which drew on television programmes involving 'real people' in specific settings. The first of the 1990s was *The 1900 House* (Channel 4 1999) developed by Wall to Wall Productions, which required participants to live in the material conditions of a defined era and as a successful format had many manifestations in the UK and overseas and was well-funded by the channel.[1] While most examples focus primarily or solely upon adult participants, in a variation upon the 'reality' history series in 2008 Five broadcast *Dangerous Adventures for Boys*, which arguably has elements in common with Channel 4's *That'll Teach 'em* series (2003, 2004, 2006). Both sought to have children experience aspects of the lives of their grandparents' generation, and although differing in some aspects, both offered an element of 'reality history'. More recently, the BBC *Victorian Farm* and *Edwardian Farm* (2009 and 2010) series saw two archaeologists and a historian placed in specific historical material circumstances, while the Channel 4 series *Rome Wasn't Built in a Day* (2011) saw craftsmen creating an authentic Roman villa using tools of the era.

These developments will, then, be examined within their production contexts, alongside consideration of the expectations of broadcasters, producers and commissioning editors of their audience, as well as of their implicit conceptions of national and other identities. The new formats also raise interesting questions about historiography, and in particular audience and participant engagement with and understanding of the past. Analysis of the series will be undertaken alongside historiographical considerations of reenactment ranging from R. G. Collingwood's 'mental reenactment' and its later use by historians involved in televised reenactment such as Vanessa Agnew; the work of historian Juliet Gardiner, which similarly places series such as *Edwardian Country House* within a broader historiographical context; and Alison Landsberg's much cited concept of 'prosthetic memory' which, we will argue, is a useful tool when considering the extent to which audience members empathize or otherwise engage with what they see. The range of programming we consider draws upon class and gendered identities, regional identity, family and generational identity, and professional identity. We seek to outline key developments in order also to demonstrate the relationship between the various series and their wider commissioning and production contexts and to go beyond Tristram Hunt's conclusion, offered in both scholarly journals and in the British broadsheet press, that by the late 1990s commercial imperatives had led to the growth in such 'bastard genres' (2005; 2006: 850, 856; 2007).

Scholarly discussion and debates

Our analysis in this chapter, then, focuses upon a particular form of 'non-traditional' factual history programming, and indeed, as Iain McCalman and Paul Pickering have recently commented, 'reality re-enactment in some variant has become the most widely consumed form of popular history' (2010: 3). Aiming to consider a form which cuts across the various ways in which the past may be represented, and therefore offering a wide sample for comparative purposes, their work alongside that of other scholars will be utilized in our consideration of 'alternative' televised representations of the past and their relation to wider public historical representations. Certainly, the disciplinary range of those writing on such issues is striking; both the questions raised and the answers offered by reenactment and its relation to public history encourage scholarly discussion across the world. Further, as McCalman, Jonathan Lamb and Vanessa Agnew assert in a statement on the purpose of the Palgrave MacMillan 'reenactment history' series, reenactment 'binds the circumstances of the original event to its repetition in order to release energies not usually associated with the garnering of knowledge', offering new understandings of the past and also of the tasks of the 'reenactor-historian' (McCalman and Pickering 2010: ii). However, as we go on to consider, in many cases reenactment on television is not the sole responsibility of living history professionals; rather, by offering individuals and families with little previous experience of reenactment the opportunity to participate, a different dynamic may be seen and hence a different type of understanding of the past. Perhaps, then, this explains McCalman and Pickering's rather blunt although unreferenced use of Tristram Hunt's now well-known description of reenactment as 'a new "bastard" genre called

"historical reality television"' (Hunt 2006: 852; McCalman and Pickering 2010: 3). In the main, however, historian interviewees with experience of working on history programming were open to the potential of such series to offer insights into aspects of life in the past. As one scholar noted of the various *House* series, discussed further in this chapter, they offer powerful insights which can be 'hugely influential and important'. Others were less enthusiastic, viewing such series as less interactive than 'working life' museums although scholarly consideration of such series, both published and apparent from interviews, increasingly highlights the active role of many viewers. Another suggested, as Simon Schama has done, that such series 'don't really engage with the difference of the past … or attempt in any way to engage with the past on its own terms' (Schama 2004: 29) and one was particularly concerned that this might give the impression that there was no 'social inequality' in the present. However, for other historians such series offer 'a kind of living history', and although they may still be open to criticism like any other representation of the past, the respondent concluded that: 'I think that audiences generally are probably capable of taking it all with a pinch of salt, it would just be nice to have a lot more serious research that helps us to understand, you know, just what people do take from these programmes.' This call for increased research into audience responses was placed in the context of wider consumption of public history such as museum visiting, and it is important to note that as these examples illustrate, not all historians hold the same opinions even if they share in some cases a tendency to consider 'reality history' series alongside museum interpretation.

Indeed, explanations for such responses to 'reality history' series may include an increase in awareness of scholarship on the topic of reenactment which frequently cites the work of the philosopher of history R. G. Collingwood, who in the 1930s asserted that in order to understand historical experience, the historian should conceive of the past as 'a living past' which could be reenacted in the present, 'and that re-enactment known as past' (Collingwood 1992 [1946]: 158, 256). Although the use of Collingwood in order to justify or otherwise interpret 'reality history' has been criticized by some scholars (Agnew 2007: 301), scholars engaged more directly with the experiences of both volunteers and viewers emphasize its usefulness. Rebecca Williams and Ruth McElroy argue convincingly for 'a need to retain a dual focus upon … historical content and … televisuality' when considering viewers' responses (McElroy and Williams 2011: 79). Focusing particularly upon 'reality history' series *Coal House at War*, first broadcast on BBC One Wales in autumn 2009, they note how the series sought to make 'a tangible contribution to understandings of local history in South Wales' as well as draw viewers in through a combination of historical documentary and 'reality television's generic tropes'. 'Ordinary' participants, tasks to be undertaken, the 'exposition of feeling' – Vanessa Agnew's 'affective turn' – and intimacy captured 'in private realms' are seen by the authors as responding to wider cultural trends in other sites, emphasizing heritage 'experience' but also understanding (McElroy and Williams 2011: 80; McCalman and Pickering 2010: 7). In addition, this might also be related to Turner's conception of the demotic, as discussed in our introduction, with the increasing appearance of apparently ordinary people onscreen.

That Turner asserts that this is not akin to a democratization of the media is significant and will be considered in the course of this chapter. Returning to those considering reenactment specifically, Collingwood offers a groundbreaking attempt to attend to 'the centrality of experience and sympathy to the historian's own understanding of the past', whilst McElroy and Williams (2011: 81) see evidence of participant-as-historian in the response of one participant from the series who remarked at its close that 'I really was imagining how my life would have been' after leaving the set, a reenactment so immersive that, in their interpretation, it outlived the series. Indeed, such comments reflect Alison Landsberg's own experiences when, upon visiting the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, she saw smoke wafting into one room and briefly wondered 'whether we were being gassed.' While clearly Landsberg had not been involved in any sort of physical reenactment, the extent to which she had been encouraged to consider traumatic histories led her to temporarily position herself alongside those whose persecution was outlined in the museum, which was so immersive that by 'plac[ing] its visitors' bodies in a threatening context' it 'outlived' the visitor's conscious appraisal (Landsberg 2004: 137).

Demonstrating insights also into the likely participants of such series, one of the scholars whose interview is cited above also noted how their own sibling had almost been involved in one programme, but was unable to participate due to work commitments. Certainly, in general those who participate in 'reality history' series do not easily fit in to the categorization offered by McCalman and Pickering of reenactors as 'quirky "time travellers" and those referred to as authenticity Nazis' (2010: 6). While that is not to suggest that it is not important to consider the historiographical significance of programming which is based in part or almost entirely around reenactment, in this part of the chapter we consider in far greater detail those involved, their reasons for so doing, and their reflections upon their experiences, as this offers some insight into the potential relationship between such programming and wider discussions of public history. Indeed, it is telling that Vanessa Agnew was in 2001 involved in the BBC series *The Ship*, based on James Cook's first voyage on the *Endeavour*, and she and her fellow scholars on-board would presumably not wish to be described in quite this manner. Other examples of professional scholars involved in series such as *Edwardian Farm* (BBC 2010) are therefore also an integral part of the analysis offered in this chapter.

As the literary scholar Simon During suggests, historical reenactment 'is a more complex cultural form than its status would lead us to suppose', and it includes a variety of subgenres such as 'the repetition of a historical event for the media, usually television' (2010: 180). In this chapter we are keen, then, following the historian John Brewer's and literary scholar Jonathan Lamb's lead, to offer scholarly interpretations of reenactment and its significance both to history on television but also to public history more broadly (Brewer 2010: 79–80). However, moving from Brewer's assertion that reenactors' 'notion of experience is an instance of … "the pseudo-concrete"' and ignores 'the human mind' in its search for the physicality of lived experience (p. 82), he goes on to consider televised reenactment in particular as part of his broader discussion of reenactment, asserting that those producing history programmes offer two types of

reenactment. The first, he suggests, 'tells a story in which the audience is invited to take side with the forces of light in their struggle with the forces of darkness', offering a linear narrative progression. However, his interpretation of what constitutes a televised reenactment differs somewhat from that of other scholars in that he cites series such as the extremely well-known Thames Television's *The World at War*, discussed at length elsewhere, which rely in the main upon eyewitness testimony, original film footage and unseen narrator. Reenactment in this sense is intended to mean an illustrated narrative of events rather than a performance of some type that binds the original historical event or series of events to its repetition through the activities of reenactor–historians or reenactor–archaeologists, or of 'lay' people (Brewer 2010: 82). An extremely broad definition indeed, it is based on the idea that television producers wish to offer the audience a way to identify in national or ethnic terms with those depicted. Although Brewer does utilize a published article by a media producer, he does not offer fresh insights into media professionals' perspectives, aside from underlining how the product must be connected to the consumer by drawing upon forms of identification. While identity doubtless must be contemplated, the series considered in this section of the chapter have in common a shared way of representing the past in a manner intended to encourage insights, historical or otherwise, in those participating and those watching, and so are a rather narrower sample than the broad definition offered by Brewer. They fit better into his category of 'refuge' history, which offers an intimate perspective on place and detail, and on ordinary lives that the audience can 'imaginatively inhabit' (p. 83). In Brewer's model, the distance between past and present is reduced for the audience through the shared experience of the everyday. However, as is common in such analysis, there is little evidence of audience work. The insights of those involved in making such series will therefore also be considered alongside the often-ignored voices of 'lay' participants and of viewers.

As de Groot notes, 'reality history' series have international appeal and 'as such participate in the wider globalization of cultural product'. Quoting Silvio Waisbord's remark that 'the globalization of the business model of television and the efforts of international and domestic companies' is demonstrated in the popularity of such formats, de Groot argues that the paradigm 'can be mapped onto pretty much any country' (de Groot 2009: 170). Certainly, European, North American and Australasian broadcasters have commissioned such series often from independent companies such as Wall to Wall, originators of the various *House* series, demonstrating, as de Groot asserts, 'the influence that private companies have on the BBC and UK terrestrial TV' as well as on their formats at a global level (de Groot 2009: 170). Although historical reenactment is not the most common form of history programming in the UK it is certainly increasingly widespread, particularly on BBC Two and Channel 4. As Sills-Jones asserts (2009), before 2003 it was relatively rare on both channels and so may be seen as a development of particular significance in the last decade and as part of growing diversity in broadcast material (Sills-Jones: 296–98) Using Brewer's criteria, many of the reenactment series discussed in this chapter may be seen as 'refuge' history, but even those based around ordinary lives do not necessarily offer the viewer an unproblematic sense of safety or security. We begin, then, with one of the earliest examples of

televised reenactment, the Channel 4 series *Edwardian Country House*, filmed in 2001 and broadcast in spring 2002, which was re-versioned for broadcast in the US as *Manor House* on PBS in 2003.[2] As well as focusing at length on the production context of the series, scholarly comment and the insights of informants who worked on the series, particularly regarding the representation of gender and social class, will be considered.

Class, gender and ethnicity in the late twentieth century: *Edwardian Country House*

A precursor to *Edwardian Country House*, aired on Channel 4 in 1999, was *1900 House*. Commissioned by the Science department of Channel 4, the series was originally intended to look into domestic life in 1900 as a way of revealing the impact of technological change on family life (Sills-Jones 2009: 327). As Caroline Ross-Pirie, one of the series' director-producers, remarked after its broadcast on PBS in the US in early 2003:

> It was kind of like *Big Brother* really. *1900 House* was born of a discussion – the producer Alex Graham was trying to sell Channel 4 [a series] about how technology had changed our lives … at the time of the millennium. It was a time when a story sic called *Driving School* was popular – [the format] wasn't called reality TV – but it was people observed doing small challenges. And we hit upon this and that's how the idea was born.[3]
>
> *(Washington Post 2003c)*

In this respect *1900 House* offered the first full opportunity to experiment with the format and may also be seen as a precursor to the 2009 Channel 4 series *Electric Dreams*, also made by Wall to Wall, which focused upon the 1970s–2000s. However, perhaps unsurprisingly the focus of *1900 House* became human interaction and domestic frustration, the 'small challenges' referred to by Ross-Pirie, rather than technological innovation. Indeed, this was due to developments in late twentieth-century technology, which 'affected what could be included in such series and how quickly material could be shaped into a form ready for broadcast'. As Dafydd Sills-Jones writes, 'the convergence of miniature digital cameras and new media technology came together with the low price and high performance of video tape', so 'several miniature cameras with enhanced exposure were able to capture every moment of the life of [series] participants'. In addition, such series had 'the ability to deal with enormous amounts of material quickly, which was a feature of the new digital editing systems' (2009: 256–58). Bearing such technological but also generic developments in mind, the growth in number of series of this type in the early twenty-first century is less surprising; the technology itself, as de Groot (2009: 174) suggests, allowed those watching at home an 'illusion of understanding' of events greater than that of those participating, although of course this was also facilitated by editing. Furthermore, in terms of perceived audience appeal, Peter Grimsdale, then (1999) Commissioning

Editor of Channel 4, noted: '*1900 House* made people think "wow" putting ordinary people, from today, into historical situations in the past and see how they get on, what a great idea, let's do some more of that' (Sills-Jones 2009: 327, 442). Hannah Beckerman, Factual Commissioning Editor at Five also noted its impact, describing it as 'experiential history that genuinely gives you the kind of insight that no amount of archive and interview and brilliant storytelling can do' and viewing it as a precursor to several of the 'reality history' series discussed in this chapter.

Certainly, appearing in the wake of the success of *1900 House* and the 2001 *1940s House* set in wartime England, at the time of its initial broadcast on Channel 4, even the BBC favourably anticipated *Edwardian Country House*. Despite its broadcast on the same channel as the new documentary format *Big Brother* (2000–10), few if any parallels were drawn between the two formats before Hunt's comments some years later although Turner's idea of the demotic was developed in part with reference to *Big Brother* and as we suggest in the course of this and other chapters, might to some degree be applied to history on television involving members of the public. An article published on the corporation's website noted the realism of the scenario for those involved, the 'absorption' of those involved into the Edwardian era, and the implications for those involved, who found themselves reportedly reflecting on social status in the past and the present (Bregman 2002). One summary of the series offered by the channel itself was simply 'Real life *Upstairs Downstairs* – money, power and class in Edwardian Britain'[4] while in its commemorative volume, marking twenty-five years of broadcasting, commentary on the series emphasized differences between the early twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, ostensibly in relation to material conditions: dress, technology and household furniture. As Jonty Olliff-Cooper, a history teacher and participant in the series, suggested, however, 'crude stereotypes' contrasting Edwardian etiquette to modern behaviour are insufficient and themes such as social class, reform, migration and housing shortages are apparent in both eras (Olliff-Cooper 2008: 352). Criticism of such series for offering a Whiggist interpretation of the move from the inegalitarian past to the meritocratic present has been discussed by several scholars commenting both on *Edwardian Country House* but also *WDYTYA*. That *Edwardian Country House* may instead, by identifying the significance of etiquette guides and rule books for some social groups in the Edwardian era, for example, encourage viewers to reflect upon contemporary and unseen ideologies at play in determining their lives is an alternative although not entirely contrary interpretation (de Groot 2009: 81, 175). The series, then, sought to outline some of these areas, most specifically social class, gender and attitudes to race and ethnicity, allowing Edwardian mores to be viewed through a modern lens but also, perhaps most crucially, modern standards to be historicized.

Despite Tristram Hunt's initial criticism of the series and other versions of the format as 'the past as theatre, in which different people played different parts with no rhyme or reason – certainly no social classes or cultural contexts – behind it', and its failure to invite more searching questions about the underlying structure of the past' (2005), in a later article he softened his approach somewhat, asserting that *1900* and *1940 House* were 'an interesting social history experiment' (2007). Those involved in making the series argue strongly for its attempts in doing so, if not successes; *Edwardian*

Country House from its first episode underlined its experimental nature in representing social class to participants and audience members. Indeed, scholars commenting on the series included those working both inside and outside its production. One historian, who had worked on other history programming praised how it had outlined 'the way class relations … [and] gender relations have changed', and how this was 'probably … much more powerful' than a book to the representation of social history. Identifying aspects of the series which we too have suggested elsewhere, the scholar drew their existing interests in the representation of ethnicity and social status into their discussion of the series. Several other scholar interviewees broadly concurred and this is perhaps because, in the account of Juliet Gardiner, who was directly involved with the various *House* series, the production team generally acceded to the historians over the emphasis of episodes. This is in contrast to the almost stereotypical response of scholars such as Hunt and also Simon Schama, mentioned earlier, who are themselves criticized by scholars such as Gardiner for not recognizing that the 'days of AJP Taylor' had gone. Certainly, scholars involved with the series, most notably Gardiner, have placed the series within a historiographical framework as a 'unique social experiment in Edwardian living' with Manderston, a country house on the Scottish-English borders, as the 'container'. Material conditions of the period 1905–14 were reconstructed as well as social 'rules of engagement' in order to see how people from the twenty-first century 'from a variety of jobs and modern ways of life' might exploratively 'interrogate' the Edwardian era, 'negotiating a very different set of social mores' and in other cases, rejecting them (Gardiner 2002a: 6).[5] Although they are not exactly the same, there are parallels here to Williams's and McElroy's participant-as-historian, and the difference lies in the point in the enterprise at which the participant is being considered; Gardiner's explorer discussed further below, might after the experience become a historian using mental reenactment to consider their experiences long after the event. The explorer, when on screen though, might be accused by some audience members of acting in an inappropriate or inauthentic way, as was the case for some other 'reality history' series (McElroy and Williams 2011: 88).

Importantly, then, Gardiner does not claim authenticity so much of the individuals' behaviour as of the material conditions in which they find themselves. Other 'reality history' series offered similar claims to material authenticity but this has not always staunched the flow of audience criticisms aimed at participants seen to have failed abjectly in their attempt to become fully immersed' (McElroy and Williams 2011: 88). That is not to suggest that such immersion is ever possible and, certainly, the comments of scholars such as Gardiner demonstrate complete awareness of this; rather, she seeks to go beyond such apparent limitations. The individuals onscreen might be perceived as historically inauthentic in their behaviour due to ignorance or unwillingness, and so Gardiner positions those involved in the series in the role of investigators, in one example describing them as 'modern-day "explorers"' (Gardiner 2002a: 16); they are not acting and neither are they passively experiencing the situations in which they are placed. Rather, they are actively creating those situations through engagement with material, social and cultural limitations, in some cases informed by the accounts of older relatives. Ellen the scullery maid, for example, was influenced by her grandmother

when she applied for inclusion in the series and those with such links were preferred in the belief that, like those participating in *WDYTYA*, they would relate more closely to those in the past and bring depth to the programme (Gardiner 2002a: 129; Ross-Pirie interview). De Groot welcomes this 'enfranchising agenda' for reasons very similar to those of Gardiner, viewing 'reality history' series in general as 'refreshingly free of the totalising claims of "authenticity"' which he sees scholars such as Simon Schama making (de Groot 2009: 168); authenticity of environment is, though, certainly asserted in series such as *Edwardian Country House*. David Scott Diffrient too suggests in his analysis of *The 1940s House*, broadcast in 2001 in the UK, that such series offer 'a critique of historically contextualized codes' allowing reflection upon the present, and our analysis of the series follows this lead, with particular relation to social class, gender and ethnicity (de Groot 2006: 396; Diffrient 2007: 47–51).

One of those involved, Rob Daley, the second footman in the house, confirmed this enfranchisement for participants, stating that '[t]he programme's historical adviser told us we were now the world experts on what it was like to live and work in an Edwardian great house, because nobody else has done it' (Curtis 2002). However, although this reiterates the idea of the volunteers as active participants, it also to some degree erases the experiences of the few surviving individuals who worked in those positions in the Edwardian era, offering instead a form of, in Alison Landsberg's term, prosthetic memory. In her introduction to her thesis regarding prosthetic memory, Landsberg states that such memories are useful; although not identical, as they are 'inflected by the specificities' of an individual's other experiences, they may, she suggests, have the potential 'to produce empathy and social responsibility'. In her interpretation, 'a sensuous engagement with the past … becomes the basis for mediated collective identification' (Landsberg 2004: 21). We would suggest that the responses of participants such as Daley, both on camera and in interviews after the series had been recorded, demonstrate the usefulness of Landsberg's insights. Similarly, writing of *Coal House*, Williams and McElroy emphasize 'how audiences interpret and embed their viewing in wider of aspects of both their everyday lives and everyday cultural practices including those generative of public and private memory', potentially 'mirroring the on-screen participants' "reality … " by reflecting on their own … past' (McElroy and Williams 2011: 84, 94). 'Being Edwardian', Gardiner's account suggests, grew and developed in the course of filming the series, and spanned further than the material conditions in the house or even the rule books for servants and etiquette guides for the family upstairs. 'Being Edwardian', in her analysis, was about getting progressively further into the mindset of the era, shedding twenty-first-century attitudes. Aware of the danger of seeming to suggest that all Edwardians shared the same mindset, particularly in relation to ideas of social and gendered status, she also comments on the decline of numbers of domestic servants before the Great War, due to a lack of the 'requisite servility' among many of the working classes (Gardiner 2002a: 200). Indeed, when Daley heard Lady Olliff-Cooper comment that she had taken only days to settle into the Edwardian lifestyle, he reflected that this was because privilege was far easier to enter into as a mindset than servitude

(p. 202). Empathy both by participants and audience members for those living in similar conditions in the past, and a sense of social responsibility towards those living in positions of servitude in the present may, then, have been one outcome of the social experiment. This was not universal, however, and one participant, 'Sir' John Olliff-Cooper, was particularly vocal in his defence of social hierarchy based on the class system both on and off screen. In a discussion held at the time the series was broadcast in the US, with viewers and with Antonia Dawson, the series' kitchen maid, he asserted in response to an American viewer fascinated by the English class system in the past *and* the present, that 'I think everyone has a personal dignity, but their worth within society is not equal' (Washington Post 2003b). As we go on to discuss with reference to other 'reality history' series, the extent to which the audience would necessarily draw similar conclusions to those participating onscreen is rather more difficult to ascertain.

Elsewhere Gardiner further discusses the importance of material conditions, particularly dress, to the series and suggests that this is a way in which both the participants and audience can see how experiences and identities – particularly gendered and classed – may be embodied literally in the dress of those seen onscreen (Gardiner 2002b: 20). This, though, may suggest less that those involved in the reenactment are interrogating or even negotiating the era, and more that they are being somehow shaped, physically and psychologically, in response to material conditions. It is useful to consider, then, Schwarz's analysis of the 2005 ABC series *Outback House*. 'Period clothing,' she asserts, 'plays a central role in creating … stories "wrought from experience"', while the bodies of female reenactors in particular are central to this construction, as they arguably are in *Edwardian Country House*. As she continues, the women's garments 'are rendered … as regulatory and disciplining contrivances' that constrict twenty-first-century participants' bodies. Although by using Foucauldian interpretation the body might be seen as imprinted by history, and somehow produced through the clothing, which seems closer to Gardiner's interpretation, Schwarz reminds us that, at least in the case of *Outback House*, the series sought to maintain twenty-first-century individuals' subjectivity, and their bodies, in order to use them 'to bear witness to the past' (Schwarz 2010: 22–23). This idea of witnessing will be returned to with specific reference to *The Trench*.

Despite these caveats, and unlike much historical reenactment, series such as *Edwardian Country House* give a large proportion of time to women's lives and experiences and offer reenactors the opportunity to offer insights alongside the oral testimony of those who lived through the eras depicted. For those in *Edwardian Country House*, Mrs Whinney, a former housemaid, visited the young women reenacting her former role. As she described physical and sexual abuse at the hands of employers, with no hope of redress, generational differences were underscored and this prompted some discussion of women's experiences over the centuries.[6] Unlike, then, the visitors to experiential or 'living history' museums discussed by Landsberg, the participants in the series did to some degree 'confront the events of their own lived pasts' as well as 'events and traumas of cultural and collective pasts' (Landsberg 2004: 21). Clearly, such insights relating to abusive employers would not have been

available to vulnerable young women at the time, just as news of the 9/11 attacks in the US was not available to reenactors (Oliver 2002). This underscores, though, the way in which the series did not claim to be a vacuum-sealed experiment set solely in a recreated past, but an engagement between past and present. Interestingly, very few of the interviews undertaken by British national newspapers with those who had been in the house were with these young women; the butler Mr Edgar and Mr and Mrs Olliff-Cooper, the Lord and Lady of the house, supplied almost all interview material. Although all three commented upon the life-changing nature of the experiences, and in the case of the Olliff-Coopers, reportedly regretting having to return to twenty-first-century life, the accounts of those who might be utterly relieved to return were not included (Jones 2002).

This may suggest a tendency in some sections of the British press to view the series as a nostalgic representation of life in the past when it sought to be rather different in its approach both to historiography but also to those engaged in the reenactment. Indeed, part of the series focused specifically on the British Empire, and the introduction of Mr Singh [Reji Raj], an Indian tutor for the younger Olliff-Cooper son, allowed consideration of the liminal role of such men in the British country house, but also, arguably because of this liminality, allowed further insights into the experiment. While other scholars, such as Catriona Elder writing of the representation of Indigenous peoples in series such as *Outback House*, note the importance of considering how contentious or otherwise difficult aspects of a nation's past are offered to an audience (Elder 2008: 217–32), existing scholarship on *Edwardian Country House* beyond the accompanying book has little to say about race and yet, like social class and gender, it is highly significant. This in itself is rather interesting, suggesting that while scholars might expect representations of interactions between European and Indigenous people in the Australian past to be contentious or sensitive, those between an Edwardian household and an Indian employee would not, perhaps due to preconceptions about Britain's multicultural society in the present. Mr Singh's role, undertaken by Fiji-born and Indian-identified Reji Raj, perhaps, then, reminds us of the adage that 'the past is a foreign country'; for Mr Singh and also for Raj, Manderston represented a different country as well as a different time and his involvement with the series additionally reflected Channel 4's commitment to diversity onscreen. Commenting on his experiences, Raj emphasized the parallels between his experience of reenactment in the house, in which he had sought to understand more about India's past, and the emulation of Edwardian British culture undertaken by distinguished Indian families seeking to advance economically and socially under British rule. Importantly, Raj also drew attention to British conceptions of parallels between their class system and the Indian caste system, and hence sought to discover 'what it would have been like a hundred years ago for an Indian to live with an upper-class English family' (Gardiner 2002a: 243). Drawing on Landsberg's comments on visitors' responses to 'living history' sites or 'experiential museums' (Landsberg 2004: 21), the embodied nature of Mr Singh's/Raj's experience may further have encouraged him to step beyond the various, largely unavoidable limitations of the series to reflect on his own subjectivity, and certainly in the series and its accompanying literature he is represented as having

moved beyond the limitations of identity politics in the present to consider yet more deeply the historical context of his life in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Aware that he could never fully 'live' the experiences he was reenacting, the prosthetic memory he developed enabled him at times to fundamentally, and not entirely anachronistically, criticize British Edwardian society. In so doing, he acted potentially as a conduit for others, participants but especially viewers, to share his criticism and take on, if not his memories, then an element of his frustration.

Positioned apart from the servants both by his status but also his ethnicity, Mr Singh offers singular insights into the 'social experiment' undertaken in the house. As Gardiner notes, like Miss Anson, the dependent spinster sister living with the family, Mr Singh was 'an ancillary member' with little opportunity to voice an opinion or express preferences. Moreover, 'there is an invisible barrier', Mr Singh commented in the series, between the family and himself, which he saw as echoing his own childhood on Fiji, where 'we all had this goal of trying to be terribly English'. Upon arrival in Britain, 'it was quite a culture shock' as social mores and etiquette that had continued in Fiji had changed considerably in the UK. Indeed, to be involved in a portrayal of a much earlier era was in some senses to return home: 'coming here to the Edwardian Country House is like coming home' in the comforting sense of shared social mores, but also because it 'brought back the colonial experience very vividly to me … the sense of status and hierarchy was very strong' both in the house and in the British-ruled Fiji (independence was achieved in 1970) of his childhood (Gardiner 2002a: 247–48). Although he shared elements of this perspective with Mr [Hugh] Edgar, the butler, who noted that his grandparents had been Edwardian in terms of their behaviour and expectations (Washington Post 2003b), Raj's experiences were even more complex and allow reflection upon past and current attitudes to ethnicity and cultural difference, as well as social class and gendered mores. That the response to this offered by 'Sir' John Olliff-Cooper appeared to be stepping out of the frame of the rest of the series[7] points to the contentious nature of the role of Mr Singh, as both tutor but possibly also exotic exhibit embodying the family's wealth and significance. Having a 'Raj supper' organized for him, Mr Singh/Raj was encouraged to tell others in the house about India in the early twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. In addition, key guests, including broadcasters Yasmin Alibhai-Brown and Krishnan Guru-Murthy provided views on issues of race in contemporary Britain. This jars rather, though, with the comments of Mr Edgar, the butler, who was keen to note how 'it transported us all back to the Edwardian era' and reflects perhaps his focus, as butler, upon the organization of the meal and the material conditions in which it was prepared and served, rather than the content of the discussion. However, affronted by Mr Singh's answers to the guests' questions regarding his position within the household, Mr Edgar noted that he feared that his exclusion from the servants' quarters but also from fully engaging with the family might have been seen as being 'on the grounds of race', which he vehemently denied. Such points of conflict may, though, help identify the liminal positions inhabited in the past by Indian tutors such as Mr Singh, and indeed, this was part of the rationale for his inclusion. As an adviser to the series remarked, 'the idea came from Queen

Victoria's employment of an Indian servant … how ostracised he was by the rest of the household … It was the perspective of the outsider that interested Caroline [Ross-Pirie].' This led to conflict and therefore 'good television', enabling, in the view of the series producer, Caroline Ross-Pirie, key issues of difference between past and present to emerge through a 'journey of experiences'. However, this position as outsider also seems to have mirrored, for Reji Raj, a continuing sense of being on the periphery of British society in the present (Gardiner email 2011; Gardiner 2002a: 250–51).

Indeed, the Empire Ball held some weeks later to mark Empire Day 1912 also included dissonant voices questioning even the reenactment of such events. Although there was a rendition of *Rule Britannia*, writer and broadcaster Darcus Howe did not participate, commenting that to sing 'Britons never, never, never shall be slaves' would be to suggest that other people may be. Like Raj, Howe came to Britain as a young man, having been educated in 'English' ways at his Trinidadian school. Acknowledging the 'Edwardian snobbery and prejudices' in the Trinidadian education system, he concluded that as much as British influence remains in former colonies, so too there is 'a lot of Africa and India and the Caribbean here in Britain today' (Gardiner 2002a: 262–63). Again drawing parallels between the Edwardian and the more recent pasts, Howe's comments underline the ways in which series such as *Edwardian Country House* may allow those participating, those visiting and those viewing to gain insights about national and cultural identities in the present, as well as those of the past. As Vanessa Agnew notes of historical reenactment in general, it 'performs political and cultural work … distinct from more conventional forms of historiography'. As a 'body-based discourse in which the past is reanimated through physical and psychological experience' (Agnew 2004: 328, 330) it offers physical, as manifested in the aching bodies of those employed below stairs, and psychological, such as the sense of displacement and alterity of Miss Anson and Mr Singh, insights. It is important to reiterate, though, that these are not simply into the past, but rather are as much about attitudes and expectations of the present. If, as scholars including Bill Nichols and John Corner suggest, the genre of documentary has increasingly shifted, with series such as *Big Brother*, towards 'diversion', and away from education and citizenship, then we might expect series such as *Edwardian Country House* to epitomize such changes (Corner 2002: 263). Indeed, scholars such as Schwarz have uncompromisingly defined the 2005 ABC series *Outback House* as 'a generic hybrid', mixing historical reenactment with documentary 'and *Big Brother*'s "fly on the wall" format … [with] participants subjected to a group endurance test' (Schwarz 2010: 20), leading us again to Turner's conception of the demotic. However, instead the content of the series might equally well be seen as encouraging at least some members of the audience to 'act in the world' informed by a greater sense of 'social structure and historical process' (Nichols 1994: 47). Although we concur with de Groot that the format has the potential, alongside other representations of the past, to 'flatten out national difference … [and] emphasise a particular type of national mythos' (2009: 170), and this may have been the case for *Outback House*, engaging as it did with Australian colonial history, meaning both viewers and participants might elect to link their experiences to a mythical

or nostalgic past and sense of national identity, *Edwardian Country House* does not seek nostalgic and uncomplicated interpretations; indeed, few of the 'reality history' series considered here do. Participants in the series may have been governed by rule books and etiquette manuals, but at times some, such as Mr Singh, broke away from the rules to speak of their experiences to guests. Moments such as this, which break the potential for a nostalgic narrative, are also often the points at which a wider sense of social and cultural structure, both in the past and the present, is invoked.

Regional and generational reenactment: *The Trench*

Moving from *Edwardian Country House* we now consider another reenactment series broadcast in the same year although on BBC Two. *The Trench* is perhaps one of the most highly criticized examples: Michael Darlow, an independent producer, asserted that from his professional perspective *The Trench* had failed due to 'its inability to translate the horror of past events in to the present' while Alex Graham of Wall to Wall suggested that the series represented the 'locus classicus' of reenactment failure (Sills-Jones 2009: 327; Bell 2009: 199). Further, as Emma Hanna suggests, the series was criticized even before it had aired, making a positive reception less likely (Hanna 2007: 107). That is not to suggest that all such enterprises have been perceived to have failed; most strikingly, the Canadian reenactment series *The Great War* (CBC 2006) earned director Brian McKenna the prestigious Pierre Berton award for popularizing the nation's history (Canada's National History Society 2007). The favourable reception it received underlines the extent to which, internationally, opinion of 'reality history' and its appropriateness as a vehicle to depict national stories can vary greatly; even within the UK, the English Heritage Festival of History for several years up to 2011 had a 'WWI trench'. Here, visitors received 'a glimpse of what life would have been like … with water filled craters, shattered trees and twisted barbed wire', as 'authentically uniformed British Tommy reenactors' were 'on hand to explain the weapons and equipment used at the time', a few hundred metres from the nearest food court and real ale bar. Significantly, though, and drawing, perhaps, on the expectations of visitors familiar with televised representations of the conflict, Battlefield Partnerships, 'a group of museum-trained actors, archaeologists and historical interpreters' also offered a depiction of events based on 'first-hand accounts'.[8]

However, *The Trench* attempted, and in part succeeded, we would suggest, in offering a representation of the Great War which drew on both regional and generational histories. The historical researcher and historical adviser involved in making the series emphasized its legitimacy in terms of historical accuracy, although of course the volunteers would never really experience living under fire; as veteran Harry Patch commented around the time of the series' broadcast, 'you can imitate a shell burst by a thunderclap firework … you will never create the fear and apprehension' and, for that matter, mortality rates (van Emden 2002: 2). As has been argued elsewhere (Bell 2009) the series offers a nuanced range of testimony, by and for men inhabiting Great War trenches as well as that of their descendants participating in the reenactment. In

addition, and of particular interest to this discussion of developments in 'reality history' programming since the 1990s, is its regional significance. Specifically, the series took twenty-four male volunteers from Hull, trained them and placed them in a trench in France for a fortnight, as if they were the 1916 10th Battalion East Yorkshire Regiment, the 'Hull Pals'. Focusing to a great extent on the minutiae of day-to-day living in the trenches of the Great War, the series additionally allowed the significance of regional, as well as national, memories of the conflict to be recognized by viewers. Although, as Bell has argued elsewhere, the men stood for all British soldiers, the selection of this particular regiment, because they had survived 1916 relatively unscathed, meant that regional identity too would be a central theme. In terms of broadcast material, in the Hull area, information additional to the national broadcast was available through BBCi Hull, a now defunct experimental interactive channel available only in the East Yorkshire region. The volunteers' motivations also drew on both regional and familial ties to the conflict; one referred to his desire to be involved with 'a project to do with people from Hull and the surrounding area' and also to be involved because of a grandparent or great-grandparent's role in the conflict (Bell 2009: 200, 205). These regional and familial ties were drawn upon in the series as reenactors were 'paired' with Great War soldiers. They were sometimes family members, as in the case of Steve Spivey, who in one episode can be heard reading a letter home written by his great-grandfather, who died at the front, whilst the camera pans over the letter itself (see van Emden 2002: 277). Although the series did not make quite such extreme claims about the relationship between the volunteers, their role in the series and their forefathers, there may be some parallels here to the insights of reenactor/historian Stephen Gapps, who has discussed one American Civil War reenactor 'who claimed to be re-enacting her great-grandmother' in order to provide 'a mobile monument' to her memory (2011: 50).

If a reenactor were removed from the trench in order, however superficially, to represent the death of a soldier, parallels were drawn immediately afterwards in the episode by reference to the death of a particular member of the regiment during the conflict, usually alongside an image of a newspaper report from 1916 and with the narrator providing the name and details of the 'real' soldier who had died. It is perhaps useful, then, to consider the trench an ethnoscape: a terrain offering a 'unique and indispensable setting for the events that shaped the community' (Smith 1999: 150) despite being in another country. During the period it was aired, debate raged over the proposed English regional parliaments, and historical senses of identity were revisited regularly in national and local media; while Bell has noted the movement from representations of the Great War in international terms in the 1960s with *The Great War* (BBC 1964) to regional terms in the twenty-first century (2009: 208), the importance of *The Trench* as a series also heralding regional interpretations of 'reality history' in the UK should also be noted. Certainly, later representations of the past, particularly the 'Welsh programmes with a specifically regional focus' (McElroy and Williams 2011: 80) *Coal House* and *Coal House at War* (BBC Wales 2007 and 2009) which depicted families in south Wales coal mining areas in the 1920s and 1940s appealed to some audience members due to the sense of regional history and identity

they evoked, although for others personal memories and the past as it was offered onscreen differed significantly (McElroy and Williams 2011: 87–91). While some viewers might be able to draw on their own reserves of memory in order to interact with the material broadcast, series such as *The Trench*, set in a period outside of the memory of most viewers, makes 'responsible memory transmission' particularly problematic (Landsberg 1997: 64). A few veterans were involved with the series, and give testimony to their experiences onscreen, but in the main, given participants' comments, the series succeeded in producing prosthetic memory, 'an alternative living memory … in those who did not live through the event' (1997: 65–66) in those participating in the reenactment and possibly also in the audience, in order to produce, as in *Edwardian Country House*, empathy and forms of knowledge. The experiences of the reenactors relied primarily upon the bodily sensations of noise and sleep deprivation, Landsberg's 'sensually immersed knowledges' (1997: 66) and so may be seen as a route to developing empathy for ancestors, seeking, like some participants in *Edwardian Country House*, to 'do their best' for them (van Emden 2002: 269) as fellow East Yorkshiremen, at least as much as for Great War soldiers as a whole.

Journeys of discovery: reenactment by and for children

A further development over the following years was that of specifically child-oriented reenactment series, such as the BBC One/CBBC series *Evacuation* (2006), involving twelve urban children and described by the BBC as a '[r]eality TV show in which children experience the life of a wartime evacuee',[9] which was nominated for a BAFTA television award in 2007. Its follow-up was *Evacuation Manor House* (2008), and in addition the Channel 5 (then Five) series *Dangerous Adventures for Boys* (2008), in which fathers and sons created *Boy's Own*-style adventures, considered briefly as it is discussed in further detail in our consideration of the perceived audience of history programming. *Evacuation* and the later *Evacuation Manor House* have been described by some scholars as 'demonstrating the enormous demographic range of the format' (de Groot 2009: 170). Binding together reenactment and adventure, the CBBC's *Serious Explorers: Livingstone* (2011) depicts a group of young teenagers 'following in the footsteps' of the Scottish explorer David Livingstone in the mid-nineteenth century. Offering authenticity not through costume or any consideration of Livingstone's reasons for his expeditions, the series' main claims to validity lie in the physical world experienced by the seven participants, Tanzania's difficult terrain and dangerous wild animals, and through their suffering and endurance a partly historicized appreciation of Livingstone's journey may perhaps be reached. Unsurprisingly, though, neither his missionary nor his colonialist motivations are revealed, which might have offered a rather different perspective to the racially varied group of young people participating. Certainly, though, the combination of physical hardship and the recreation of Livingstone's journeys offer for the viewer, if not necessarily for those participating, a form of affective history along the lines of Agnew's definition. Indeed, in the case of both *Serious Explorers* and *Evacuation*, responses to the series, despite being broadcast

on CBBC, which aims to offer 'high quality, distinctive programming for 6–12 year olds' (BBC Trust 2007: 1), included those of much older viewers.

Unsurprisingly, given the participants, the parenting website Mumsnet included a discussion thread about the later *Evacuation* series in January 2008, where contributors shared family histories of evacuation in the 1940s as well as, more commonly, noting aspects of the series itself such as the 'transformation', in the words of one respondent, of the children involved in the series, 'from being obsessed with hair/make up TV Game Boys etc., etc., to being happy with a skipping rope etc.'. In addition to offering younger viewers insights into aspects of wartime Britain, then, the series seems to have been perceived by some members of their parents' generation as offering an alternative to twenty-first-century consumer demands on parents and children. Other parents were proud to share their familial involvement in the programme; one revealed that 'being a proud mum I thought I'd tell you that my son is one of the children involved in this programme. He loves history and totally enjoyed the experience.' By emphasizing her son's interest in history she arguably justifies his privileged opportunity to participate in the reenactment, but perhaps also mirrors adult participants' comments that they wished to learn more by engaging in the material aspects of a particular period of history. Presumably wishing to identify her in the final episode of the series, in which the children were met by their parents at a railway station and the framework between the reenacted 1940s world and the 2000s is dissolved, another parent asked her what she had been wearing at the station. Interestingly, the first parent adds that '[t]he series was filmed over a 2½ week period', a far shorter stretch than *Edwardian Country House* and reflecting the very different group of participants.[10] Other respondents were, though, critical of aspects of the series which, while authentic, clashed with some viewers' and participants' mores. In particular, the depiction in *Evacuation Manor House* of the hunting and shooting of pheasants distressed some of the children but also some viewers, who after contacting the BBC were informed by the BBC Complaints department that the shoot was a legitimate and educational element of the series: 'The commentary was clear about the historical context of the shoot and our evacuees took part as beaters and pheasant retrievers, both of which are jobs that would have been done by children living on an estate like this during the Second World War.' Indeed, broadening this from historical context to wider educational concerns, the BBC added that '[a]s city children, many of them, like the real evacuees before them, arrived at the Manor House totally ignorant of where their food came from – and even though some were squeamish about handling raw meat, without exception they found it a fascinating and educational experience', and this was ultimately part of 'a remarkable journey of discovery for our modern day evacuees'.[11] This mirrors the comment of a parent on Mumsnet; the series sought not only to encourage children to learn about a specific historical era and events, but also to educate them in areas, it is suggested, in which they are lacking insight in the present; their transformation, as for adult volunteers, was not only from present to past, everyday life to reenactment, but from past back to the present, where insights, skills and experiences could be fruitfully drawn upon in daily life.

Dangerous Adventures for Boys was first aired in November 2008 and was feted by Five in a press release shortly before its airing as one of the channel's autumn highlights. Part of 'a raft of new history, factual and entertainment programmes', it offered 'famous dads and their sons mount[ing] exciting expeditions in a Boy's Own-style journey of adventure and self-discovery' and 'trace[d] the journeys of historical icons from Captain Scott to Nelson to reveal the unique relationship between boys and their fathers'.[12] Perhaps unsurprisingly, tabloid newspapers such as the *Daily Mail* gave a large amount of coverage to the series and especially to its representation of father–son 'bonding'.[13] It is a particularly significant example for a number of reasons, despite its lack of success in terms of audience figures. As we discuss further in our consideration of perceptions of the audience for history programming, it aimed at a particular demographic of parents and children, and may therefore be seen as part of a move in recent years to a fragmentation of audiences across channels, as well as reflecting the rise in celebrity culture. Channel 5 itself, launched in 1997, is a terrestrial example of the proliferation of channels occurring in the period considered in this book. Specifically, the episodes involved reenactment of aspects of modern military, technological and industrial history: the Battle of Britain, spying, and the SAS in the Second World War; the rise to fame of British motor racer Lewis Hamilton; Victorian steam railways; and eighteenth-century tall ship sailing. The use of the term 'journey' is held in common with *Evacuation* and suggests the geographical but also temporal movement attempted in 'reality history' series. Loosely based on the bestselling *Dangerous Book for Boys* by Conn Iggulden, which outlines 'essential boyhood skills' such as building a tree house and fishing, the series offered rather different challenges for 'celebrity dads and their sons [to] … recreate some moment in history to see if they have got what it takes to be as good as ordinary heroes from the past' suggested Hannah Beckerman in her interview. The use of the phrase 'ordinary heroes' is telling; although the adults involved were a selection of comedians, soap opera actors and disgraced peers, those whose achievements they attempted to reenact in some way were much less well known, and like many of the other series considered in this chapter, it is reminiscent of the idea of heroism and of meritocracy in British society. For example, in the first episode of the series, soap and film actor Martin Kemp and his son Roman must learn to fly fighter planes and reenact an aerial dogfight, but they are informed by the insights of Geoffrey Wellam, one of the few surviving British fighter pilots from the Second World War, who represents such ordinary heroes and their role in the Battle of Britain. By achieving something apparently akin to Wellam, the fame of the celebrity father could be justified as part of meritocratic recognition in the present. In addition, references to the Second World War and specifically the Battle of Britain added 'Big Name Recognition', seen by some independent producers as a necessary ingredient when a series offering 'a new angle on the familiar' is considered by a commissioning editor (Zoellner 2009: 523).

The success of series such as *Who Do You Think You Are?* has been widely acknowledged, and the 'celebrity' element to the Channel 5 series allowed some insights into family lives in the present rather than the past. More significantly, though, the gender and age of the audience for such series was highly important at this point in the

development of Channel 5's factual portfolio when programmes appealing to young men were being encouraged; overall, the channel sought to commission and air 'really experiential history … adventurous and out in the world' according to Beckerman, involving geographic journeys as well as historical. Of course, the *House* series are significant for their representation of women's lives and so in some ways, through those engaging in the reenactment, the audience at which the series was aimed, and the choice of events depicted, *Dangerous Adventures* marked a return to historical programming focused on the lives and experiences of men.

Offering a distinction between historical reality – a soap actor was not involved in the Battle of Britain – and the real – visceral emotive experiences in the present – the respondent emphasized the importance of including both in series such as *Dangerous Adventures*, and certainly, as in more traditional factual programming, original footage and eyewitness testimony were used. But as Landsberg notes in relation to wider developments in the representation of the past, the real response to historical events may enable memories to be developed and maintained in later generations, a model itself replicated through the use of generations within a family to reenact the events, which were selected in part to offer alternative representations of well-known periods and aspects of British history around which national identity and pride have been created: naval strength; the logistical possibilities offered by the railway system, and the military triumphs of the Second World War. Indeed, the series was depicted as placing both fathers and sons 'in the footsteps of their dads' childhood heroes' in order to educate their sons. Alongside, then, the familial ties of reality history like *The Trench* and the child-reenactors of *Evacuation*, Channel 5's 'adventure history' included a range of well-known historical markers relating to national identity or, in the words of one participant, 'exciting expeditions to experience iconic, *Boy's Own* adventures'.[14]

However, expectations that the series would gather high audience figures were not entirely correct. Despite substantial advertising on the channel,[15] shortly after the first episode aired it was announced by *Broadcast*, magazine of the broadcasting industry, that '[the channel's Chief Executive] Dawn Airey's wish for Five's peaktime shows to get at least a million viewers looks to have run aground already with … Dangerous Adventures for Boys' (Rogers 2008). In the same week as the first episode of *Dangerous Adventures*, which peaked at 1.01 million, the channel achieved its largest audience of the week, 2.3 million, with the US-made crime series *CSI Miami*. According to BARB viewing figures (BARB.co.uk) this placed *Dangerous Adventures* below a number of drama and soap opera episodes in terms of audience size, while tellingly, given hopes of its success, the historical and archaeological documentary series *Secrets of Egypt*, which began to be broadcast on the same week, achieved the channel's second largest audience of 2 million viewers. Perhaps this was in part, as *The Independent* newspaper's television reviewer commented, because 'small boys who are the target audience for this programme are not fools and will spot at once that Vic [Reeves] and Louis were enthusiastic passengers [on eighteenth-century tall ships] at best. They could use some of the time they spent on bogus tension-raising to tell us more nuggety facts, which, as a small boy myself, I can assure them would go down very well indeed' (Sutcliffe 2008). The broadsheet newspaper's criticism may also

point to reasons for the series' failure to maintain the audience they sought. Furthermore, while our research suggests that reenactment as a format tends both to represent women's experiences and also appeal to female viewers, women were notably absent, and were also apparently not considered as potential audience members by executives at the channel; the loss of many of this section of the audience may have contributed to disappointing viewing figures.

Ethno-methodological reenactment

A further development in some of the most recent reenactment series has been the involvement of the professional-reenactor, individuals who draw on their expertise as historians and archaeologists but also as members of other professions, bringing skills and insights to recreated events or physical surroundings. This has not, of course, developed only in the past two or three years, but rather since the 2000s has been particularly popular with both audiences and commissioning editors in the UK. Writing of their own experiences, Vanessa Agnew, Alexander Cook, Jonathan Lamb and Iain McCalman have all commented either directly of their experiences on *The Ship*, the BBC reality history series (2001) based on part of James Cook's Pacific expedition in the *Endeavour* (Cook 2004, McCalman 2004) or more broadly of reenactment in its various historical forms (Agnew 2004, 2007; Lamb 2009). John Brewer considers such types of reenactment to be 'ethno-methodological … to act not just as an observer of reenactment but as a (possibly privileged) participant' (Brewer 2010: 80). Often those involved were less enthusiastic about this privileged participation, concluding, in one example, that their experiences amounted to a 'ship of horrors' or 'searing experience' for the scholarly participants (McCalman and Pickering 2010: 7) who struggled to cope with poor hygiene, bad food, seasickness and sunburn. Their comments on the series are somewhat at odds with the comment of Chris Terrill (2002), its producer and director, who emphasized his desire not to use the ship as a floating museum, but rather as a 'time machine', 'a vehicle of history that could, emotionally, take us back to the 18th century … The obvious thing to do, therefore, was retrace part of the route of Captain Cook … and measure ourselves against those amazing seafarers on the original *Endeavour*.' That many of those sailing on the ship had little or no experience may have been intended to add to the sense of (personal) exploration and adventure; in Terrill's words, he sought 'to capture an amazing adventure on the high seas'. Certainly, his comments resonate with Brewer's, who asserts that for the past two centuries reenactment has offered a 'progressive view of history which figures change as both progress and loss' (2010: 79), including knowledge lost, but possibly re-found, during the series. They also, of course, demonstrate the veracity of Agnew's assertion that in recent years reenactment has been indicative of a wider 'affective turn' towards 'affect, individual experience and daily life rather than historical events, structures and processes' (2007: 299). Terrill (2002) was, though, keen to acknowledge the limitations of reenactment and asserted that 'there was never an attempt to become 18th-century sailors ourselves. We wore our own clothes and, inevitably, maintained our own mind-sets … but we could gain insights into their way of life'.

Given Gardiner's comments on the importance of the material aspects of reenactment, including dress, this is rather interesting, and suggests that although through reenactment skills may be developed to understand ways of life in the past, or even take a volunteer 'back' to the eighteenth century emotionally, this cannot be applied to the wider sense of mentality. Although at first glance this may seem contradictory, Terrill treads carefully in his claims and generally bypasses the criticisms of scholars such as Schama. Indeed, later series such as *Rome Wasn't Built in a Day* draw similarly on emotional authenticity in modern dress.

While *The Ship* may have offered an emotional experience for those involved due to the physical hardships endured and tensions between Aboriginal and European crew members in their interpretations of the impact and significance of Cook's expedition, Katie Kitamura, among others, has considered *The Battle of Orgreave*'s significance both as reenactment and 'a highly nuanced work of conceptual art' (2010: 39; also de Groot 2009: 129). Jeremy Deller's Turner Prize-winning restaging in June 2001 of the confrontation on streets and in fields between South Yorkshire miners and police in June 1984 included a reenacted 'battle' on the original site, which was filmed and broadcast on Channel 4 in October 2002 and repeated in June 2009. Former miners and policemen who had taken part in the original event were included in the reenactment, alongside members of reenactment societies, offering what Kitamura sees as a fissure demonstrating the differences between personal and collective memory, 'traumatic repetition as opposed to evocative iteration' (2010: 42). This, de Groot concludes, represented 'part therapy for the local community and a reinvoking of a particular time' (2009: 129), in a manner similar, it may be argued, to Aileen Blaney's discussion of the members of the Derry community participating in Paul Greengrass's Granada-produced film *Bloody Sunday* (2002), broadcast on ITV the same month as its cinematic release to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the event. Blaney argues convincingly that the reenactment of a civil rights march which was unjustifiably fired upon by British soldiers on 30 January 1972 and, in particular the role of the local community, forms 'part of a broader commemorative or ritual revisiting of the event which, in turn, discursively works through historical trauma' (2002: 119–20). However, as for *The Battle of Orgreave*, those involved also included professionals, in this case soldiers, who had served in Northern Ireland after the events depicted, and who brought 'flickers of authenticity' to scenes in which they played Paras. Further, although this reenactment was offered as part of a film, Greengrass used improvization while filming, so that those involved did not know how a scene would unfold, adding to the 'flickers of authenticity' (Blaney 2002: 128–29). Arguing that the heavy advertising surrounding the inclusion of real soldiers was intended to persuade viewers of the veracity of the film, Blaney's analysis reminds us of the role and responses of the audience of reenactment; clearly, not only the Derry community, or the former miners of Orgreave, were affected by or responded to the representation of the past offered. This draws us, albeit via a particularly traumatic and sensitive route, to a broader discussion of the role of professionals in reenactment series.

A rather different form of reenactment based around professional historians and archaeologists was offered by the BBC series *Tales from the Green Valley* (2005), based

in the early 1600s, *Victorian Farm* (2008) and *Edwardian Farm* (2010). The first offered viewers insights into 'a vanished world from a forgotten time', through 'a remarkable farm, one that is trapped in time' on the Welsh borders, which also acts as a border or frontier between past and present. There, as the narrator of the first episode tells us, 'handpicked experts' ran it as it would have been in the reign of James I. While the narrator of *Edwardian Country House*, as de Groot reminds us, offers a 'modern' voice (2009: 175), Owen Teale, a Welsh actor and the *Tales* narrator, offers a regionally specific voice, bringing, like the Stuart-period music that seams the episodes together, authenticity and a link to the past. All three series saw experts running the farm for an entire calendar year, giving a sense of change with the seasons, but yet, of course, maintaining the chronological distance of the past – 'an age gone by' – represented onscreen. The farm itself had been abandoned in the 1800s, and its renovation, like that of the farm buildings used in the following series, has parallels to the *Restoration* series discussed in our chapter on the business of television. For seventeen years, from the late 1980s, the building had been carefully conserved, its foundations re-laid, with the involvement of Stuart Peachey, one of the historians appearing in the series. However, unlike the Victorian and Edwardian farms, which are accessible to the public, 'Green Valley Farm' is owned by Historical Management Associates Ltd. The company continues to restore the wider property, which is advertised as offering 'the ideal background for film shoots and educational courses as well as the production of period foodstuffs. The site can be hired furnished and with period agricultural equipment.' In addition, 'living history events are held every year with complete costumed demonstrations of rural life in the Tudor and Stuart periods for school parties and specialist groups' (Historical Management Associates 2011). Reenactment, then, continues at the site. Indeed, the state of the buildings meant that during the series' filming the team of historians and archaeologists could not live there but worked there every day, due to 'modern Health and Safety law'.

However, and unlike the physical hardships but modern dress of those on *The Ship*, the participants wore 'period clothing, and cook and eat food from the era … turning theory into practice … using only tools and materials available in the year 1620'. The choice of clothing was explained by the series' producer/director Peter Sommer: 'The five specialists wear period clothing … practical, real working garments, with the men in breeches so the bottoms don't get muddy and wet, and the women wearing long thick skirts which protect from brambles and keep them warm.' Although he does not go into the detail used by Gardiner to consider the relationship between clothing, gender and status in *Edwardian Country House*, this does highlight the *Farm* series' relatively greater emphasis on the daily and practical rather than the abstract and cultural, aspects either dealt with directly or inferred through the comments of participants in the various *House* series, although that is not to say that such aspects are not considered. However, this may be due to the 'lay' participants' tendency to compare the past and present, including social roles, in comparison to 'professional' participants' propensity to question such roles less and to become more engaged in the practicalities of baking or ploughing as experimental archaeology. In this respect the *Farm* series represent a move away from accusations of such programmes as being

Big Brother in period costume and may have been a deliberate choice on the part of the BBC to find a slower-paced, less emotive – although in Agnew's definition no less affective – way to reenact the past in contrast to Channel 4, the broadcaster of the *House* series and *Big Brother*. However, that is not to suggest either that the *House* series have less scholarly or televisual value, or that viewers value the knowledge offered to a lesser degree. As one viewer suggested online, the *House* series offered 'the same concepts [as *Tales*] except … with the average modern man volunteering instead of historians so you get a bit of drama but there is also real wonder as people discover how their ancestors lived.[16] As an example, the first episode of *Tales* includes the introduction of two oxen needed to plough the field to plant barley, and the confession of the archaeologist Alex Langland that 'I've never actually ploughed before, I mean, I've read a lot about it, and certainly this plough looks the part, but I'm really looking forward to seeing how this develops.' Much as *Edwardian Country House* had done, the recreation of material conditions, clothing, tools and buildings was intended to offer insights into the lived experience of early modern rural life beyond existing academic studies, while the farm's liminal position on the 'Welsh borders' was suggestive of its origins as an early modern building but its use for modern education and entertainment.

The two later series involved a smaller team: the historian Ruth Goodman and the archaeologists Alex Langland and Peter Ginn; further, the Victorian farm at least was in rather better condition as it already acted as a working life museum, Acton Scott Historic Working Farm in Shropshire, which specializes in 'practical demonstrations of historic farming using traditional skills' (Acton Scott 2011). Unsurprisingly the museum is keen to emphasize its links to this and other series such as *Ben Fogle's Escape in Time* (BBC Two 2010), produced in the wake of *Victorian Farm*'s success, in which families and a celebrity presenter, rather than history or heritage professionals, spent a week in September 2009 engaging in Victorian farming techniques.[17] Indeed, consumption of the local landscape is also encouraged, as visitors may take 'The County Squire's Stroll … footpath developed by the Acton Scott Estate … The route has been chosen to take in many of the locations used in the Victorian Farm BBC TV.' Placing visitors in the footsteps of key figures of the rural community is not unusual in historic gardens and houses, and the designers of the walk do not make further claims to authentic reenactment, but it is a reminder of the tendency of many representations of the past to focus upon elite, albeit regional, histories. Indeed, luxury travel companies offer trips to the *Atonement* and *Victorian Farm* sites.[18] *Edwardian Farm* was filmed at the World Heritage Site Morwellham Quay in Devon, advertised to visitors as 'keeping the past alive' (Morwellham Quay 2010), and represented a move from the Welsh/English border to the Devon/Cornwall border. Offering publicity for sites based around heritage and national or regional identity, the sites' involvement in the 2008 and 2010 series also enabled them to include references to the series in their advertising literature, and encouraged viewers to continue to support them after their appearances onscreen, and to visit to see technology of the period used in authentic contexts, echoing the series' participants' insights.

Press response to the series was almost entirely positive; *Broadcast* commended it as a 'sleeper hit' garnering an audience of 2.8 million (*Broadcast* 2009) initially and up to 4 million by its final episode (BBC Press Office 2009a), which led the BBC to ask if this suggested 'an appetite for more of this immersive or "formatted" history' (Dabboussy 2009) among its audience. Media professionals' responses to its success will be discussed in our chapter on audience which follows. Of course it had a precursor in *Tales*, and Lion Television's executive producer David Upshal represented its commission as an extension of Lion's existing work for the BBC; the Open-University-funded *History Detectives* (2007), he asserted, had similarly sought 'to make new discoveries about a lost way of life' albeit without reenactment.[19] Its success also allowed a convergence of interests with BBC Wales' *Coal House* series, in that by autumn 2009 families were sought for a series set in a farmhouse in late nineteenth-century Snowdonia, although the title *Snowdonian Farmhouse* was amended by the time of its broadcast in October 2010 to *Snowdonia 1890*, possibly to distinguish it from the *Farm* series but also to reflect the importance of slate mining to the area (Prior 2009, Wightwick 2010). However, other than this three-part series, reenactment of historic farming techniques has tended to be undertaken onscreen by historians and archaeologists, possibly because, drawing on the comments of one media professional, diminishing production budgets across most channels do not allow the sort of large-scale projects that would see a large number of 'laypeople' slowly gaining insights into the past. The authenticity offered through the employment of professionals could at times, though, double as a screen to mask less palatable aspects of the past. While *Victorian* and *Edwardian Farm* both focused on the need for hard work and frugality, the spin-off *Victorian Farm Christmas* (BBC 2009) additionally outlined the increasing consumerism of nineteenth-century society, summarized by Alex Langlands as 'the first Christmas crackers, marbled wrapping paper, countless pretty things' (in Warman 2009), but not the poverty and alienation of many living in urban rather than rural areas of Britain. While this is hardly surprising in a Christmas special it also reminds us, as we comment elsewhere in this book, of the tendency of some representations of the past to ignore difficult or potentially contentious histories – those of the increasingly militant urban poor, for example – in favour of the acceptably hard-working rural farmer and an ideal of country life as community-based, even in the present. As Langlands also noted, the inhabitants of the estate on which the farm is based still hold an annual carol service and often have familial ties to the area: 'When so many places have become commuter villages, maybe the Victorian idea of people coming together for Christmas shouldn't be all nostalgia' (in Warman 2009). Indeed, it was suggested by BBC Two Controller Janice Hadlow at the time of its broadcast that the series' popularity may have stemmed not only from a desire to see a selective version of the Victorian era emphasizing family and regional ties, but also from resonance with a British public beginning to appreciate the extent of the economic recession, for whom thrift enacted onscreen was both a guide to and a confirmation of the need for prudence: 'powerful formatted TV for big audiences that feels like it is responsive to the new world' (Holmwood 2009a).[20] This is also referred to in the next chapter.

Edwardian Farm, aired in 2010, similarly sought to 'resonate with the way people feel towards their community and relate to each other in the current economic climate', offering 'good-hearted, intelligent programming that hits a familiar note' (BBC Press Office 2009a). Much as de Groot notes of *Restoration*, considered in our chapter on the business of television, Hadlow offers 'history as … a discourse of the social utility of the past' (de Groot 2009: 168), although rather than a building being restored from decay, communities might be revived. So while reality history series earlier in the decade sought, according to some commentators, to reveal the contemporary self by considering the historical subject (de Groot 2009: 180) some of their later forms differed not only through the type of volunteer, and therefore the way of representing the past offered to viewers, but also the broader cultural and political environment being brought to the series by audience members, which was then responded to by controllers and commissioning editors. Indeed, the importance of the audience is central to the series; the archaeologists involved were open about the limitations of the experiment, noting that the long-term hardships of Edwardian life could never be completely reached by the series. In short: 'If the crops fail, it means good TV, not bankruptcy' (Radford 2010). In other ways the desire for the series to 'look' authentic was prioritized; the episode in which cider was pressed, for example, involved staff and equipment based at the National Trust's Cotehele Estate, where the building in which the recently restored cider press is kept had to be dressed with hessian to disguise its steel frame (Orchard Network 2010). Both series, then, seem to have attempted to maintain a balance between appearing to be authentic in terms of the materials and buildings used, while also seeking to utilize heritage sites which may use modern equipment, underlining implicitly or explicitly the need of national heritage organizations for public support. The National Trust and other national bodies' often-criticized role (Weideger 1995) in preserving a grand narrative of English history through its support of elite sites and elite pasts is not directly applicable to the series, although the historical idea and ideal of a rural community united in culture and habits resonates with public histories funded or otherwise supported by political and economic elites in the present.

A later example of professionals involved in 'reality history' series which shares the use of national heritage sites and debates over authenticity is the Channel 4 series *Rome Wasn't Built in a Day* broadcast in early 2011. Perhaps most commented upon in the national press for arguments between the building professionals and the series' historian over the existence of wheelbarrows in Roman Britain, the series' participants attempted to build a Roman villa using only materials and tools of the period. Unlike the *Farm* series, however, those involved were not expected to dress in period clothing, suggesting initially that it offered less an insight into the lived experience of Roman builders and craftsmen, and more into the frustrations of modern people seeking to build a villa under duress. The historical subject initially appeared to be the villa itself, to be preserved for future generations by English Heritage, and its building was repeatedly described as experimental archaeology by construction historian Colin Richards, among others. However, despite their modern clothing some of the builders did begin to develop, if not a Roman sensibility, then a different perspective on their

craft and for some, on their wider lives. Arguably, the series achieved greater authenticity in the final building and in personal experiences seen onscreen rather than in the process of creating the villa; time constraints meant it had to be built in six months from wood that had not seasoned properly, and which therefore damaged the wall of the villa, despite the guide by Vitruvius which counselled otherwise.[21] Therefore contrary to claims of experimental archaeology, much of the build was dictated by the schedules of both English Heritage and the broadcaster. However, in terms of affect, as emphasized by Agnew and others, the series offered insights into the responses of those engaged on the project, and specifically into their identities both as professionals and in wider roles. Jim the site foreman's assertion that 'I'm a Roman; I mean, I'm absorbed into the culture now' is used at the beginning and end of several episodes and points to his belief that the experiment is granting him insights not only into building, but into a wider culture. For other participants, though, the experience allows them to reflect on their lives in the present: Tim the plasterer, who had become increasingly bored by working on large hospital walls, for example, found that his efforts to find a Roman plaster, based on medieval recipes, 'brought a life to it [plastering]', and later commented that 'this is not mundane anymore'; another of the men noted that 'every day it's a joy to come to work'. The exchange of predictable working environments for challenging work of lasting historic significance proved a very positive experience for most of those involved, and allowed them to develop and demonstrate newly acquired skills; the website of one of the volunteers currently lists their achievements in this area. Involved also in making tubuli, radiator bricks, for the house's bathhouse, Tim highlighted his own, and by extension the audience's, education: 'It's learning history. It's just that feeling that you're living and breathing it … it's like falling in love … it's such a joy to do it … It's a good feeling.' Putting his daughters' names on some of the tubuli, his role as both skilled worker and father was apparent, and the positive effects of the reenactment work on both of these roles. Similarly, another professional drawn into the series was Kevin the tiler's daughter, who had rarely seen her father since his divorce and whose degree in archaeology was put to use on the site. While drawing together long-separated relatives has been common on British television for some decades, its role in a reality history series is rarer and it served to provide human interest, to offer a female presence in the series beyond that of the volunteers discussed shortly, but also perhaps to demonstrate how a university education might be applied to public historical sites in a period of recession, in which the value of non-vocational qualifications might be questioned.

In addition, the role of members of the public, whether school children or Women's Institute members, was crucial to parts of the building process and highlights a recent development in 'reality history'. Although as de Groot (2009: 180) notes of *1940s House* (Channel 4 2001) 'it was not a closed community', with neighbours offering help and assistance, making the experience in his view 'a performance', this is uncommon in such series. In general while specialists in the heritage industries might assist the reenactors, those 'out of costume' are rarely involved. However, in *Rome*, where additional volunteers helped make bricks, the boundary between the Roman

and the modern world was crossed, in part perhaps because there was little attempt to recreate the lived experiences, rather than the specific skills, of Roman craftsmen.

Public involvement in reenactment

Another series which allowed the public to interact with those recreating an earlier time, in a manner similar to a 'working life' museum, was *Turn Back Time – The High Street* (BBC 2010/11) which represented the British High Street in the key decades from the late Victorian era to the 1970s. There are similarities to the previous year's *Electric Dreams* (BBC 2009), also made by Wall to Wall, which altered a family's home so that it reflected the three decades from 1970, with a day representing a year's progression, and allowed them gadgets of the period. One of the key principles of the series was to discover the effects on the family of engaging in the series, rather than focusing specifically on historical insights, and to this end the experts advising the family and commenting on them in the series were technological and sociological, in contrast to the historians appearing in the *1940s House* 'War Cabinet', for example. While *Electric Dreams* sought to encourage nostalgia in those old enough to remember the period depicted, before showing its partial rejection by various family members happy to spend more time with each other while dealing with power cuts and pressure cookers, their experience was more 'closed', using de Groot's term, than that of families involved in *The High Street*, which while similarly offering insights into the effects of change over time could not, because of the necessity of trading with the 'outside world', be a closed one. Instead Shepton Mallet's population was encouraged to visit the shops and experience having to wait for coffee to be roasted and butter to be patted. But this was very much the intention of the series; to demonstrate to a wide audience the former social and cultural role of the high street to those experiencing economic recession which had led to the 'death', or at least depletion, of high streets in towns across Britain, in part in an effort to attempt to revive it. This sociological rather than historical intervention is shared with *Electric Dreams* and arguably goes beyond the contemporary self to groups, families and communities, both those involved directly with the series but also 'plain clothes' participants and audiences, while offering insights into one of the subject areas – 'the historical basis of current issues' – listed in the BBC History Knowledge Strategy (Dabboussy 2009). Indeed, the success of the revived *Doctor Who* science fiction series may also have been drawn upon in the *High Street* trailer, with a modern van, filled with volunteers dressed appropriately for the decades considered in the series, literally blazing a trail through a Victorian high street.[22] Taking especially into account the Knowledge Strategy, it is apparent that such manifestations of 'reality history' offer the opportunity to reflect on contemporary society through consideration, however limited by time and other constraints, of its historical precedents. Given Janice Hadlow's comments in 2009 and 2010 suggesting that programming appropriate to audiences experiencing economic recession, perhaps offering examples of families or communities experiencing and surviving economic hardship, were being commissioned by the BBC, both series seem to reflect this remit, marking another development within this form of history programming.

While this book considers in the main more 'traditional' factual programming, in this chapter in particular we have considered programming which offers a rather different interpretation of the past and its uses in Britain in the twenty-first century to more 'traditional' factual material: reality programming is the 'implied "other" to these more traditional formats' (Shimpach 2010: 7). Although the national narratives offered by some of the other series discussed in this book have little room for alternative explanations or subaltern histories, *Great Britons*, considered in our chapter on the business of television, and *High Street* both ostensibly granted a voice to the 'ordinary' citizen and allowed them to engage in a form of public history, in the course of the series but also, in the latter case, through Turn Back Time events held throughout Britain which sought to offer families – those not directly involved in the filming – insights into the effects of the past in the present, primarily through setting up shops and other exhibits in various public spaces such as shopping centres and with some involvement by local museums.[23] Of course, as we outlined in our introduction, and as we revisit in our conclusion, to suggest that television history is a form of public history and therefore democratic in contrast to academic history is contentious. As we have noted already in this chapter, while examples such as these are certainly demotic, in most cases the final broadcast material was shaped by editing and by the 'scripted', preordained situations into which participants were placed to as great an extent, if not more, than by the actions of the participants. Certainly, though, the BBC (Dabboussy 2009) noted that their success with *Victorian Farm* and *WDYTYA*, considered in our chapter on landmark and flagship programming, has been due to the 'contemporary journeys' on which viewers were taken, using contemporary experience as a way into historical stories, claiming relevance to the present and offering different ways into the past which appear to note, *contra* Turner, a range of identities in terms of who are represented, and therefore to acknowledge diversity in late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century Britain. However, as we go on to consider in the following chapter and in our conclusion, other preconceptions of the audience are more troubling, revealing circular reasoning in which expectations of the audience lead to limited representations and histories.

5

WHO DO 'THEY' THINK 'WE' ARE?: CONSIDERING THE AUDIENCE

Relatively little is known about who actually watches history programmes and even less is known about what they glean from their viewing. An empirical study of the audience was beyond the scope of our project but we argue that much can be garnered from an examination of the preconceptions of programme makers and commissioning editors about the viewers of their history outputs. In addition to our analyses of specific history programmes which, through their form, content and channel of transmission, give strong clues as to the 'intended' audience, these perceptions have been gathered both from our interviews with producers and commissioners, but also comments they make in public. These appear, for example, on channel websites and at specialist media events. The assumptions about audiences are not only present in their discourse, but are also of great significance to them. Within media and television studies understanding of the audience, which dominated media and cultural studies work in the 1980s and 1990s, has focused on specific, usually popular, genres, for example soap opera (Ang 1985, Hobson 1982) and, more recently, reality television (Skeggs and Wood 2012) or have explored media use in everyday life through qualitative research methods (Gillespie 1995, Morley 1986, Gray 1992, Mankekar 1999). There is very little research into 'factual' television forms with the notable exceptions of Hill and Bennett who include these genres in their studies of 'life-style' television, and cultural distinctions in television preferences, respectively (Hill 2007, Bennett 2006). Further, Angela Piccini's study for English Heritage produced a useful survey of viewing figures for what she defined as 'heritage' programmes (Piccini 2007). One of the few qualitative in-depth studies to date is that carried out by Ruth McElroy and Rebecca Williams into viewers of the Welsh 'reality history' programme *Coal House,* which reveals some interesting data about audience engagement for this genre (McElroy and Williams 2011). Both Bennett and Piccini's studies suggest that viewers range in age and represent both sexes (Bennett 2006, Piccini 2007), contrary to the view which some media professionals have of the history documentary viewer as male, middle aged and

middle class. Bennett's research includes 'history' as a genre within 'documentary/nature/history' and as such is rather too broad for an understanding of the different kinds of audiences drawn to different kinds of history programming. His quantitative study does, however, reveal a much more diverse profile of audience in terms of age and gender, if not a much more predictable spread of preference in relation to 'education', which Bennett calls a 'proxy for class'. Piccini's work goes into detail about specific programmes but her definition of 'heritage' programming limits her to any 'factual' programming transmitted on both analogue and digital platforms that concerns material culture, the historic environment and ancient monuments. History programming that focuses on artefacts and sites recovered through archaeological practices is also considered to be heritage television. As such, the programmes range 'from *Antiques Roadshow* and *Cash in the Attic* through to *Time Team* and *Horizon*' (Piccini 2007) but her work has certainly produced some unique and valuable data. Throughout our study we have noted that audience members are often active in their responses to history programmes, contributing to online forums to which we refer in our final chapter. These examples also suggest a relatively diverse audience in terms of age, gender and ethnicity which does not necessarily conform to the stereotypes of audiences held by television professionals. In terms of broadcasting strategy all the commissioning editors we spoke to – BBC, ITV, Channels 4 and 5 and the History Channel – have preconceptions of the type of audience they would like to attract for their channels and schedule 'slots', and also of the ways in which they believe the audience can be divided into key types of people. Aiming certain kinds of history programming at different audiences clearly affects the way in which the past is represented in factual television. We will therefore tease out the various 'figures' or ideal types of the history audience as expounded by the broadcasters and commissioners, as well as how independent producers are constrained in their programming by the requirements of the commissioners.

The development of channel identity, as discussed in our chapter on the business of television, has clear links to the idea of an audience demographic. This is mainly based on age but Channel 4, in addition to aiming at the 16–34 audience group, also targets ABC1 viewers, reflected clearly in their digital strategy and thus expanding their assumed 'core' audience. Audience share, however, remains a critical factor for the terrestrial channels and especially for the BBC and, as we saw in our consideration of the business of television, the BBC has developed clear images of what its ideal audiences are for each of its channels. While the broadcasters commission and carry out their own audience research, the 'imaginary' audience is often based on much more instinctive and, indeed, subjective notions of who the audience is, their age, gender, class and tastes. This was confirmed by at least three of our respondents from the independents who variously described broadcasters' research as 'flimsy', 'biased towards the broadcasters' assumptions' and 'practically non-existent'. These elements will be explored with a view to understanding the major topics, periods and themes covered in history programming as well as the form those programmes take. First we examine an example of more systematic research commissioned by the BBC in 2009, already referred to in our chapter on the business of television, into audiences for history programmes across their channels.

The broadcasters and their audience

BBC: 'Traditionalists' and 'Contemporaries'

The corporation's mission in relation to its audiences for history programmes is '[t]o build towards a historically literate public, by offering the stories, insights and lessons of history that are captured in the core content'. According to audience research commissioned by the BBC in 2009:

> Qualitative research tells us that audiences are fundamentally interested in the past in the ways it helps to explain and contextualise the present. From television, audiences want both entertainment and information. The key challenge for BBC History is to balance entertainment and information in the right proportions for a range of different audiences.
>
> *(BBC Strategy Document 2009)*

Their qualitative research identified two distinct attitudinal audiences for history content: 'Contemporaries' and 'Traditionalists'. The 'Contemporaries' preferred 'contemporary journeys' and the 'Traditionalists' were happier with the 'heartland' and 'investigative' modes of programme. Their preferences overlapped in both 'immersive adventures' (usually led by reconstruction through CGI or drama) and 'drama' categories. In finer detail the contemporaries liked particular 'slices' of history with relevance to the contemporary world. They liked 'immersive' and formatted programmes. Their preference for 'real evidence' demanded that they be *shown* rather than *told* about the past and they especially liked a focus on everyday lives. In contrast the 'Traditionalists' preferred a broader view of history and especially of important events that explained the world. They preferred the 'sage on the stage' mode of delivery and history told through the important figures of an age, and valued programmes from which they felt they had learned something.

The BBC-commissioned research suggested the following trends in terms of audience. The 'contemporary journey' approach to programming was skewed for the most part towards a younger audience although the 'less entertainment led' *Victorian Farm*, which attracted viewers across the age and gender spectrum, was the exception. The 'investigative' mode was skewed on average towards an old audience than the peak channel averages for BBC One and BBC Two. In the case of 'immersive' programmes the actual subject is a more reliable indicator of audience profile, across age and gender. Similarly 'heartland' appeal can vary depending on topic and talent, although those in the older demographic tended towards men. Alternatively, those skewed to a younger audience tended towards women.

For BBC One and BBC Two this profile looks thus:

Older male

Heartland: *Andrew Marr's History of Modern Britain, The American Future: A History by Simon Schama, The Lost World of the Raj, Great British Journeys, The History Detectives*

Investigative: *Moira Stuart in Search of Wilberforce, Simon Schama: Rough Crossings*

Older female

Heartland: *Andrew Marr's History of Modern Britain, Simon Schama: Rough Crossings, RAF at 90, WWII Behind Closed Doors*

Immersive: *The Wild West, Heroes and Villains, Peter and Dan Snow 20th Century Battlefields*

Younger male

Heartland: *Charles Darwin, Wilfred Owen: A Remembrance Tale, Ian Fleming: Where Bond Began*

Immersive: *The Wild West, Attila the Hun*

Contemporary Journeys: *Supersizers Go …*

Younger female

Heartland: *The Victorians, Jeremy Clarkson: Greatest Raid of All, The Victorians, Victoria's Empire*

Immersive: *Cleopatra: Portrait of a Killer*

Contemporary Journeys: *Who Do You Think You Are?, My Family At War, Victorian Farm.*

These are interesting results which the BBC gathered from focus groups. While we must take account of the reluctance of some viewers to reveal their actual viewing practice, preferring to self-define themselves as viewers of 'serious' or 'high importance' programmes, it appears that younger (under fifty-five) women and older (post-fifty-five) men are the heaviest viewers of history programmes. We find it surprising that women over fifty-five do not mention such programmes as *Who Do You Think You Are?* and are tempted to reach for explanations of gendered viewing dynamics rendered visible through earlier viewing studies (Morley 1986, Gray 1992). The lightest viewers of history programmes are younger males, a lucrative market for channels funded by advertising. There is evidence here of the importance of the onscreen talent, especially familiar names such as Andrew Marr and Simon Schama. Younger women appreciated Victoria Wood and, apparently, Jeremy Clarkson. Surprisingly, perhaps, older women and younger men shared a liking for *Attila the Hun* and *The Wild West.*

ITV and markets

There is no doubt that for the UK's commercial terrestrial channel the figure of audience as 'market' has and continues to define the network's programming. However, and as we have discussed in our chapter considering the business of television, the regional companies were the foundation of the network. As Barbara Sadler has argued,

the regional idents can provide us with a history of the attempts of each company to both distinguish themselves from each other and the main network but also to create an identity for their regional audiences. The decline of the regions and regional programming have already been mentioned and the regional opt-out archive-based series *The Way We Were* and *The Way We Were on Holiday* by True North Productions for ITV Yorkshire, Anglia and Granada are examples of history programming which certainly appealed to regional audiences. According to some postings online these are 'better than *EastEnders* anyway'.[1] ITV's network offerings within the period of our study were notably *The Second World War in Colour* (ITV 1999), discussed in more detail in our chapter on commemorative programming, followed in 2002 by the three-part series *The British Empire in Colour* and in 2005, *Victory in Europe in Colour*. All were produced by Central and were considered to be the kind of history programming the network audience would appreciate. Melvyn Bragg, whose long-running arts and culture series *South Bank Show* for London Weekend Television (1978–2010) was finally axed in 2010, scripted and presented the eight-part series *The Adventure of English* (ITV 2003) along with his companion book. This kind of programme is now rarely seen on the network but ITV have attempted to introduce more avowedly popular forms of history programming. In a roundtable discussion in 2006 a group of media professionals, which included Jo Clinton-Davis who became ITV Controller of Popular Factual in 2007, discussed reality formats and, speaking of Wall to Wall's *House* format, said it can be seen to offer 'good, core content, mediated in quite a tabloid way', although, referring to the audience, 'behind it there is a real hunger [among viewers] for reality and content because they're sophisticated and they see through the more obvious formats', irrespective of whether the series offered was 'serious' documentary or 'clever worked-out reality formats'.[2] In 2007 ITV commissioned *You Don't Know You're Born* from Wall to Wall, the relatively unsuccessful series discussed in our chapter on the business of television, and the following year an increasingly embattled ITV was released from their public service obligations by Ofcom. ITV clearly sought programming similar to popular BBC series, especially those which were presenter- or celebrity-led (Sadler forthcoming; Zoellner 2009: 511, 528). A combination of dire financial circumstances for the BBC's main rival and its simultaneous desire to offer a less serious version of history led ultimately, if not to commercial failure, then to disappointment.

A more successful commission was Wall to Wall's family history series *Long Lost Family*, fronted by popular presenters Davina McCall and Nicky Campbell, which traces and reunites family members separated for most of their lives and has elements of social history – usually reasons surrounding the break-up of families – in many of the 'stories' aired. Indeed, in 2007 the then ITV director of global content Dawn Airey had announced that ITV plc would focus on factual entertainment, due to the low profit margin of commissioned documentaries, and *Long Lost Family* may certainly be seen as an example of this; while *You Don't Know You're Born* predated the Ofcom announcement it too seems indicative of a movement in ITV towards factual entertainment before this was publicly declared (Zoellner 2009: 504, 511). A second series of *Long Lost Family* was commissioned and transmitted in 2012, drawing an average of 4.5 million viewers.

Channel 4 'everyone'

Janice Hadlow, when Commissioning Editor for Channel 4 History, described the audience for history programming on her channel as follows:

> Thirty-five plus and over 50s predominantly male. Intelligent and confident. Capable of making its judgement felt. Sophisticated and grown in confidence through exposure. Also affluent and therefore good for advertisers. Audience is demanding, as picky.[3]

Hadlow, who confirmed that at the time Channel 4 was commissioning more history than any other kind of factual programme, said these programmes could attract 4–5 million viewers and what she considered to be a 'good' audience, especially for her advertisers. However, she did not at that point distinguish between different genres of history programmes and whether they attracted a more diverse range of viewers. Bennett's research initially confirms this view in that expressed male viewing preferences clustered in the 'high importance' genres of news, current affairs and documentaries. However, Hadlow did speak about the power of television to 'reinvent' itself and in the period of the project, as we have seen, history programming has taken on many different characteristics, the impulse of which comes in the main from the search for the right kind of audience, whether bigger or more representative of niche markets.

We discussed the question of audience with Ralph Lee, Head of Specialist Factual, who said that the audience statistics they produce confirm that their audience is ABC1, aged 45/55 and slightly skewed towards males. Like the BBC audiences, however, this varied with subject. He referred to a programme they had recently transmitted about Princess Margaret for which the audience was 70 per cent female. Although Lee looked at the audience statistics he insisted that 'we don't let it govern our thinking too much'. He went on to say:

> I like to think our audience is everyone. I love as much information as I can about people who are watching but I try not to double guess. What we are looking for is impact and scale is the best way to get impact. If 2–3 million people watch a programme then sort of everybody's watching it, you know, rather than relying on a particular demographic.

He went on to compare Channel 4's strategy with the BBC:

> I think the BBC because of its portfolio of channels has to think really carefully about who its audience is and how it is serving all the audience, you know, so actually they make decisions about commissioning based on one particular segment of the audience that it is serving or not serving for a particular demographic success. We don't have 4 channels which are commissioning – we do have a portfolio of Channels but really all the commissioning is on C4 and we don't double guess to that degree who might watch programmes.

This is a clear statement of the relatively simple commissioning strategy which Channel 4 can adopt given that their main channel is the only one which commissions history programmes. Lee also said:

> I don't know anyone who defines themself as a history viewer – people are more interesting than that and they watch a variety of different things. Many of the programmes we've made haven't really marketed themselves as history programmes – a lot of the programmes that are driven by experience or personality aren't – they don't necessarily have 'history' written above the door.

This open and apparently relaxed attitude to garnering audiences allows Lee and his specialist commissioners to adopt a bolder strategy in their commissioning, of which they are very proud. However, this does rely on their perceptions of who their viewers are and largely, as Lee suggests above, the world they know and within which they operate. This was revealed when Lee spoke with pride about the series *Empire's Children* which he commissioned and which will be further discussed in the following chapter. The idea for the programme came from what he felt to be a lack of general understanding of the origins of 'multi-cultural' Britain:

> One of the things that's missing in our conversation about multi-cultural Britain is Empire and I think it is hard for people in the academy and readers of broadsheets [to realize] that the people do not understand why we have a multi-cultural society – the Jade Goody-kind of people – I honestly don't think they have any idea of that and that degree of ignorance we forget – we overlook completely and so trying to find things that make people realize that the kind of society we are living in today is a consequence of our history is quite important it strikes me. It is quite difficult and the way it's been dealt with in a straightforward way End of Empire kind of way, it's all a bit depressing and flags getting hoisted down flag poles and people hand over power and no one actually equates that with, well what's going on in Britain today – who are all these people and why do they feel British or do they feel British and what does that mean.

This characterization of a society which is clearly divided between 'them' and 'us' – 'them' being the 'Jade Goody' type of person, presumably typical of the uneducated and unenlightened about our/their history, in contrast to 'us' the educated and enlightened viewer – is revealing of easily accessed stereotypes in his thinking about audience. Goody was the youngest contestant to appear in the highly successful and lucrative Channel 4 series *Big Brother*, born in a deprived part of London to a mixed race father, a drug addict who left the family when she was a child, and a white mother, and was hounded by the media for what was considered her outrageous behaviour on the show. She came to epitomize, as Owen Jones points out in his *Chavs: The Demonization of the Working Class*, Britain's underclass and was vilified for it. Jones also reminds us that Goody had suffered racist abuse at school and in her own local community (Jones 2011). Lee is not alone in evoking the Goody stereotype

but it is surely worth pointing out that she, and others from a similar background, have often painful first-hand knowledge of 'multi-cultural' Britain and it is perhaps the 'people in the academy and readers of the broadsheets' who are in need of the education.

Channel 5 'contemporaries'

Channel 5 presents a more complex picture. When we interviewed Hannah Beckerman she was keen to talk about their series *Revealed* (also discussed as part of our chapter on the business of television).

She described the viewers who came to Channel 5 to watch *Revealed* as slightly older than their usual audience for the channel and, she said, ABC1. Thus, this series is, as she said, 'not "on brand" in terms of the Channel – you know the audience is much younger than the audience for *Revealed* erm it's got a slightly different tone and sensibility'.

For this demographic she said:

> their default position would be *Timewatch* on BBC2 it would be UK TV History and it would be the non-popular culture history shows on BBC Four. They're not going to be big Channel 4 watchers unless there's a big history show on, they're not going to be huge BBC One viewers unless there's you know a David Attenborough show on, so our main competitors are BBC Two, BBC Four, very, very occasionally C4 and the History Channel.

According to Beckerman the *Revealed* series was made up of conventional pieces of documentary story-telling which tended to attract the 'Heartland' viewer (she used this term) whereas, although it had been successful and 'gets very good ratings' she would be looking for something a bit different for new commissions in the series as, she said:

> I think it would feel more comfortable in terms of tone and sensibility if it were a little bit more like the family of programmes on the channel that night or that week.

Beckerman said she would be looking to commission more stories that are post-Second World War that 'just feel a little bit more kind of contemporary'. If she commissioned stories set before that period she wanted them to have a sense of 'why are we telling this story now, what does it have to say to us about the way we live now, or what kind of resonance does it have for people watching it?'.

In addition to *Revealed*, Beckerman's strategy was to try to attract some of their 'on brand' viewers to history programming. Hence her commissioning of *Dangerous Adventures for Boys* (discussed in our chapter on reenactment) to which she had given the label 'adventure history'. She was looking for

> ways we can bring some of the kind of programme making and editorial values of shows that appeal more to young men like *Unbreakable* that we've got on at

> the moment or *Last man Standing* on BBC Three or Bear Grylls or Ray Mears, not just in terms of survival but in terms of getting a real visceral experience of the world to history programmes so whether it might be a (you know) presenter-led show where they kind of trace difficult and famous journeys from the past or a slightly more (I hate to use the word) adrenalized version of *Dangerous Adventures*. … What I am looking at is formats that can allow the audience through the presenter to kind of get an experience of history rather than a show and tell[.]

In the BBC's 'jargon' this is an example of a 'contemporary journey' with adrenalin as described by Beckerman as enticement for the ideal Channel 5 audience. While she assured us that she welcomed the 'Heartland' viewers brought by the more conventional style of *Revealed* she was, nevertheless, determined to create history programmes which appealed to their core audience. She wanted to produce programmes for the audience because the overall branding of the channel demanded that it should 'feel like it's modern and tapped into contemporary concerns and mores and culture and entertainment. Us wanting to feel like … yeah, we're a bit more kind of alive in the present day I think.' It seemed pertinent to ask why Channel 5 wanted to carry history programmes at all. After a long pause she replied that:

> [S]tories from the past nonetheless often have interesting and useful and … erm [pause] kind of good ways in which we can reflect on the way we live now or a kind of understanding of something that is going on now, that isn't necessarily new, actually it's kind of got a provenance, or there are parallels in history, or that you can view something that is going on now in a completely different light from something that has gone on in the past. But I think that sense that there is a kind of resonance or some kind of echo with where we are now is why you would do history.

This expressed reason for putting history programmes on Channel 5 is very near the BBC's mission regarding history and what they think their audience wants.

> I think even for Five's [Channel 5's title, 2002–11] core audience there are a lot of subjects that you can, and hopefully will do in history, that will appeal to them, just sort of getting them in the door and watching them because they are interested in those subjects, precisely because they are some of the greatest and most familiar stories around. The trick obviously then is how to keep them, how to say something new in a different way.

Given the target age range of the audience for her channel we asked whether Channel 5 commissioned multi-platform programming. She did foresee a time when the shape of television programmes would be influenced by use across different platforms. However, Channel 5 were extremely limited in expanding in this way. I asked if there

was a website for *Dangerous Adventures*. After confessing that she actually did not know she said:

> I mean there will be a content website which will be about the show and when it's on and what each episode is, when it's on … Five is just starting to come into its own with 360° commissioning.

She recalled her time working at the BBC when 360° commissioning was the 'buzzword on the street'. Beckerman had worked on *The Big Read*, one of the BBC's first 360° projects and spoke of the 'phenomenal' resources which the BBC had to throw at these projects. In Channel 5's case:

> Yes, there's programme support online content but there aren't the resources, the kind of the resources the BBC have. You know if you were doing *Dangerous Adventures* … on the BBC I am sure there would be, you know, access to digital archive and you could watch every film ever made on the Battle of Britain or whatever.

Channel 5 have a clear idea of who their audience is but it is battling to produce history content which both reflects the channel 'brand' and encourages its audience to come to history programming. Beckerman made clear the limits of their business model and especially in relation to moving towards multi-platform and 360° commissioning which, as she said, was commonplace at the BBC and increasingly common on Channel 4. Hannah Beckerman left Channel 5 in 2009. Her commissioning strategy for history, now under Andrew O'Connell (Head of Factual, News and Current Affairs) and John Hay (commissioner for, among other things, *Revealed* and other history programming), remains intact according to their website in early 2012:

> History – A modern take on well known events, legends or iconic figures, either series or one offs. Also looking for interesting ways of getting into contemporary history and skewing younger.

However, *Revealed* remains a significant strand for the channel which also continues to welcome a broad audience:

> Revealed Strand – Attention grabbing mainstream subjects either series or one-offs, featuring iconic, historical figures, and/or stories that haven't been told. We're seeking a large, broad audience here from a wide spectrum of areas from WW2 to Tudors for example.

The 2012 series is announced by John Hay, formerly of the BBC where he contributed to *The Victorians* and *Empire*, as follows:

> History programming is absolutely central to Channel 5, and *Revealed* defines our approach to the genre. This run is full of simple, strong, unspun stories that

> deliver all the pleasure of a thriller or an action film while being packed full of proper scoops and shocking revelations along the way.[4]

The History Channel UK: 'Roy' and 'Ben and Sue'

While the terrestrial channels, as we have seen above, are still in the main aiming at a general audience, specialist satellite channels must have a much clearer and more defined notion of who their audiences are. In order to produce some comparative data we spoke to Richard Melman, Executive Director of The History Channel UK, now re-branded as History UK. The sister company is joined by the further specialist channels, Biography and Military History, launched in order to reach new audiences. It is important to note that audiences for these channels are, in terrestrial terms, extremely small, making audience knowledge even more critical.

We asked Richard Melman how their audiences were measured:

> We study our BARB figures very carefully. We do a lot of audience research with focus groups and we are pretty conversant with what they like. At 8.30 every morning I get the ratings and you do get to know what they like and what they don't like. Of course we make terrible mistakes – not often and most times we get it right.

Melman explained how precarious the audience figures are for satellite channels like his because of the way in which the statistics are gathered. He checks the BARB figures daily but is conscious of the fact that the small number represented in the method of data gathering means that 'if two of them go on holiday they can take 30 per cent of my audience with them'.[5] History UK therefore calculate their audience across three planes of transmission which takes account of repeat showings on the channel and produces a more accurate reflection of actual viewer numbers.

When we interviewed Richard Melman the Military Channel was about to be launched and he spoke of the reasons behind this new channel. As we discovered, the channel need to understand who their key audience is and their head of marketing had recently come up with some audience categories, described as follows:

> our classic history channel viewer today we call Roy who is 55 years old, we pretty much know what Roy likes, he likes military history. Yes, we've heard all the jokes – they don't call us the Hitler channel for nothing … you know – we've heard all that and in fact now we're making a push to an audience we call Ben and Sue. And Ben and Sue are between 23 and 35, just had their first kids, they want TV that is entertaining but they don't think they've wasted their evening by watching it.

The launch of the Military Channel would allow them to use their 'back catalogue' of military programming for which they expected to get a strong audience of loyal and migrating 'Roys'. Meanwhile Ben and Sue will watch the main channel and the then new

commissions such as *My Favourite Place*, in which celebrities go to and talk about a favourite location, e.g. Bill Bailey on Stonehenge. As well as providing good viewing Melman thought that it would encourage Ben and Sue to take family trips to see the sites.

We pointed out that a number of broadcasters and commissioners seemed to be looking for younger audiences and asked how The History Channel stood in relation to that and in spite of their aim to attract 23–35 year old Ben and Sue. Melman referred to 16–24 year olds and said:

> I call them 'the unicorns' because everyone talks about them but no-one's actually seen them watching television … I've never quite understood that … you know, I'm reasonably confident because I am of a particular age that once you get past 35 you don't age mentally any more – you might think everyone settles down around 35 so if we aim our programmes at 35 year olds we get everything past that age[.]

He confirmed that they have no intention of trying to get younger audiences to their channels:

> I think history is very much an acquired taste, it's like classical music, it's like wine, you know you suddenly get to an age where you'd like to know more. And people … the Americans keep saying to me – 'they're all getting too old, they're going to die off'. I say 'no' – for every person who falls off the conveyor belt another one steps on at the other end – people grow into it. I would not chase after an eighteen year old for the History Channel.

Thus, from our discussions with broadcasters and commissioners we can identify some key figures on the audience landscape. These are: Traditionalists, Contemporaries, Everyone, Roy, Ben and Sue, and Unicorns. Age, gender and, by implication, class were all important factors in audience perception. What was missing completely from the different interview discussions was race and ethnicity, other than, ironically, Jade Goody's implied whiteness. This, of course, is an extremely important and telling absence and one which we will explore further in our concluding chapter.

What we see from the above overall is that the largest broadcaster and the smallest satellite channel are those for whom 'knowledge' of the audience is the most critical in channel identity and, in History UK's case, literally, maintaining quite miniscule viewing figures for advertisers.

Channel 4 was in a unique position in its relative freedom to have a broader reach and scope for their audience, while being able to maintain both an innovative and public service ethos for their programming. Ralph Lee spoke of the terrestrial's fears of loss of history audiences with the advent of more specialist history channels. According to Lee their fears were unfounded and, speaking of Channel 4:

> we are still able to do really well with history in terrestrial terms and not fear the encroachment of satellite channels. Most of the fall-off to digital is being

> picked up by the terrestrial portfolios so although every year the share of the pie for satellite and the share for terrestrials get smaller, most of the bit that is growing in digital, they are our channels.

One of his explanations for this state of affairs was the lack of ability for the satellite channels, such as History UK, to commission new programming and when they did this they had to play safely into their audiences' hands. In his view this meant that programming produced for these and other satellite channels were no particular threat to the terrestrial channels. We will look in more detail later at one of the series commissioned by History Channel UK aiming at Ben and Sue but we now turn to how independent producers work with the perceived audiences for the different channels.

The independents: second guessing

Commissioning editors are obviously important 'gatekeepers' in programming ideas and commissions. A number of media professionals and historians we spoke to expressed this view. As we have seen in our consideration of the business of television, the 'corporate' responsibilities of commissioners have expanded especially in relation to 'brand identity' and this is especially true for commissioners responsible for multi-channel programming. Commissioning the right kind of product will bring the right audience to their channel as well as supporting the different channel identities. In this 'risk averse' environment (Gray 2010) the skill of the commissioning editor is to find 'tried and tested' programmes but also to come up with new ideas, topics and forms of history programming which will build on audience and channel identity. All the independents we spoke to emphasized the importance of being 'plugged in' to what the commissioners might want and, more significantly for research and pre-pitch, what the next big idea might be. Ann Gray has written elsewhere about how the independents are influenced by the 'ideas' of commissioners (Gray 2010) and this can be summarized here by quoting one of the independent producers we interviewed:

> You keep your ears open to the commissioners and what their passions are and where their broadcaster's priorities lie – you are always aware of that because actually there's no point in developing something utterly obscure if they are dead set against it, so you've always got to do that, and actually that can change from week to week … [laughs].

Ralph Lee at Channel 4 confirmed this when we asked him where his ideas came from. 'It's quite personal actually. That is one of the real privileges and pleasures of the job. We get to make quite personal decisions.' And Richard Melman at History UK echoed this feeling of satisfaction which came from being free, within the quite considerable constraints of hitting the right audience: 'Yeah, the delight of being able to sit here and say "yes, alright, I like that, we'll do it" is unbounded. I have to report to no-one unless I spend a lot of money – but within my budgets I can say "yes, we'll do that", which is a rare privilege'. He did, though, go on to say that:

> One of the reasons I keep my job is that on average 15 out of the top 20 programmes a month are programmes which we have commissioned because that's what we are there to do. We know what our audience likes and the best way of getting it to them.

As Richard Bradley indicates, the independents are continually keeping their ears to the ground for commissioner preferences that are by their nature difficult to predict. According to Taylor Downing, Flashback, in common with most independents of the same size, have a small development team who monitor publishers' lists, movies, documentaries, marketing campaigns, etc., looking for 'links and tie-ins' which offer opportunities for programme ideas and development. Downing said:

> But frankly, we can come up with dozens of ideas for history programmes, but if a commissioning editor tells us 'I'm very interested in programmes that cover X, Y, Z' then that's a steer we will focus on, because we can come up with many ideas. But if that's not what they are looking for … It is very rarely that we sit in this room and say 'have you got a good history story? Oh, that's a good one, let's pitch that'.

Both Bradley and Downing spoke of the then current desire to attract younger audiences, Richard Melman's 'unicorns', especially, but not exclusively, to Channel 4. Bradley said:

> So, part of you has got to be aware of what the broadcaster's demands are and if the broadcaster is looking to get a young demographic there is no point in taking them a series of esoteric films about the Normans, or whatever.

At the time of our interview Downing was working on a film for Channel 4 about an incident which occurred during the Cold War. The story of its development and commissioning provides a telling case study for our purposes. Downing had ten years earlier worked on the *Cold War* series for Jeremy Isaacs Productions (JIP)[6] commissioned by Ted Turner's Turner Original Productions for CNN (*Cold War* 1996) and during their extended and well-resourced research period had unearthed hitherto unknown archives and a number of 'stories', some of which, for one reason and another, were not included in the final series. He told us:

> I had heard that the British commissioning editor at Channel 4 was interested in looking at Cold War stories again and trying to find a different way of looking at the Cold War. And so with that specific piece of information I explored three or four of the Cold War stories which we had picked up on and which I had wanted to follow and see how they played out, so I said this one was the one to pitch.

According to Downing, Ralph Lee was interested in the Cold War because he felt it would attract younger viewers:

> The interest in the 70s and 80s, was in general to get younger viewers. Ralph had an interest in new ways of looking at the Cold War largely for viewers who had only the haziest idea of what it was all about.

The film was eventually to be a ninety-minute exposition of a period in 1983 that was one of heightened tension in the Cold War. This included Reagan's inflammatory speech referring to the USSR as the 'evil empire', his 'Star Wars' initiative and the shooting down of a civilian Korean airliner by the Soviets. The film hinges around the 1983 'Soviet war scare' when the Soviet Union was convinced they were about to come under attack by the west and, fuelled by a misreading of the NATO military exercise 'Able Archer', went onto maximum alert. Downing, through employing a Russian researcher, had uncovered a human-interest element to the story. This was in the figure of an employee at the Soviet early warning station who when in October 1983 the early warning radar misinterpreted some freak weather conditions over Montana for the firing of inter-continental ballistic missiles, refused to believe this for thirty critical minutes and did not alert the system to retaliate. Although, as Downing is quick to point out, this was not actually part of the main story, nevertheless it happened in the same period of time and, importantly for television, was representative of the tense moment. He described it as 'People staring at radar screens, listening for signals from intelligence'. Thus, the 'little man' element plus the interviews with senior players involved: Robert Gates, then Deputy Head of the CIA and at the time of the filming Secretary of Defense in the Bush administration, Vladimir Kryuchkov, head of the KGB, and Oleg Gordievsky, a senior KGB officer but a double agent who was also working for British Intelligence, created a compelling account.

Flashback, along with Channel 4, took the outline to Discovery hoping to strike a co-funding deal. At that time Discovery, under Jane Root's leadership, were also interested in attracting a younger audience to their channels. Indeed, a senior executive from Discovery had announced at a meeting of the World Congress of History Producers held in London in November 2006 that, having conducted research with younger people they were looking for 'immersive' treatment of stories with energy about post-1960 'history'. They were particularly keen on stories that covered 'iconic' moments, naming 'Wako', 'Death of Diana' and 'John Lennon' as examples. Although Downing's proposal did not fit this template they were intrigued by the story and he is convinced that it was the combination of the revelation of hitherto unknown events, big name interviews and the experience of the 'ordinary man' which persuaded Channel 4 and Discovery to go ahead with the commission. The film titled *1983: The Brink of Apocalypse* for the UK and *Soviet War Scare: 1983* for the US market was transmitted on 5 January 2008 and awarded the Grierson Best Historical Documentary for 2008.

During the editing stage of its production Downing was generous enough to screen an extract for us and discuss some of the decisions he was making, including

dealing with executive editorial inputs. He explained that an early decision was made that the programme would take the form of a documentary and would include interviews, archive footage, some reconstruction and music from the period. The aim was to produce a hybrid, but familiar, style that would appeal to the younger audience who would remember or know about the era, its music and its news stories. During the editing process it had been decided that, as the interviews with key players were so powerfully frank, that the dramatized scenes, with no dialogue, could play a lesser role in the overall programme. In order to satisfy both funders, Flashback produced two slightly different films. Discovery wanted ninety-four minutes which would fill a scheduled two hour slot and Channel 4 required seventy-five minutes for ninety minutes programme time. Unlike Channel 4, the producers at Discovery assumed that their audience would have little knowledge of the Cold War and would therefore need a clear introduction to the period and the key players involved. This was achieved by recounting the story of 10-year-old Samantha Smith from Manchester, Maine, who in 1983 wrote a letter to Yuri Andropov expressing her fears of a nuclear war. Andropov replied and invited her to Moscow. Although Andropov was too ill to meet her, nevertheless she said of her visit: 'He promised me he wouldn't start a war, Russia wouldn't start a war. And America says we aren't going to start a war either. Then how come we keep making more bombs for a war if there is no-one to start it?' The target audience would be the same age as Samantha, who had unfortunately died in her teens, and would therefore, the producers hoped, invite identification as well as providing the necessary background. The Discovery version concluded with an account of the CIA cover-up of the incident which, following its transmission, had a big impact on American audiences. Downing was surprised that Channel 4, who 'love a story of a cover-up', were not interested in this part of the film.

This example of the commissioning of a history programme reveals the drivers behind the idea and the different assumptions about audiences from the co-producers, especially when wishing to capture younger viewers. In the UK it was broadcast on Channel 4 at 7.30 on a Saturday night in January – that is, perhaps, a surprising slot in the schedule given its intended audience.

It is, however, not surprising that most of the independents agreed that the 'ideas' from commissioning editors were, as one put it, 'totally market driven'. As Downing said, 'so it's driven by a dialogue, at Channel 4 specifically, between the marketing department and the commissioning editors. In Discovery it's the same thing – we hit upon the same thing when I was pitching it out there again they were looking for programmes that dealt with subjects from the eighties and the nineties in order to keep the young demographic watching.'

As we noted in our chapter dedicated to commemorative programming, the period of the project has covered a number of commemorations, in particular covering the First and Second World Wars. A number of independents and commissioners acknowledged that this had resulted in 'military history fatigue' but there was acknowledgement that this was still a popular subject that could be relied upon to draw an audience, and not only 'Roys'. When we raised this with Channel 4's Ralph Lee he agreed that their policy is to produce fewer of these programmes but told us

of a series then in production, *Atlantic Convoys* (2009) which he knew would draw audiences. He was frank about the role this kind of history programme plays in their overall strategy:

> We'll do [this kind of programme] because audiences will watch it and we'll save enough money doing it to spend it on something we're really excited about. So if I want to do more Rupert Everett, the series he's doing at the moment is about Byron, it is not cheap and I need to find a way of affording that. The indies are aware of this.

However, if the topic is approached in a sufficiently different way, or can be made to appeal to a target audience, then it will not be dismissed out of hand by the commissioners. An example of this is Downing's use of archive aerial photographs which were used to track twenty-four hours of D-Day for the Channel 4 and History Channel co-production *D-Day: The Lost Evidence* (2004) discussed in some depth in our consideration of commemorative programming. According to Downing:

> The History Channel were looking for programmes which used graphics at that particular time … they had plenty of colour enactments so they wanted graphics that would appeal to a younger audience.

A technique was developed which became a series of programmes called *The Lost Evidence* which appealed to a younger audience and did very well. Flashback was commissioned to do another batch of programmes which were completed in 2006. Towards the end of the run the audiences began to dwindle. As Downing said, paralleling Lee's view of UK audiences, there is 'a sense in America of World War II fatigue', so, as he said 'then on to the next thing'.

When we interviewed Richard Bradley, Lion's *Victorian Farm* had just been transmitted to great popular and critical success. He used this as an example of commissioners wanting to ride on a demonstrated success. The relatively low budget programme had garnered 4 million viewers and Channel 4 had already approached him with regard to developing something similar for them. It is likely that the success of this style of programme will also motivate other independents to come up with their own versions. Taylor Downing spoke of this trend in relation to Channel 4's seventeenth-century season aired in 2001 with the highly acclaimed series of docudramas *Plague, Fire, War, Treason: A Century of Troubles* made by Juniper Films.

> Yes, yes … and immediately after that the word went out from broadcasters saying 'can you find us moments in history where there is some unusual record or some source of one sort or another that could tell a story'. And we were all busy looking into periods in history to find sources that could be dramatised in one way or another – we looked at all sorts of things – none of which were commissioned at all.

Richard Bradley pointed out the disadvantages in the dominant system of commissioning from the perspective of innovative programming:

> However, if you only do that, you'll never come up with a new thing and you'll never be able to surprise them, and so what we do a lot is pursue things that just interest us in the hope that we'll drop something in and they'll go, 'oh never thought of that. …'

Broadening the audience

The terrestrial channels, especially the BBC and Channel 5, have a declared interest in bringing new audiences to history programming and this is where some of the ideas can come from the independents. Before their success with *Victorian Farm* Lion had two previous programme series which were aimed at a general audience who were not especially interested in history. The first was a series called *Days that Shook the World* which aired in September 2003, in which a basic idea from the US TV drama series *24*, that 24 hours could be looked at from a number of perspectives, was applied to days from 'history', with three or four perspectives offered. Key 'days' were re-told in this way. Examples Bradley gave were the assassination of John F. Kennedy and, one of the most successful, the bombing of Hiroshima. This format was copied elsewhere. According to Bradley its success lay in that

> it did a very good job, I think, of a sort of 'entry level' history for a broad audience, taking the subjects back again and re-inventing them not in a sort of particularly expensive way but with real sort of factual accuracy and clarity, so at the end of that you would have – there was a lot of 'take-out' in that, it wasn't interpretive or analytical history, it was a description of events but one where the detail is really fascinating.

This idea and series had a declaredly pedagogic aim but employed a range of televisual devices to attract and keep the audience. Lion followed this success with another series for Channel 4 called *The Tower of London* (Channel 4 2002). Although this, according to Bradley, had 'started off looking rather unpromising' they had eventually been commissioned to produce eight hours of programming. Their approach was to look at the Tower of London through time. The building itself was, through the series, given 'organic life' as a character that had 'seen so much'. The more familiar stories associated with the Tower, such as executions, were interspersed with less well-known aspects of its history as a site, for example, of the shooting of deserters. Bradley talked about the audience for this series specifically in terms of gender. The programme had surprised him thus:

> It not only rated very well but then reminded me of something that I was learning bit by bit was that history that appeals only to er … men self limits its audience because there's this fact about television which is that women walk

> out [but] … men will sit and watch programming very often that women want to watch but women, if it doesn't interest them they will leave. So that was one where there was material that really appealed to men and women and I think all the successful series, you know whether it is *Who Do You Think You Are?* or er David Starkey's first series (*Elizabeth*, Channel 4 2000) worked because they appealed to men and women.

Bradley identifies two groups within the audience, those with very little knowledge of history and women, and the latter's viewing habits. He seems to suggest that, as we have seen above, men are assumed to be the core viewers of history programmes and women a surprising bonus if the subject and treatment is appealing.

Channel 5 adopted a populist approach as we have seen earlier with the *Dangerous Adventures for Boys* series. Hannah Beckerman noted that:

> I think it is the kind of thing that … if you are a history viewer you will by default inevitably come to it, but if you are not someone who generally comes to history you will watch it and the history will almost surreptitiously jump up on you – but you're actually watching it to see what Martin Kemp's relationship with his son is like or because you want to see if they can fly the planes in the end, so there's a whole incident of jeopardy and storytelling which is the purpose for you coming to the story in the first place. But hopefully they will then pick up stuff about the Battle of Britain and fighter pilots and about planes in the meantime.

We asked what she would be looking to commission in 2009/10:

> Experiential history that genuinely gives you the kind of insight that no amount of archive and interview and brilliant story-telling can do. And I think for us the version of that needs to feel that it is adventurous and out in the world, and possibly a little bit dangerous, and possibly a bit of 'survival' or extreme locations. Again hopefully that would be a way of bringing some experience of great historical figures, or characters, or moments, or journeys to life for a younger audience.

Beckerman also spoke of the 'televisual memory' format *'I Love the … '* which she saw as 'another breakthrough for history programming'. This was because it apparently attracted a very young audience who, she argued, were watching what was essentially a history show. She argued that this format 'felt much more accessible to a wider audience' and would like something like that to come along for Channel 5 as 'I have no shame with that kind of populism whatsoever'.

As we have seen, History UK had re-branded their channels and intended audience and one of the commissions about which Richard Melman was very pleased was just about to air when we interviewed him. *50 Things You Need to Know About British History* was a commission not so much aimed at audience success but because Flashback and History UK had joined forces with *The Daily Telegraph* for its production, the

outcome of which, according to Melman, was that they would get 'an editorial in every paper for every week that it goes out so in fact it's worth a million pounds to me in publicity and brand promotion and relevance and all the rest of it'. *50 Things You Need to Know About British History* (History UK 2008) included events dating from c.2200 BC (the building of Stonehenge) to the 1990s (the Good Friday Agreement) via a range of events from the founding of the Bank of England to the abolition of the slave trade and the Miners' Strike, and was presented by Anna Keay, of English Heritage, Dan Snow and Lawrence Westgaph. Melman was pleased with the series in terms of its audience appeal:

> I said to Taylor one thing I'm absolutely delighted with – I can stick a 14 year old in front of it and an 84 year old and they'd both enjoy it. And that's what we set out to do with that programme.

Notions of the intended audience were evidenced at the production level as we discovered from Anna Keay, Curatorial Director of English Heritage who has worked on a number of programmes for the History Channel in recent years. Part of their agreement was that clips from the programmes produced for the channel could be used as podcasts on the English Heritage website. Keay started working on *50 Things* after the filming had already begun and the format had been agreed, as Dan Snow had suggested to the History Channel that she be involved. All the presenters as well as the executive producer and director had a hand in the list of *50 Things* … . They had a day when they got together and 'thrashed through' the list. Although the list was a 'false construct', the balance needed to be right, hence not all of the items on the list were the most obvious aspects of the British past. Talking about her work presenting history programmes Keay referred to *50 Things* … and said:

> For *50 Things*, Taylor Downing conceived of 'Ben and Sue' and their kids and had a stock model of Ben as a teacher and Sue as interested in local history: a thumbnail portrait. They were not qualified in history to any level but were interested in public history e.g. watching reenactment.

The series, although successful, has not been re-commissioned.

Re-versioning for different audiences:

As already discussed in relation to *1983: The Brink of Apocalypse*, re-versioning is a common strategy in co-produced history programming. Most 'high-end' co-productions will require adjustments for their different 'host' audiences. This can be a mere matter of length; that is, usually longer for the BBC UK and shorter for US channels which carry advertising. But it can also include questions of language, changes in the narrator's voice (or nationality) and in some cases the onscreen 'experts'. Richard Bradley talked about the relatively simple format for *Days that Shook the World*, which was designed so that they would not have to re-version it for every national audience.

Thus, in the series, a range of languages were used depending on the origin of the story – i.e. Russian, Hindi, German, etc. leaving the purchasing broadcasters to put on their own voice-over.

In contrast, Lion's *Cleopatra: Portrait of a Killer* (BBC One 2009), co-funded by the BBC, Discovery and NHK Japan, presented more problems. The archaeologists who had found new evidence about Cleopatra were German but the BBC insisted that everything should be in English. They also named Neil Oliver as presenter who was already familiar to BBC One audiences and who, in their view, had a reputation for unravelling archaeological mysteries and could tell the story well. As Richard Bradley said 'of course the Americans didn't want that', nor did they want the German team of archaeologists speaking with German accents. After some negotiation, two American academics who were Cleopatra experts were filmed in order that their contributions could replace those of Neil Oliver. NHK, the Japanese funder, also demanded additional filming to acknowledge the Japanese contribution to research into Cleopatra, for inclusion in their version of the programme. Bradley thought that NHK would most likely provide their own additional interviews with Japanese academics and edit them in to the finished film for their audiences. As in this case, the demands of the funders present complex logistical problems for the directors filming on location and for the editors in post-production. As we spoke, Lion had two editing suites running for *Cleopatra*, one for Discovery and one for the BBC. At the time of the interview Bradley was optimistic about this larger-scale programming and, indeed, Martin Davidson at the BBC spoke of their desire to find suitable stories for high-end co-productions. But these large-scale projects aimed at international funders and, eventually, viewers, are limited to 'those subjects which … you know the world shares an interest in'. As we saw in our chapter on landmark programming, Davidson had some concerns about how these formats can quickly slip into parody.

A further example of differing audience tastes demonstrates not so much the funders' and producers' views of what constitutes acceptable or relevant history programming for their intended audiences but the audiences themselves. *History Detectives* produced by Lion for PBS (2002–) has proved to be very successful with the American audience. The UK seven-episode series had not been as popular as it should have been, according to Bradley, and was not re-commissioned (*History Detectives* BBC Two 2007). The premise of the programme is to find the provenance of an object. An example is 'people say this tankard was used by Shakespeare as he was writing *Much Ado About Nothing* – is it true?' The programme then explores theatre in London at the time and other aspects of Elizabethan life. At the time of the interview it was into its seventh season and, according to Bradley, the material culture focus and detective format afforded the opportunity to engage with the ethnically diverse history of the US and to take the viewer into those multiple histories. One hundred such episodes have been aired, to date.

Children – up to fourteen and 'dads and lads'

One of the independents we spoke to had a long-standing commitment to developing history programmes for young audiences. Throughout the period of our study public

discussions about the dwindling of history teaching within the National Curriculum, along with variously informed critiques of the kind of history teaching conducted in schools, emerged regularly. There is some evidence that children watch and enjoy history programmes aimed at the more general audience. For example, Martin Davidson told us that the audience profile for *A History of Britain* had included a significant percentage of children. This perhaps can be understood in the context of 'family viewing' with those families with educational aspirations for their children sitting down to watch together. This apart, Richard Bradley felt there were opportunities for developing programming aimed more directly at children. Having finally, after four years, obtained the rights to the *Horrible History* books he had just completed the first series for CBBC. In giving his reasons for spending so much time on this project he drew on his own experience:

> Observing through my own children who are fascinated by history because I think you are … my reading of it is … any of us who work in this genre feel the same … that there's a period up to about fourteen, maybe, when you are actually really interested in history then you cease to be interested in history while you are interested in your own … things … until possibly your late twenties early thirties and then you start to get interested, maybe because you've got ageing parents or, you know you're starting to think about your own mortality or whatever and you become interested and engaged again and I thought that children's history was underserved pretty much on television.

The format for *Horrible Histories* is, in Bradley's words, 'sort of sketch based, Monty Python'. He told us they had brought together a group of well-known comic writers and performers whose 'children couldn't watch the material they wrote but who had dozens of the *Horrible Histories* books'. Their involvement in the series had, apparently, given them 'lots of cred' in the school playground. The series was re-commissioned.

Since its initial broadcast the *Horrible Histories* series is considered to have been very successful and has been a long-running project for Lion. It is, however, within the context of this chapter, interesting that Bradley refers to his own children and their interests as the initiators of this idea. Furthermore, part of the attraction for the performers – surely a persuasive element in the pitch – was that their kids would be able to watch at least this example of their television output.

Before the *Horrible Histories* commission Lion TV had produced an innovative series called *Time Commanders*, taking games technology as their starting point. Bradley told us about the development:

> We knew that history was very much part of what underpinned a lot of the gaming industry and yet no-one had managed to bring that across and so we went to Saga and we took their very successful game 'Total War' which is really a strategy game and brought that into a studio on quite a limited budget.

Time Commanders ran for two series between September 2003 and March 2005. The original presenter and scene setter was Eddy Mair, a radio broadcaster, and latterly Richard Hammond of *Top Gear* fame. The game-based format was interspersed by 'experts' and regular appearances from the historical adviser to the series, Dr Adrian Goldsworthy. The series was accompanied by a book authored by Peter Harrison, published by Virgin books in 2004. According to Bradley, they 'created what was you know, by those who saw it, and it was almost exclusively men and boys, dads and lads programming, quite a successful show'.

We had been told about Richard Bradley's 'passion project' by Hannah Beckerman at Channel 5 and she also talked about programming strategy to draw in children. Hannah Beckerman's strategy in *Dangerous Adventures for Boys*, which we have already mentioned, was also, and more explicitly, aimed at the dads and lads audience:

> The show is celebrity dads and their sons go on a journey to sort of recreate some moment in history to see if they have got what it takes to be as good as ordinary heroes from the past. So Martin Kemp and his son go off and they learn to fly Spitfires and to do dog fighting and see if they could have been fighter pilots in the Battle of Britain.

But it also, according to Beckerman, had a special appeal to women. As she said:

> It's got something for the girls because … all of the films have got a really lovely father son relationship and … you really see it progress over the course of the film.

Added to these elements were the 'energy and pacing' combined with the 'modern day story' and their 'contemporary journey' making it, for Beckerman, 'slightly more youthful and slightly more Five'.

Personal encounters

It has indeed become a truism that media professionals, commissioners, broadcasters and producers rely to a greater or lesser extent on family and friends, taxi drivers or other chance encounters for their knowledge of the audience. We certainly do not wish to perpetuate this stereotype, but after all, what author or producer does not delight in hearing responses to their work from their readers or viewers? One producer talked about his pleasure in being told by a member of his audience about what he had learnt from the programme he had watched the night before:

> He'd watched avidly, telling me in a sense that he now knew that and he was now telling me. And – I love that – you have passed it on, you've communicated those stories and that they are now – they feel they've not only learnt something but they want to share that. Really exciting.

However, like all professionals, media workers are immersed in their world of work and television is certainly seen by them to be of extreme importance in peoples' lives. A number of broadcasters and producers told us of the influence of television viewing as young people on their choice of career. These included the A. J. P. Taylor lectures, Michael Wood's early history/archaeology programmes and such 'landmark' documentaries as *The Ascent of Man* (BBC and Time Life 1973).

This relatively small 'symbolic community' (Dover 2004, Gray 2010) of history producers certainly share knowledge about the audience with each other and we heard evidence of this in our interviews. Examples of this were responses to *Victorian Farm*. Richard Bradley, the producer, told me about its promotion and scheduling. There were, he said,

> no trails, unheralded, small budget but the scheduler at the BBC saw it and said actually this is … a, very good but he thought it would really strike a chord at the moment so he put it out at 9 o'clock on Thursdays and then again on Saturday nights[.]

The clever scheduling produced 4 million viewers, a large audience for BBC Two history programming. Its success had sparked conversations between the commissioner at the BBC, the independent producer responsible for the series and the controller of BBC Two. First of all, Martin Davidson suggested that it had bucked the trend of the reality television genre in that it refused 'humiliation and fake jeopardy'. It contrasted also, for Davidson, with earlier reality history genres in that it did not 'just tell you living in the past was shit'. He admired the aesthetic of the programme which 'looked like one of those Victorian celebrations of work pictures come to life' and the representation of 'non-alienated labour' which, for him, was at the programme's core. Richard Bradley of Lion told me of his conversation with Janice Hadlow earlier that day. Her thoughts were about how the programme had tapped into the structure of feeling of the time, and that how, in financially anxious times, escapism takes on a different meaning. Bradley reported her thinking, noting that

> one of the successes of it is that it is a way of escaping the present day to a time when things were simpler, they were tough but they were more communal, people pulled together and you can watch and a man will make a basket for a day, and that's all he will do in a day, but the basket will last for 50 years.

This is but one example of the kinds of reflective discussions that occur within the 'symbolic community' as to what makes a particular programme successful. Although all speakers are gifted, creative and highly successful professionals their speculations are an interesting mix of experience and professional expertise which informs what is often thought of as an 'instinctive' feel for what works in terms of programming and audience. As in the examples above, however, this reliance on instinct can lead to a very exclusive perception of the audience, who they are and what their viewing

preferences might be. These ideas also limit the range of possible contributions from independents. We have teased out, along with demographic distinctions, references to class and gender but none which directly address ethnicity. The mis-reading of Jade Goody's identity in relation to the intended audience for *Empire's Children* indeed begs the question posed by the title of this chapter. We now turn to consider other sources of audience construction.

Defying expectations: other constructions of audiences

To begin this section we will look at how our historian interviewees spoke about the audiences for history programmes on television. Their responses to our questions about their roles as 'public historians' through, in part, their involvement in television and other media often included speculation about both how media professionals think of their audiences and the audiences themselves. Much of what they said was drawn from their own experiences of participating in the making of history programmes. A number of our interviewees were curious about how the media producers visualized their audiences. As we have sought to demonstrate above, their knowledge is gleaned from formal audience research which is strongly overlaid with informal knowledge and professional 'instinct'. Other historians had their own views about preconceptions of audience and several felt very strongly that media professionals underestimate their audiences in general but in particular those for history programmes. One such told us that when, as a contributor to a programme based on his own specialism, he argued with the producer about the need for accuracy he was told: 'Oh well, we're not making a programme for you anoraks'. He replied:

> Well, actually the anoraks will make up more than half your audience, because they're interested in it. You know, you might not need to preach to the converted, but you at least need to bear in mind that there is a lot of people who knew about it and are gonna watch it.

Another of our interviewees expressed the same views about existing audience knowledge:

> So the kind if level of specialised knowledge, which is out there in the audience, is often greater than that of the programme makers themselves, and you can see this again on the web with blogs. I mean, some of these blogs are run by genuine specialists. We might think they're nerds, or anoraks …

Most of the historians we interviewed were aware of the necessarily different modes of address required for television appearance and performance. Some likened it to the difference between levels of undergraduate lectures and seminars, others to their experience of giving public lectures. None thought it necessary to 'dumb down' history for the general audience. Ian Kershaw expressed it thus:

> It's obvious that you can't present a 50-minute television programme in the same depth, or the same language, that you use in a 500-page academic monograph, so there's no point in trying. So I think the public historian's job therefore is to convey the complexity, but in ways which are intelligible: to simplify complexity without losing the basis of that complexity[.]

The tension between simplicity and complexity also has echoes in media discourses in the need for the balance between entertainment and information. The logics of television suggest that detailed and 'pedantic' programme content will lose audiences but this, of course, can often be a cover for what amounts to ignoring questions of accuracy and validity. One of our interviewees spoke about the responsibility of broadcasters and programme makers to get it right:

> Yes, I think it does have a duty to be accurate without being pedantic. It has a duty to stimulate informed debate rather than handing things down to stone tablets, and I do think we have a duty not to trivialise and not to underestimate its audiences.

The dangers of trivialization, which are perilously present in the attempt by producers to hang on to the audience, are central to the problem of successful history programming. But the notion of duty to integrity is one that hardly entered the discourse of the media professionals. We return to this in our concluding chapter.

The two more systematic studies we referred to at the beginning of this chapter also produced some data that potentially challenges some of the orthodoxies and received wisdom about audiences for history programmes.

Tony Bennett conducted a survey-based study of television genre and channel selection using, given that his primary interest was in exploring cultural choice and taste in relation to television, a Bourdieuan framework. He examined both the internal economy of choice and preference in television viewing, which he then sought to relate to other cultural activities external to television viewing. His analysis of the survey data reveals similar results to those achieved through more qualitative research (Morley 1986; Gray 1992) carried out some decades ago, which are that gender and class are significant variables in declared preferences for particular television genres. For example, preferences for soap opera were weighted heavily in women's declared preference, appearing hardly at all in male stated preferences. This, again predictably, compared with a clustering of male preferences for sport and news and current affairs. Incidentally, 'reality television' was the least preferred genre across all variables, i.e. gender, class, age and ethnicity. This relatively new genre has replaced the soap opera as the perceived trashiest of the trash in television outputs. This is, of course, not borne out by the actual audience viewing figures themselves but does beg many questions, some of which scholars are seeking to answer, about why people watch specific genres while claiming to loathe them. For our purposes here Bennett's category 'nature/history documentaries' is of most interest and it is the case that, according to Bennett's logical regression analysis, women are only half as likely to

express a preference for this genre category. Age and class certainly influence genre preference selections, with older males clustering in the serious programme genres, but these preferences increase significantly with age and education. Importantly, Bennett includes ethnicity in his variables, and looks at how this relates to education levels, which is significant in terms of expressed preferences. Bennett is keen to point out the limitations of his method, that of a prescribed schedule of questions, in ascertaining cultural taste and admits that many of the responses, such as that regarding 'reality television' mentioned above, are more indicative of how the people involved in the study wished to present themselves than a reliable barometer of cultural taste. Bennett clustered television genres into wider categories of high, medium and low cultural legitimacy with nature/history documentaries settling into 'serious television' with high cultural legitimacy. The status of high cultural legitimacy and its seemingly automatic link to the so-called 'serious' genres which include news and current affairs and documentary has been linked to gender by other scholars who have also pointed out the determining agency of gender and power within households which, they suggest, reflects wider social structures.

Angela Piccini's study was commissioned by the Council for British Archaeology and funded by English Heritage and the University of Bristol. Carried out by the University of Bristol and the Television Research Partnership, its aim was to find out who was watching 'heritage' programming across twenty-five television channels. The study looked at programmes for the twelve-month period 2005–6 and drew on BARB data to address the points covered in the project aims.

The analysis of Piccini's data constructed a figure which she called the 'heavy heritage viewer'. As we said earlier, her investigations into programme preferences included such programmes as *Cash in the Attic, Antiques Road Show* and *Time Team* as well as the more conventional 'heritage' genres, for example, documentaries. She found that 'heavy heritage viewers' were heavy television viewers in general and that, more broadly, the reach of heritage programmes was relatively even across gender and social groups. The lowest viewers of such programmes were in the 16–24 and ethnic minority groups but, according to the analysis of their data, a significant percentage within these groups claimed to have seen a heritage programme in the previous year.

The 'heavy heritage viewers' choosing terrestrial channels skewed towards elderly, C2DE and white while those using non-terrestrial channels skewed towards male: evidence of the 'Roy' factor, perhaps. A very interesting finding from their survey of viewers was that television archaeology programmes attract a more 'gender equal' audience than either television in general, or their category of 'heritage' television overall. Women make up 51 per cent of the audience for archaeology programmes. Their other key finding is that 76 per cent of heritage and 70 per cent of archaeology audiences are over 45, compared with only 58 per cent for overall programming.

Both these quantitative studies suggest that the audiences for history programmes do not readily conform to the stereotypical white, male and middle-class history viewer conjured up by some of the media professionals. One significant variable which is introduced in these studies and which is absent in the formal institutional research we have been able to trace and the 'audience discourse' of media

professionals is that of ethnicity. The class categories which are regularly referred to by the broadcasters, in particular the desire for ABC1s, which they link only to age and gender, are market driven. This results in oversimplified and streamlined versions of audiences which can be readily employed in advertising recruitment and in the programme commissioning process. We will reflect on the consequences of this in our final chapter.

As Piccini and Bennett are quick to point out, their research does not suggest why people are watching such programmes nor, indeed, what in particular they get out of their viewing. These questions, along with those of emotional engagement, empathy and affect as well as the extent to which viewers glean historical knowledge from their uses of history programmes were all considered to be of extreme importance to both our media professional and historian interviewees. This kind of research has been started by, for example, Ruth McElroy and her colleagues at the University of Glamorgan's Communication, Cultural and Media Studies Research Unit (McElroy and Williams 2011), who have worked closely with producers and participants in the 'reality history' series *Coal House* as well as conducting some audience research, and it is also considered in the following chapter. This is clearly the next stage in putting much more flesh on the audiences for history programming.

CONCLUSION: PROBLEMATIZING 'PUBLIC HISTORY' – WHAT IS RARELY THERE?

Our concluding chapter begins by drawing together the key themes and insights from the previous chapters, particularly those relating to the representation of and preconceptions relating to gender, ethnicity and race, and social class in history programming, as well as the relation of developments in the television industry more broadly to the representation of the past in particular. After considering the extent to which history programming might be considered public history in the light of this consideration, we go on to outline specific examples of programming which are rare, if not exceptional: those which relate to groups often absent from histories offered onscreen, and indeed in other forms of public history.

As we considered in our introduction, a range of publications in the fields of history, cultural and media studies, sociology and related disciplines have in recent years been produced in an attempt to understand the representation of the past on television. However, few have directly dealt with the absence, or at best limited presence, of histories which do not fit into a predominantly white and male national story, with its attendant claims to knowledge, authority and legitimacy, leading us to consider such factors through an interdisciplinary approach, drawing on cultural studies and history, and in particular to contemplate the extent to which factual history programming might be considered a form of public history, a point which we will discuss at greater length in this concluding chapter.

As we noted in our analysis of the business of television, the changing context in which history programming is commissioned, produced and scheduled can be seen in part as a response to increased competition and therefore to the related need for channel identities. Linked to channel and broadcaster identities, television personalities are crucial across all programming, and their presence relates to broader scholarship on the development of 'celebrity culture' in recent years. However, they have a particular significance to history programming, with a direct relationship to gendered and racialized issues of authority and legitimacy. Most noticeably, the roles

and representations of women in history and as historians are rather limited, relating in the first instance to wider culture: the hold of particular regimes of representation of the female in visual culture. Then, in televisual terms, such images are perpetuated and rendered 'normal'; they are domesticated (in the home) and often are domesticating (in terms of the forms of history offered by female historian presenters). This exists in addition to preconceptions by those commissioning programming, in particular, regarding the expectations of both male and female audience members of the types of history and historians on television. In addition, as we noted in the chapter on the business of television and as we go on to discuss in this conclusion, similar restrictions and limitations apply regarding ethnicity and race, and to social status when the types of history onscreen are considered.

Our following chapter, on landmark and flagship programming, offered insights into the development of key types of television history and into their significance to the reputation of broadcasters and to audience share, while being developed in complex and fluid production environments. Once more, issues of identity – both of the nation as offered in 'national histories' but also of the channels involved, and the links between the two – are apparent and underscore our argument for the need to consider which histories are incorporated into the national story, which are not, and why. As a rather unusual and in some ways unrepresentative example, the hugely successful BBC series *Who Do You Think You Are?* was considered as a rare example of programming which regularly, albeit briefly, considers a broad selection of histories. The celebrity participants come from a wide range of backgrounds, in terms of culture, ethnicity and social status, and the series largely succeeds in placing such diversity within British and other nations' histories.

We developed this further in the following chapter, on commemorative programming. In many ways the most obvious example of the type of output which offers both historic and contemporary ideas and ideals of national identity, into which broadcasters' identities are also intermeshed, our analysis of recent programming commemorating the world wars offered insights into those commonly represented (men), as opposed to those more rarely represented (women and ethnic minorities), and underlined the role of such programming in perpetuating national historical ideals (of national homogeneity in the past, for example). However, rather surprisingly, programming is still the most common means by which histories of 'minority' groups appear onscreen: when there is a need to acknowledge their significance to a wider national narrative, which also has parallels drawn both implicitly and explicitly to conflict or economic hardship in the present, there is a need for recourse to myths, in Angus Calder's sense, which ostensibly protect but in reality create a universally held national identity. Such aspects of commemoration are considered shortly.

Relating to the theme of national identity in particular, our analysis of reenactment series focused particularly on the significance of ethnicity and race, gender and class, as well as geographic region, to the historicized and contemporary identities offered through such programming. The 'implied other' to more traditional formats, related in particular to Turner's idea of the demotic, such series ostensibly allow ordinary

people to appear on television, yet in reality this is often in a rather circumscribed role (aside from the obvious limitations of historical chronology). That said, such series have posed difficult questions relating to identity in the past *and* present, such as those of race, class and gender considered within the episodes of *Edwardian Country House*. Clearly, not all reenactment series are the same; the different ends to which the 'reality history' is put attest to the developments over time within and among broadcasters, and to wider, international movements in the media, highlighted throughout the book.

Our chapter on preconceptions of the audience of history programming drew on many of these themes. Further, although based primarily on the responses of media professionals, analysis of their comments highlights how there is in reality very little known, but much is assumed, about the audience, and how this sometimes takes the form of gendered, racialized and classed perceptions of viewers. While a great number of the respondents' insights are developed from years of experience and expertise in the media industry, at some points it is apparent that assumptions are made which arguably do little to assist individual channels in their choice of programming. Indeed, as we discussed in our chapter on the business of television, 'surprise hits' such as Mary Beard's *Pompeii* (BBC Two 2010) were surprising, we would suggest, only because of preconceived ideas of what and whom an audience would wish to see onscreen. We will now consider further the limitations on what and whom appears onscreen.

As we noted in the previous chapter, and particularly with reference to the business of television and to landmark programming, the 'logics' of television often lead producers to follow professional instincts regarding what will make good television. Therefore, in this section of our conclusion we would like to consider how and why this can limit what is seen onscreen, despite television's liberating potential, utilizing the comments of historians and viewers as well as media professionals. While the introduction to this book dealt with public history and the role TV plays in circulating knowledges about the past, here we will consider how history on TV can, potentially, pose questions about commonly accepted versions of history, offering a voice to the often voiceless or representing pasts otherwise rarely considered outside the academy, although in many cases these voices are granted only in certain limited circumstances and assumptions are made about the likely audiences of such programming. Indeed, we will also consider history programming upon which censorship has been attempted, for the past continues to be a highly charged area of contention and debate when it leads to the questioning of taken-for-granted national – and other – identities. Such programmes often relate to the colonial histories of European nations, meaning that televisual interpretations are frequently the first representations of certain pasts experienced by a large proportion of the audience. Similarly, elements of very recent history, of women's and of social history have been considered, particularly by 'hybrid' series such as *Who Do You Think You Are?*, when few other areas of public history – including more 'mainstream' televisual accounts – have made efforts to include them. These 'risky' stories, which may lead the audience to question elements of their existing historical knowledge and even of their identity, are often

suppressed in ways other than censorship – frequently because media professionals, as we have already considered, conceive of the audience in certain ways and, in the present climate of competition among multiple channels, outlined in our introduction, primarily wish their programmes to be popular. This can lead to underrepresentation of women's, Black and working-class histories, among others, for more than technological or other practical reasons. At the same time a developing fascination with the past, as noted by Huyssen, and with celebrity, as noted by Turner, has allowed for the commissioning of formats such as *WDYTYA*, and which strongly suggests that it is possible to tell 'risky stories' with a high degree of success.

Television history as public history: audience responses

While we have interspersed the previous chapters with brief excerpts from audience responses to factual history programming it should also be noted that relatively little research has been undertaken into such audiences, and of history programming, and existing scholarship is outlined in the previous chapter. Furthermore, changes in the television landscape in the previous two decades also include the increasing amount of online material relating to broadcasting. While in the 2010s almost every programme broadcast on terrestrial television has a section of the broadcaster's website dedicated to it, and is often also available for some weeks or months afterwards through BBC iPlayer, ITV Player, 4oD (4 On Demand) or Demand Five, this is a recent development and has changed who watches specific programming and how and where they do so. While further discussion of this is beyond the remit of this book, it is sufficient to consider how, also through online sites, viewers then often log their comments and reflections on programming. Indeed, audience members do not even have to be based in the UK to contribute to such websites, whether hosted by the broadcaster or independent; they may have accessed a series through the internet or bought it on DVD. Therefore the geographic but also social, ethnic, age and gender of audience members of history programming cannot be simply assumed, as we discussed in the previous chapter. In addition, it is useful here to consider the links between audience responses to history programming and wider analysis of public history.

The range of programming offered on television may be seen to fulfil some definitions of public history, offering accounts, as we considered in our introduction, of and with the involvement of non-elite groups. However, despite the real risk of alienating those rarely represented, one of the ways in which history on television seems most notably to be developing into a form of genuinely public history is through audience responses encouraged on broadcasters' websites, whether relating to pages set up for specific programmes, or to those such as Memoryshare or 'the People's War' on the BBC website, referred to in our chapter on commemorative programming. Such sites, as well as more generic audience websites, allow viewers to contribute their memories of historic events but also potentially to add their own interpretations of the past – public historiography in a sense – informed by a combination of televised and other publicly accessible material but also, crucially, their, and their families', experiences in

the past. Thus even when programming does not involve directly those groups described or depicted, or indeed, when some groups are only rarely represented if at all, their members are more than capable of commenting on absences, omissions and oversights as much as on what is present onscreen.

While relatively little scholarship has considered such audience responses, we have undertaken this on a small scale through analysis of online responses to specific programmes or seasons of programming (see e.g. Bell 2009, 2011; Gray and Bell 2010). As well as offering insights into the range of responses a television programme might receive, such research more broadly points to the significance of the internet in offering such an outlet. While, as we noted in our introduction, public history in its most stringent definition necessitates the close involvement of members of the public in its construction – although this cannot necessarily be said of all examples of factual history programming, which tend often towards the demotic rather than the democratic – the online construction of knowledge about the past by television audiences is arguably a convincing site of public history. Although limited to those with access to a computer and with IT literacy, it is otherwise no less open to viewers of a range of ages, social status, gender and ethnicity than other sites of public history and arguably is rather more in keeping with more radical definitions of the term, allowing debate over interpretations of historical events, for example, between those with differing degrees of knowledge, of experience of the events discussed, and of engagement in the subject. We would argue, then, that this offers an exciting new arena for further research into the role of such sites as facilitators of public history and public historiography; research which emphasizes the role of new media in enabling such developments, which would have been virtually inconceivable at the beginning of the period studied in this book.

Histories rarely seen on TV: Black histories

To begin our consideration of the types of history programming rarely seen on British television, our first example, referred to briefly in our chapter on commemorative programming, offers possibly the most unusual example. The documentary *Walter Tull: Forgotten Hero* and the accompanying drama *Walter's War* both aired on BBC Four. Very little programming on British television considers Black history, and the programmes about Tull were a rare example. In terms of the internal politics of the television industry, Anna Zoellner's research suggests that film makers seeking an outlet for such programming may stand a better chance of commission if it can be hooked into a wider anniversary; the choice of a more unusual (in televisual terms) topic may even gain them the commission in the first place (Zoellner 2009: 524). Tull had been one of the first Black British footballers before he became the first Black officer in the British Army during the Great War, and his experiences during the conflict were documented in both programmes; his life was little known outside of this, although a Heritage Lottery Grant had been awarded to the City of Westminster Archives to fund a travelling exhibition about his life to mark, in 2008, the ninetieth anniversary of his death, and to celebrate him as a Black British role

model (Crossing the White Line 2008). However, the broadcast of both programmes on BBC Four is telling; such a history was not offered on more mainstream BBC channels, despite the former being presented by Nick Bailey, a well-known Black actor from the soap Eastenders (BBC 1985–), and the latter involving another well-known Black actor, OT Fagbenle from *Dr Who* (BBC One 2005–). Indeed, *Walter's War* received a substantial audience of more than 400,000 viewers, while the documentary received almost the same number and far outstripped the BBC Four repeat of *My Family at War*. Its absence from the terrestrial BBC channels seems, then, to point to assumptions about the likely audience of the programmes and their limited appeal to a broader group of viewers; by limiting their broadcast to BBC Four, this became a self-fulfilling prophecy. Respondents on the BBC website remarked favourably upon them, but noted the lack of such material on British television more broadly, and in some cases expressed a desire that Tull's story be made part of the National Curriculum in Britain as it stood for wider moves towards tolerance in British history.

Arguably one of the reasons that such stories have not to date been marked more regularly on British television is the wider tendency in public history, including school history teaching, to limit Black history to accounts of slavery and colonialism,[1] intrinsically risky accounts which may lead to reflection but also rejection on the part of some members of the audience. Like the Great War, the immediate experience of the slave trade and colonialism are ostensibly out of living memory, and yet are as central to British national history and self-conception as the World Wars. They were considered in the BBC's spring 2007 season of programmes on radio and television marking the bicentenary of the British abolition of the slave trade, which formed part of a national series of events and was therefore influenced by a wider governmental agenda, although such historical events had been rarely considered in previous decades (Wilson 2007a: 391). Like many of the other commemorative seasons considered in this chapter, the Abolition season, aired on BBC Two and BBC Four as well as national and regional radio, offered accounts of controversial and traumatic events with ongoing resonance in the present, and which had been rarely marked in 'mainstream' sites of public history, televisual or otherwise. In the case of the Abolition season, a range of formats appeared on television. Key broadcast material included drama-documentaries and celebrity-led programming, the latter a relatively common means of offering controversial or otherwise potentially alienating histories, as *Who Do You Think You Are?*, and several of the examples offered in this chapter demonstrate. However, despite the differing formats, in many cases the same historians advised the programme makers. As James Walvin, a historian of slavery and the slave trade, commented in an interview held in late 2004, demonstrating the degree of organization and long-term planning being undertaken for the season:

> In one of the programmes … I actually knew the producer, and I mentioned to him that … the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade is coming up, so I said 'this is a good idea for a programme', and he took it from there … And the other two [programmes] well they [the producers] just rang me because they knew I'd be interested … at an early stage, and as with all these

> things it then takes on a – it often takes a different direction, it becomes a different kind of programme.

Although it is unlikely that all of the season's output stemmed from initial suggestions by historians of slavery, his insights demonstrate the importance of personal relationships in the selection of ideas and material for some of the programming, although this did, of course, also need to fit with broader ideas of what would make for appropriate commemoration and good television. Ross Wilson's analysis of the season usefully draws together the key themes, noting especially a tendency to emphasize key aspects of slavery which resonated in contemporary British society, by smoothing over 'cracks and divisions within society' (2007b). Asserting that the corporation was engaged in creating 'media memories', meaning 'the manner in which the wider public consciousness is shaped by the content of television, radio and film', which creates and maintains cultural memory, he suggests that 'presentation of the past in the media … acts as a means to frame perceptions; ensuring viewers possess a structure in which to understand the commemorative events … [but this is] a reciprocal process as audiences critically consume' (Wilson 2007b). What he does not consider, however, is the potential for audiences to reject entirely the framed version of the past offered to them, either by refusing to watch in the first instance, or by responding in an entirely negative fashion, as we consider elsewhere (Gray and Bell 2010), stemming from what Wilson (2007b) describes as the programming's tendency 'to remember to forget rather than to confront or engage' with Britain's role in particular, which may be representative of wider trends in British society. While we would certainly concur that much of the programming may be criticized in this vein, we also suggest that its interpretation is dependent on acknowledgement of the televisual techniques used, and of the wider experiences of those watching and of those seen onscreen.

This is particularly evident when two programmes aired as part of the season are considered: *Rough Crossings* and *Congo: White King, Red Rubber, Black Death*. As the latter programme was not produced for the season but had initially aired some years earlier, it is dealt with at greater length elsewhere in this chapter, but will be acknowledged briefly here in the context of the Abolition season. Although sharing the use of dramatic reenactment they differ significantly in their use of presenter-type. Simon Schama, the *Rough Crossings* presenter, has made regular appearances on British television in several high profile series and could arguably be described as a 'brand', and contrasts with his relatively unknown counterpart Elikia M'Bokolo in *Congo*, who has no pre-existing media profile in anglophone nations. Audience responses to the programmes suggest that the use of the 'brand' personality, often seen as a risk-reducing factor by broadcasters in tackling more controversial or less familiar topics, can have unpredicted consequences for audience appeal and engagement. Certainly, though, the use of drama-documentary has greater potential as historiography and for audience engagement than 'straightforward' documentary, especially when the topic predates the twentieth century, with little film footage and few, if any, surviving eyewitnesses. It is necessary, then, to consider Thomas

Elsaesser's idea of a 'fractured viewer identity', shifting his original focus towards the implied audience within the text.

Rough Crossings, as we have suggested elsewhere (Gray and Bell 2010), might be considered historical event television in that it was aired as part of the anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade, but in addition because it was fronted by Simon Schama, one of the highest paid presenter–historians on British television, who signed a three-book, two-series contract with the BBC, it may be considered event television. Directed by Steve Condie, who directed earlier series presented by Schama, it was adapted from Schama's 2005 book *Rough Crossings: Britain, the Slaves, and the American Revolution* although, as one historian interviewee noted, 'Simon Schama has put it in his book and it'll reach millions … 400 people knew about it when I wrote it'. However, despite this, the historian was pleased that their area of research interest was gaining wider acknowledgement. At the time of broadcast, Schama's book had already been adapted for the stage by Caryl Phillips and toured the UK during 2007. *Rough Crossings* considers, through the narrative offered by Schama both on and off screen, and prolonged dramatized segments, the experiences of African slaves granted freedom by the British in exchange for joining the Revolutionary Wars, who then of necessity travelled from Nova Scotia to Sierra Leone in 1792 to avoid being reenslaved, and the consequent failure of the British to support the fledgling democracy, drawing parallels between slavery and its aftermath in the present. Indeed, a Belgian viewer who had watched the *Rough Crossings* DVD noted on the Amazon website the relationship between the African history depicted in the film and the recent election of the first Black US President, asserting that, '[a]fter more than two centuries we can finally see the start of a new America … Freedom at last?'

However, there was relatively little response to *Rough Crossings* by British viewers, and this merits further exploration. While the managing editor of the web forum BlackNet Village advertised *Rough Crossings* on the website, and directly after its broadcast in March 2007, she asked: 'Anyone watching?', this was received with silence from members of the forum. Perhaps having a fairly well-known, at least to many viewers, white (albeit Jewish) presenter who had previously worked on a series charting the history of Britain may have literally proved a turn-off. In addition, a month before the transmission of *Rough Crossings*, the BBC had received complaints from viewers, specifically from an African Human Rights organization, Ligali, over its portrayal of Africans in another of Schama's series, *The Power of Art*, which aired in autumn 2006. In the view of the organization, Schama had used 'dehumanizing language' when discussing J. M. W. Turner's painting *Slave Ships with Slavers Throwing the Dead and Dying Overboard* (1840) and allegedly had failed to address the 'serious and sensitive topic' of slavery in an appropriate manner. Ligali's overall message to the BBC was that:

> African people are thoroughly capable of telling their own story [but] … the corporation['s] visual endorsement of Schema's [sic] 'Rough Crossings' … will ensure he and his team enjoy the profitable BBC kickback at the expense of the suffering of our Ancestors and the miseducation of our children.

Such a response should remind us that the framing techniques used in commemorative programming, employing high profile 'celebrity' historians, do not necessarily resonate with all potential viewers.

The use of a drama-documentary technique in the programme is less surprising when its origins are considered. Schama's book, on which *Rough Crossings* was based, uses his trademark 'literary' writing style and includes a list of 'Dramatis Personae' and both the book and television programme aimed to be factually accurate and emotionally engaging by using historical documents but also dramatic passages, raising questions about the representational strategies of historical docudrama. Further, the subject positions offered are more complex than those Thomas Elsaesser suggests (1996). The audience is not dehistoricized; individuals are encouraged to bring experiences to the programme based at least in part upon ethnic and national difference: Schama is at pains to recognize in the opening minutes of the programme that the audience he addresses is Black and White, British and American, all of whom have inherited, albeit in different ways, the legacy of slavery. While he seems to be directing the audience towards remembrance of ancestors who should be allowed to 'have their moment', in his words, his acknowledgement of the aftermath of slavery in the present is, though, limited. There are however some references to what has elsewhere been termed 'history in the subjunctive', in this instance a suggestion that Sierra Leonean history may have been different if democracy had been supported and maintained. In terms of format, Schama's is a grand narrative – his is the authorial and authoritative voice – and the prolonged dramatic episodes are punctured by his appearance, serving to prevent the viewer becoming passive in Ebbrecht's (2007b) sense. The audience is neither lulled into following the drama nor by Schama's presence: he spends far less time on camera than in his other series. In Elsaesser's terms, this enables the viewer to open up a space of 'otherness' – an opportunity to recognize the impossibility of truly acknowledging the scale of an event or of empathizing with its victims (1996: 172). This does not allow the audience to respond with empathetic grief as if the matter was lamentable but essentially closed; rather, it encourages reflection on the current effects of slavery and colonialism in modern Africa. The subject positions lie beyond sentimentality, yet allow the self to experience otherness; they 'break through any coherent and thus comforting subject position and shock spectators into recognition' (Elsaesser 1996: 173). This history is far from over, as its representation onscreen acknowledges.

Among the other BBC productions commissioned for the season, and indeed listed in a press release as a season highlight, *Moira Stuart in Search of Wilberforce* is a particularly good example of programming that drew upon an increasing tendency for televisually skilled presenters, noted in our chapter on the business of television. Like *My Family at War*, which included celebrities with a familial link to an event, Moira Stuart is a well-known figure whose links to slavery were discovered in an episode of *Who Do You Think You Are?* broadcast in 2004. Produced by BBC Religion and Ethics rather than BBC History, it won an IVCA Clarion Award in 2007 for 'excellence in the communication of Social Inclusion, CSR, Sustainable Development and Ethical Debate'.[2] Aired on BBC Two and directed by Gillian Bancroft, who has directed and

produced a number of documentaries for Religion and Ethics, it focused upon Wilberforce only in so far as it sought to avoid maintaining his legendary status: indeed, the season as a whole sought 'to tell the stories of the forgotten heroes' and in the words of the season project director Chantal Badjie, to avoid being boring (BBC Press Office 2007). In addition, like *Rough Crossings*, it attempted to emphasize the shared nature of the history of slavery for Black and White viewers, and also the active role played by the enslaved and former slaves in seeking and securing their own freedom. Drawing upon her own familial links, well known from *Who Do You Think You Are?*, in the opening section of the programme Stuart asserts that 'the [Atlantic] ocean is a burial place for my ancestors'. Her authority and authenticity stem from this known link to slavery and her previous role as a BBC newsreader; her 'personal journey', as it was described by the BBC, offered a counterpoint to Schama through which the BBC demonstrated a range of approaches to the bicentenary appropriate to a broadcaster with a remit to supply programming for the entire nation. The rarity of a Black, female presenter of factual programming makes *In Search* especially laudable, alongside its granting of a voice to other Black, sometimes female, scholarly voices such as Professor Verene Shepherd of the University of the West Indies. *Ms Dynamite in Search of Nanny Maroon* was similarly broadcast on BBC Two and fronted by a Black woman, albeit aimed at a younger demographic, one of the channel's priorities in 2007.[3] As the musician Ms Dynamite is well known for her comments on her experience of racism as a child, her inclusion in the season tied into the consideration of slavery's modern legacy in contemporary attitudes, while Martin Weitz of the independent production company Focus Productions, which created the documentary, had already produced award-winning documentaries on issues related to race and modern slavery.

Given the channel's aim to be intellectually and culturally enriching, it is unsurprising that the three-part series *Racism – A History: Race Through Time*, which charted the development of ideas about race from the medieval to modern era, was one of few examples of Abolition programming aired on BBC Four. That the majority of programming was aired on BBC Two suggests a desire to make the season as accessible as possible to the British population. However, the BBC Four series, produced in-house, garnered a relatively large audience response, largely in relation to its discussion of eugenics, to which the executive producer David Okuefuna, who has been involved in a number of series broadcast on the channel, such as those based on the work of Albert Kahn, responded on the corporation's website.[4] The bicentenary was also recognized through other BBC series: for example, the built environment was considered in a number of programmes such as *Built on Slavery*, part of *Inside Out*, BBC One's regional early evening series. With Lucinda Lambton, an architectural historian regularly appearing on the BBC, the programme offered a combination of a well-known face with material more challenging than that regularly aired in the series; on BBC Two's *The Culture Show*, a one-off episode similarly considered evidence of slavery in the UK. It is apparent, then, that in the case of the bicentenary commemoration, programming was spread as widely as possible across BBC radio and television, which related to the corporation's aims in 2007 to enrich, inform, educate and celebrate diversity in order to enrich life in British society as a whole.[5] While this

was certainly attempted through the Abolition season, the absence of such histories in other years is remarkable.

In contrast to the BBC, one of very few examples of history programming dealing with slavery offered by other terrestrial British broadcasters was *The Last Slave*, aired on Channel 4. Using a previously unknown presenter, David Montieth, the programme showed his journey from Jamaica to Nigeria, as he sought details of the life of an ancestor who had been one of the last Africans enslaved before the 1807 Act. With obvious parallels to *Who Do You Think You Are?*, Montieth's journey forced self-reflection on his identity to some degree – although Ligali found it revisionist, cynical engineering to assuage European guilt, and offensive for its apparent attempt to blame Africans for slavery[6] – and as in *Rough Crossings* and *Congo*, the nature of the events discussed may have made it possible for audience members to respond, irrespective of their own family histories. Remarks on the channel's website were generally positive, although the audience figures were relatively low at fewer than 1.9 million viewers, and speaking publicly and in print about the film, its director Paul Kerr, who had worked on a range of history programming including, two years earlier, a documentary on Mary Seacole for the same channel, has been openly critical of the lack of Channel 4 engagement with the bicentenary and the lack of funding available, leading to a far shorter, single-episode documentary which instead of considering the last slave ship more broadly, had to focus upon one individual (Kerr 2009a and b). The lack of involvement by the channel in contrast to the BBC is extremely interesting, especially as part of its policy in 2007 was to offer education, diversity and innovation; it may have stemmed in part from a desire to commission history programming relating to events 'within living memory', as several of our interviewees noted. Indeed, *The Last Slave Ship* was heralded by the channel as an example of cultural diversity in their programming (Channel 4 2007) although the absence of other material in a similar vein is perplexing and may have been due to the competitive pressures referred to in their 2007 programme policy, including a need to be make their broadcast material distinctive from the multicultural programming 'embedded as part of its core practice' (Malik 2009), while distinctiveness in the wake of the BBC's huge accompanying Abolition season would also have been extremely difficult. Commemoration, then, is not automatic; the decision to commemorate subjects otherwise rarely considered in sites of public history reflects broader institutional remits and identity, considered in our introduction with particular reference to the recent development of distinctive channel identities.

Histories rarely seen on TV: imperial histories

August of the same year (2007) marked the sixtieth anniversary of the independence of India and Pakistan, and both the BBC – television and radio – and Channel 4 broadcast a range of programming reflecting especially on the significance of the events to both nations, and Britain, in the present. Five years earlier the fifty-fifth anniversary had been marked to some degree by Channel 4's Indian Summer season, which, seeking a younger audience for its sport coverage, launched an award-winning

campaign offering a combination of live Test Match cricket, and music events in London and Leeds, as well as special offers on 'Indian' fiction via the Channel 4 website and films, documentaries and news programmes on current and historical events.[7] The season was not without its critics, perhaps most notably the Pakistani-born author and journalist Kamila Shamsie (2002), who viewed its claims to offer, for example, authentic Indian music as conflating Indian with British Asian, and in so doing continued to place Britons of Asian origin somehow outside of 'real' British-ness. However, it was reminiscent of the original purpose of the channel at its founding in 1982, described by Jeremy Isaacs simply as 'extend[ing] viewers' choice' by offering a 'selective and varied' diet onscreen (2006: 344, 350). In the interim, Niall Ferguson's *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World* (2003), discussed as an example of 'landmark' programming in our earlier chapter, proved controversial among scholars and other commentators in its revisionist interpretation of the impact and legacy of British imperialism, celebrating British culture and traditions rather than those of colonized peoples (Wilson 2003). The sixtieth anniversary was therefore, unsurprisingly, rather different; offering documentary history programming consider-ing Indian history both before and during the transition to independence, its approach was much more similar to other 'event TV' while more convincingly reflecting the channel's remit to offer distinctive, high quality and diverse program-ming for a diverse audience. In a competition launched in August of the previous year, organized by the UK-based Documentary Filmmakers Group (DFG Films) and sponsored by Channel 4 and The British Council, Indian directors were offered the opportunity to make short films and have them broadcast in early 2007.[8] The films were aired as part of the channel's long-running 'Three minute wonder' strand; all four were broadcast in the same week in late April 2007, and focused on themes of conflicting identity and cultural bricolage in the wake of independence. *Hemalata: A Story of Independence* or *Ms Hemalatha* by Sudha Pillai begins with an elderly Indian woman's assertions that for her, independence means 'a lot to me, because I can do what I want to, without being told by somebody what I should do, or what I should not do.' Her remarks become clearer after a brief autobiography is offered: widowed at an early age, she has chosen in her seventies to remarry, a controversial act in Indian society which reflects, according to its director, the continuing influence of the concept of independence on India.[9]

The channel also offered *Empire's Children*, discussed in the previous chapter, which was produced by Wall to Wall, and began to be aired in the month before the anniversary. In a similar vein to their hugely successful series *Who Do You Think You Are?*, it followed a number of celebrities in their journeys across parts of the former British Empire, and by inference back in time, in order to discover more about their family history and more broadly, British identity. Using the quest narrative form apparent in *WDYTYA* but also Michael Wood's *Story of India*, the series went beyond India and Pakistan and used the anniversary to consider questions of the British imperial legacy. To ensure audience engagement with the series, a specific website was also launched, with the involvement of Wall to Wall, who originated *WDYTYA?*, in order to allow anyone to 'trace, record and share' their family history

online. Instead of acting as a rival, this complementary and very specifically themed series arguably bolstered the popularity of *WDYTYA?* and definitely of family history research.[10] Certainly, controversial aspects of British imperial history were drawn out in several episodes. As Bell has considered elsewhere, with particular reference to audience responses (2010) it was successful in forcing some participants, and perhaps audience members, to reflect on what it meant to them to be British. Comedian Jenny Éclair sought to find out more about her childhood in Malaysia, and her father's role in the oppression of Chinese Communist 'bandits' in the 1940s and 1950s.[11] Disturbed by information about the events, which contextualized photographs of severed heads stored in her parents' room when she was a child, she needed to defend her national identity in the face of conflicting emotions. Her familial and national links to the rebellion were mirrored in her meeting with Ban Ar Kam, an ethnic Chinese man whose father was executed by the British for his Communist activities. She had already asserted that her father could have 'no dark side', and her approach to Mr Ban was not uncriticized by audience members (see Bell 2011) especially when, during their conversation, Mr Ban suggests that his father was 'fighting for the freedom of Malaya … they wanted to decide their own fate'. She asserts that 'your position is totally coloured by what happened to your family', Mr Ban disagrees, and she walks away. This tense scene is followed by her confession, in a café, that 'I haven't got a political bone in my body … I just don't know what anyone [British?] was meant to do, really.' Later she determines that the British military intervention was necessary although no sustained alternative perspective is offered. Her experiences, though, had affected her notions of a global, national and personal past:

> I come from a time when the Empire hadn't got this sort of dark underbelly to it … The whole empire thing has opened up a huge internal debate … There's some sort of shared history which good or bad, does forever link.

While Channel 4 offered challenging and often controversial interpretations of the imperial past, the BBC's Indian and Pakistan 07 season was rather more varied and sought to offer 'Powerful documentary, evocative story-telling and captivating natural history programmes', the latter best represented by *Ganges*, feted by the BBC as a 'landmark' series. The season also included celebrity-led series such as *India with Sanjeev Bhaskar*, presented by a British Asian writer and comedian well known from his participation in the radio and television comedy series *Goodness Gracious Me!* (Radio 4 1996–98; BBC Two 1998–2001), which drew upon aspects of British and British Asian culture. The series approached the history and culture of India in part through family history, specifically seeking to offer a 'personal portrait' (BBC 2007) while emphasizing through the choice of presenter the close links still in existence between the UK and the subcontinent. Meera Syal, a British author, playwright and comedian also from *Goodness Gracious me!*, contributed to another aspect of the season. *When Auntie went East* offered her 'personal journey' through the BBC archives and granted access to relatively rarely seen archive material of the subcontinent filmed by the

BBC. At the same time this footage was made accessible online as part of the BBC Archive Trial. Syal's Indian heritage and family had already been investigated in *Who Do You Think You Are?* making her 'personal journey' an extension of existing material. In a similar fashion, although without celebrities, BBC Four aired *Midnight's Grandchildren*, a short documentary in which British teenagers visited their families' countries of origin: India and Pakistan. Selected to represent the Moslem, Sikh and Hindu communities, the title of the programme echoes Salman Rushdie's 1981 novel *Midnight's Children*, which has continued to remain a high profile winner of literary awards and offers a lengthy fictional account of the life of one man, born at the precise time that India's independence began, offering insights, albeit elliptical, into national identity and its relationship to trauma. It is unsurprising, then, that a programme on BBC Four, which was originally launched in 2002 as 'a place to think'[12] should have used such a literary allusion.

A lengthier and more sustained historical analysis was offered in *The Story of India*, written and presented by Michael Wood, best known on British television for series that follow a narrative structure of discovery and 'quest', and in which he seeks answers to his questions about the past by asking local people in places of historical significance. As we have noted elsewhere (Bell and Gray 2007a and b), his work often draws visually upon picturesque and spectacular images of distant lands and, indeed, the BBC described the series as offering an 'unmissable mix of history, adventure and travel'. However, by problematizing history and demonstrating that it is open to a range of possible interpretations, such series, including this example, allow a multiplicity of viewpoints to be considered by audience members, in contrast to those presented by Syal or Bhaskar. Wood's own production company Maya Vision International produced the critically acclaimed series, which in its opening credits is introduced as following 'a ten thousand year epic', so it seems hardly surprising that upon its broadcast by PBS in the US it was described as 'landmark'. Indeed, the PBS website included a 'Your Stories' section for viewers to comment upon their and their families' experiences, in recognition of the diaspora of Indians to the US as well as to the UK.

Contemporary India was utilized as a backdrop to Wood's series but also to *The Day India Burned: Partition*, one of few more traditional documentary accounts of twentieth-century India shown on British television, which drew together testimony, archive footage and some dramatized segments in order to depict the British withdrawal from India in 1947 and the subsequent violence, issues still of great importance in India and Pakistan, as well as for those no longer in the region, as Bhaskar's series too emphasized when he visited his father's former home in what is now Pakistan. Beginning with footage from August 1947 of the ceremonies accompanying the British withdrawal, the colour film is visually striking and aesthetically pleasing, depicting guards on horseback and Indian crowds cheering their departure, although this conflicts with the narrator's description of a 'once-peaceful land' which 'implodes'. Footage of those leaving their homes with few possessions follows the assertion, interspersed with dramatized close-ups of the faces of the dispossessed. Similarly, images of the wounded victims of intercommunal violence from footage of

the period is leavened with dramatic reconstruction ostensibly in order to 'evoke some of the mistrust, violence and upheaval that ensued', although ethical questions relating to the representation of traumatic pasts are raised by its combination of colour footage and reconstruction with little sense of which is original, similar to the questions raised by scholars of trauma, and more specifically of the representation of the Partition such as Jennifer Yusin (2007). Yusin's work does, though, highlight the potential of such representations, whether in filmic or written form, to act 'as a form of ethical testimony to history that arises at the site of the border and demands an impossible yet necessary witness'.[13] Certainly, in terms of critical responses the film was well received, as was the season more generally. In the season's wake, the BBC's then director-general commented upon future plans for the corporation, including substantial redundancies and restructuring, but referred also to the continued need for quality and innovation, such as 'landmarks like this summer's brilliant Partition programming' (Thompson 2007). Such responses are indicative of the need to consider a broadcaster's wider policies: that a season such as India and Pakistan 07 should, despite its subject matter, become an aspirational marker for future programming at the beginning of a period of highly controversial change at the BBC including the proposed closure of the digital radio station BBC Asian Network, is significant.

While a genre such as drama-documentary can be one way in which a new angle is brought to well-known events such as the Second World War, as we discussed in our chapter on landmark programming, or reveal previously little-known aspects of the past, such as *Rough Crossings*, in other cases it has been used to create a representation of the past which itself became an event of national significance. That events of previous centuries can still be extremely controversial is apparent when *Congo: White King, Red Rubber, Black Death* (BBC Four 2003) is considered, for although Ian Kershaw commented that in his opinion drama-documentaries needed to be especially careful if they sought to represent events such as the Holocaust, since 'with a number of people around who deny it, if you get one word out of place, or make a factual error, the whole thing is sullied', this arguably also applied to the discussion of genocide which formed part of *Congo*, in which historian Anna-Maria Misra specifically defines the murder of thousands, if not millions, of Congolese at the hands of soldiers under the direct or indirect instruction of King Leopold II, as a Holocaust.

A co-production by international broadcasters, the film caused considerable controversy in Belgium and in 2004 there were calls from the Belgian government for it to be banned before its airing on the Francophone Belgian channel RTBF in April 2004 (Ceuppens 2007, Castryck 2006). The use of dramatized sections in the film, most notably depicting a courtroom where actors voice the words of eyewitnesses to the killings and Leopold appears as the accused, alongside footage of contemporary Brussels and areas of the Congo offers, we have argued at length elsewhere (Gray and Bell 2010), drawing upon the work of Thomas Elsaesser and expanding Derek Paget's and Tobias Ebbrecht's analysis of 'new docudrama' (Paget and Ebbrecht 2007), a relationship to the film and to the past which is uneasy and makes it difficult, if not impossible, for a viewer to passively consume the events depicted without any

reflection upon them, despite the genocide being outside of living memory. As we have also discussed, reception of the film raised scholarly and political questions about the ongoing importance of the past to national self-perception and self-representation. In brief, it offers an overview of key events in late nineteenth-century Congo and Belgium, while also providing, through the use of eyewitnesses and contemporary film footage, insights into the current effects and representation of imperialism in both nations. The BBC's 2009 History Strategy noted how drama-documentaries had proved 'harder to get right' than 'straightforward' documentary, having been 'in decline' since 2003, the year of *Pompeii* and *Krakatoa*. However *Congo*, despite being broadcast in the same year, shares little with programmes representing natural disasters. Instead, by depicting the disastrous consequences of European, specifically Belgian, claims on Africa, its resources and its people, some members of the Belgian government called for censorship, and sought a ban on its broadcast in Belgium as it was perceived as potentially damaging, both to Belgian self-representation but also to the nation's global status. Here, then, albeit in another European nation, the controversy surrounding the content and form of the film *created* event television; a specific anniversary was not being marked, but the furore surrounding the representation of specific aspects of the nation's past effectively made its eventual airing into event television.

An unusual BBC production, particularly as it was not related directly to an anniversary, which considered the long-term effects of European empires was the February–March 2012 series *Empire*, written and presented by Jeremy Paxman, presenter of the BBC Two nightly current affairs series *Newsnight* since 1989 and based on his 2011 book *Empire: What Ruling the World Did to the British*. Discussed in our consideration of the business of television, the corporation described the series a year prior to its broadcast as representing its 'commitment to commissioning in-depth arts and culture programmes' (BBC 2011); unsurprisingly, given Paxman's existing role, the series drew parallels to ongoing political conflicts to some degree, particularly in its consideration of Israel/Palestine and the historical, imperial origins of aspects of the conflict. That the first episode begins with Paxman's assertion that the British Empire 'was the Empire on which the sun never set, or as some said, on which the blood never dried', points to the 'risky' histories considered in the series, and also its implicit contrast to the 2003 Channel 4 series *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World* written and presented by the historian Niall Ferguson, which sought in the main to reject revisionist accounts of British imperialism that represented the empire as destructive and violent. Criticism of Ferguson's series (e.g. Wilson 2003) pointed to its tendency to represent non-European nations as culturally stagnant in contrast to Europe; this was particularly apparent through the absence of the voice of any person, past or present, representing colonized nations. In contrast, Paxman's series included interviews with individuals based in the former empire, who offer comments on the role of the British, underscoring the ongoing significance of the empire overseas as well as in Britain. In the case of the latter Paxman asserts that 'There was a time when Britannia really did rule the waves, and it's a memory which has never wholly faded', pointing to links between history and identity in modern Britain, including a

tendency to become engaged in conflicts overseas, an assertion made in comments reported in the press prior to the series' broadcast (e.g. Hajibagheri 2011). However, his use of the term 'we' in his concluding comments in the first episode, 'It's as if we can't quite let go of who we once were', obliterates differences in the audience.[14] While series considering the empire and its cultural and political legacy are unusual, especially if they offer discomforting visions of the past, those which recognize and reflect the diversity of the television audience are rarer yet.

Histories rarely seen on TV: other international events

More recent events with some resonance in the UK have also been commemorated on television, and the examples considered here are the fall of the Berlin Wall and the founding of the state of Israel. Beginning with the former, although little was televised outside of news commentary on the tenth and fifteenth anniversaries of the fall of the wall in 1999 and 2004 respectively, the twentieth anniversary in 2009 received coverage on both the BBC and digital channels. Largely linked to news reports and reflection on the ongoing economic and political status of Germany, such as *Our World: Fall of the Wall* on the BBC News channel, and references to the anniversary in the satirical news quiz *Have I Got News for You*, there were, however, some historical accounts such as Diverse Productions' BAFTA-winning *The Secret Life of the Berlin Wall* (BBC Two 7 November 2009), made in association with the Dutch broadcaster VPRO, Japanese NHK and Danish DR, which offered eyewitness testimony and film footage of the years after the Second World War and the role of the wall in the lives of several East Berliners. Diverse Productions is part of the Zodiak international media group, so the transnational nature of the production is unsurprising; however, it is a rarity among the company's largely lifestyle- and family-oriented catalogue although the director, Kevin Sim, had previously worked on a number of history and commemorative documentaries, including *RAF at 90* (BBC Two 2008) for Prospect Pictures.

Themes of national identity and individual responsibility run throughout the documentary, which begins with footage of a twenty-first-century circus in 'East Germany', and then moves to Alfred, an elderly man who as a boy had been sent from Berlin to England by his parents. That none of the eyewitnesses have their surnames revealed other than Sascha Anderson, an infamous figure in recent German history, is telling; it may be intended to reflect the Stasi use of code names for informants, but it also gives a sense of intimacy to the accounts of domestic lives shattered either by Nazism or the East German regime, or both. The movement of the train transporting Alfred to Berlin mirrors the movement back in time he is taking when he shares his memories, but also to some degree the well-known use of railway lines in Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*. Whilst Alfred did not share the fate of millions of others during the war, his testimony, alongside the narrator's description of his past begin the programme, although the reasons for this are not immediately clear. Interspersing footage of his train journey through Germany in the present with clips from a US black and white film intended for Allied troops stationed in the country in

the late 1940s, Alfred's childhood and adolescence are contextualized historically, and his liminal position as a German – yet a German who had to flee during the war years – is again underscored. Indeed, as the film continues, Allied troops should remain alert and suspicious, for they are still in enemy country, and Albert too, gazing out of the train window should also, we are led to believe, be cautious of the nation and its history. As the soundtrack develops, swelling music is heard, and the American narrator of the 1940s film asks 'Measure the cost in lives? We can only guess at that figure. Someday the German people might be cured of their disease'. We then see Alfred at home, leafing through family papers, interspersed by black and white photographs of him and his family taken in the 1930s or 1940s. Alfred cannot find the letter he is seeking; he apologizes to the director and explains that it told him that his parents had been deported to the east in 1942. Moving to a photograph of Alfred as a small boy in shorts and a cap, linking the person giving testimony in the present with an earlier era, a technique frequently utilized in documentaries reliant upon eyewitnesses (see e.g. Bell 2010), we hear him confirm that at this point during the early post-war years, having received the letter, he realized everything the German nation could do to Jewish people. The decision to show Alfred's fruitless hunt for the absent letter parallels both Alfred's absence from Berlin during the war years but also the absence of his murdered parents. Then, rather incongruously, the narrative returns to circuses in post-war Germany. We are reminded, as we are in *Congo*, and drawing on Thomas Elsaesser's work, of the desire of some documentary makers to offer not a smooth and straightforward narrative but a problematic account where the viewer can never settle into one perspective and account of events, but is constantly aware of leaps in place and time, and of the need to remember. Unlike some other 'event TV' programming, considered in our chapter on commemorative programming, we are encouraged not simply to remember the Berlin Wall on the anniversary of its fall, but also the events which led to its construction, and the people whose lives are still marked by them. Outside of television, few other means of representing history to a substantial audience offers such a combination of visual material, including historical footage alongside eyewitness interviews, with a deliberately disconcerting organization of material. Exceptions include museums such as the Jewish Museum Berlin, but they are rare, and some television programming offers discomforting insights into the recent past potentially to a far wider demographic and certainly to more than a million viewers.

Examples of the film's approach include Alfred's train journey, interleaved with colour film footage of the train journeys of young socialists to the 1951 Peace Festival in East Berlin in which he participated, because: 'I felt an obligation to help, to build up a new Germany. What's the alternative? What do we do with these millions of Germans? Put them all into prison? The alternative was to create a new mental attitude in their heads.' Positioning himself as an outsider, no longer German, as we, the audience, are, through Alfred we are offered insights into the motivations of those who eventually built the wall, which in some ways reflect the insights some decades earlier offered by scholars studying generations of Jewish Germans after the Holocaust (e.g. Rosenthal 1998). At this point Ellen is introduced; also in her seventies, footage of her walking towards the camera is combined with colour footage from the

Festival, as the camera moves through crowds of smiling people waving flags, giving a sense that she, too, is moving back through time. Explaining how she came to join the Communist Party as a 17 year old, Ellen represents thousands of young East Germans. After a brief overview of events leading to the building of the wall, a second woman, Angela, recounts her happy childhood in East Berlin. A clown, she believes, holds up a mirror to society, and so she joined the circus. The deaths of other young East Germans trying to scale the wall in the early 1960s is offered as an alternative to the lives of Alfred and Ellen; but Angela, shown in her clown make-up, stands outside both positions. Those more actively involved in oppression are represented by Günther, a former Stasi officer, filmed at a pub close to the wall where he drank in the 1970s; Angela's father was imprisoned by the Stasi, and later became an informant: such links between seemingly disparate Berlin lives traverse the documentary. Angela provides the critical voice from within the GDR, and her account of 'running away' to the circus is not, therefore, a story of liberation but of Stasi raids and imprisonment for some of the performers, although the circus itself stands as a symbol of defiance, rebuilt on several occasions when its owner returned from prison. Mirroring East German society, she mimes running from someone and (Stasi?) footage is seen of motorways, as well as colour footage from East Berlin, before we see her mime hiding in a box. The combination of testimony, footage and narrator is common in historical documentaries, but the additional of contemporary and seemingly unrelated footage – Angela's miming; journeys through the German countryside – make it difficult to experience the accounts offered by eyewitnesses in a passive manner, or indeed to entirely believe their accounts, especially in the case of Stasi employees.

The footage used in the documentary is a combination of official GDR film, Stasi footage and Allied information films; the variety of sources points to the difficulty in finding the 'real' GDR. The eyewitnesses become part of the search for authenticity: Harald, a photographer, is interviewed in his studio; like Alfred earlier in the programme, he cannot initially find an object, in this case a photograph of the poet and former Stasi spy Sascha Anderson, although unlike Alfred he does locate the images and they form the basis of the narrator's description of Anderson and the area in which he performed. Indeed, Harald's crucial role in documenting aspects of East Berlin life absent from official accounts is underlined when he describes how he deliberately photographed punks and ruins; like Angela he sought to hold up a mirror to society, rather than the misrepresentations offered by official channels, making both people intrinsic to the documentary yet also, arguably, unrepresentative. Rainer, shown travelling on a tram in Leipzig, with footage of Leipzig in the 1980s offered as both a contrast to Berlin and to official representations of the GDR, discusses his treatment at the hands of the Stasi in the 1980s as a member of an opposition group in Leipzig. As he and a colleague confirm that they were, from 1988, consciously seeking to overthrow the government, the camera moves through towns and then countryside, as if on a train, as the accompanying music becomes more and more dissonant. Returning to Alfred and Ellen, however, the desire of some East Germans in the West – Alfred had been a radio representative of the GDR in Bonn – to return

home is outlined briefly, although in moving on to 1989, opening with a recent shot of derelict buildings and abandoned cars, the gap between reality for most and aspirations for some is highlighted. One of the last accounts is that of Karin, who describes living near the wall and hearing gunfire regularly; then how on one occasion, unknown to her, her son Chris Gueffroy, the last person to be shot at the wall, died. A picture of him as a very young boy is shown, emphasizing his youth and innocence at the time of his death, although he was in reality an adult when he died; her memories of him as a child are being alluded to, and this sense of a loss of innocence mirrors the loss of innocence of the GDR as a nation. Indeed, one viewer originally from East Germany reflected after watching the documentary on their own experiences in the GDR, remarking that even in the 1980s they could 'get the BBC on my radio which you could just about hear over the tune of the soviet blocking signal'.[15]

There was little other coverage on the BBC other than on BBC News, and to some degree through *Matt Frei's Berlin*. *Berlin*, a three-part documentary on BBC Two was co-produced by the Open University, which offered an online bilingual guide to the city, and outlined two centuries of the city's history. Written and presented by the German-born BBC journalist Matt Frei, the series saw him 'revisit his own past' as BBC correspondent in Bonn at the fall of the Wall.[16] Here too, as many of the examples of commemorative programming discussed in an earlier chapter demonstrate, geographical movement acts also as a metaphor for moving back through time. Further, Frei is both eyewitness and presenter, a mode not unknown in British television representations of the Cold War since at least the 1980s: *Timewatch: Battle for Berlin* (BBC 1985), marking the fortieth anniversary of VE Day, allowed journalist Charles Wheeler to offer both a distanced overview of historical events alongside insights into his own experiences, moving between first and third person accounts which made direct references to the historical and the contemporary city (Bell 2010: 79–80). While Andrew Hoskins (2004: 114) views this trend as 'accelerating', Frei's reporting on the historical and contemporary city is rather more complex than that of most news anchors. Indeed, *Berlin*'s final episode dealt in part with the wall, and shots of Frei in Berlin's Bernauerstrasse in the present are interleaved with footage from 1961 of Frieda Schulze's attempt to jump from the window of a house on the border into West Berlin. Filmed looking across the same street almost forty years later, Frei appears to be watching her, looking back into an earlier era, while he offers an account in the present tense for the audience as if he were in the present, or had been in the past, one of the crowd of onlookers filmed in 1961. Later in the episode his father Peter is introduced, who as a journalist reported on the events, and over lunch with his son discusses the 'psychological catastrophe' the wall caused for the families it separated. Frei's 'eyewitness' testimony parallels that of Wolf Joseph, who describes his experiences as a Jew surviving in Berlin until the end of the war: the episode, 'Ich bin ein Berliner', does not offer a single strand of narrative, but rather converging accounts around key themes, such as identity, concluding that the shared hopes and aspirations of Berliners and the (British) audience meant that 'we are all Berliners'. The anniversary's absence from most other channels may, despite this, reflect the extent to which other histories are perceived as more immediately relevant to Britain.

In a similar manner, while the ongoing political situation in the Holy Land is regularly noted by British terrestrial channels, rarely is its historical basis considered in British public historical accounts, although a number of books in recent decades considering Israel/Palestine from factual and fictional perspectives have been available to readers in the UK.[17] However, aspects were noted by the BBC through their 'Israel at 60' season on television and radio, which offered coverage of the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the state in 2008, and received a range of responses in the broadsheet press and online. That an entire season on the founding of the state of Israel was aired seems less surprising when the British relationship to the state, both immediately after the First World War, when Britain alongside France divided the Middle East between them, and in later years, when Britain initially opposed the creation of a Jewish state, which some scholars interpret as being due to their 'interests in the Moslem world' (Haron 1983: 217), at the same time as some Jewish Britons moved to the nascent nation is considered, and those themes are drawn upon in the programming. For example, the *Storyville* documentary strand of BBC Four included, as part of an Israel-themed double bill, the ZDF (Germany), ARTE (Franco-German), BBC and Channel 8 (Israel) co-production *The Battle for Jerusalem*, produced by Liran Atzmor, a lecturer in film and Television at Tel Aviv University and media professional, who has in the main produced works dealing with Israeli life in the present. The film offers insights into the Battle from the perspectives of three people, who according to the documentary 'either witnessed or contributed to the way it is remembered'.[18] *Storyville* has since 1997 offered 'the best in international documentaries'[19] to the BBC audience and now is broadcast on BBC Four, offering, in Jeremy Isaacs's words, enriching material (Isaacs 2006: 200). 'Jerusalem, a vision of serenity. But the war goes on' are the opening words of the narrator, emphasizing links between events decades earlier and those in the present. He continues: 'two peoples, with different stories to tell, each fortified in its own memories, each with its own images', underscoring the significance of memory and memorialization to the nation of Israel as we see Jewish men by the Wailing Wall taking photographs of each other to preserve their memory of the visit. As we see more footage of photographs being taken, the narrator continues: 'How do they determine the way an event is remembered? Everyone is taking photos today. If there's no photo, it didn't happen.' However, as the documentary goes on to outline, a paucity of photographic evidence of the Battle sixty years earlier means that more controversy surrounds its interpretation. Ostensibly the only photographs of the events, by the *Life Magazine* photographer John Philips, are offered alongside those of the same areas of Jerusalem, particularly the walls of Old Jerusalem, in the present, placing individuals interviewed in a wider historical and geographical context.

As the narrative opens up the possibility that there might be other photographs extant, so the potential for other perspectives on the conflict and its representation are acknowledged. So whilst insights into Phillips's work and his eyewitnessing of the Israeli surrender of the Old City in May 1948 are drawn from his diary and from the memories of his step-grandson, it is evident that further accounts will be offered in the course of the film. That of Jack Padwa, a sometime film producer and British Jew who moved to Israel and joined the Israeli army, considers the filming of an

account of the Battle in 1954, and the pain felt by those involved who had fresh memories of the events, although his assertion that 'this is exactly as it was' is negated to some degree when the photographs of exhausted Israeli soldiers taken by Philips are compared to the relatively refreshed and certainly more aesthetically appealing men in Padwa's film, pointing more to the creation of Israeli identity through such films than to an exact reproduction. Expressing his frustration at young people's lack of knowledge about the city's history to his son, and by implication to the next generation in general, he emphasizes his belief that most Palestinians are 'fanatics', a sentiment with which his son does not agree, demonstrating to some degree the extent of debate within Israel, even within families, over the possibility of peace.

The film then moves to the Arab quarter of the city, where Zaki Zaarour, whose family have run a photographic studio since the 1930s, is interviewed. As the only Palestinian known to have taken photographs of the Battle while working for the British army and Associated Press, his father Ali's images offer a counterpoint to those of Phillips, and to the reconstruction offered by Padwa's film. Unlike Phillips, the notes accompanying the images, as well as some of the photographs, were lost when the house was robbed during another conflict, the 1967 war, and so Zaarour struggles to identify the figures; indeed at one point he cannot decipher whether a group of civilians by the Mandelbaum Gate are Palestinian or Jewish refugees. The double anniversary of the founding of Israel as, also, the loss of Palestinian lands is acknowledged through this ambivalence and his photographs of dead bodies, as well as the manner in which the absent photographs demonstrate ongoing conflict in the region. The area in which his family lived before 1948 has become an archaeological site, yet he, unlike Padwa and Phillips, is the only man who can legitimately claim to be a child of Jerusalem, born there like his father before him. The loss of his family's and his neighbours' lands has inspired him to share the material traces of the conflict with the world, and so to publicize the experiences of others in the Arab Quarter: 'This is not how any of us imagined we were going to end up. But who knows, the story's not finished yet.'

Zaarour, in the taxi taking him to the Israeli Military Archives where, we learn, the photographs stolen in 1967 have been taken, explains to the director that he agreed to come to the archives because he wanted to get out of the area in which he now lives; this sense of claustrophobia is if anything emphasized in the archives, when the mystery of precisely where the photographs were cannot be fully answered, and he is visibly uncomfortable in the building. Many of the images held by the institution are undoubtedly those stolen from his family home, which Zaarour is later able to reproduce them from negatives. The duplication of similar or identical images for entirely different ends runs throughout the film; the transference of the images from their original album to another symbolizes the appropriation and misappropriation of such material, which is compounded when Zaarour and his son, who has accompanied him, are not allowed to see all of the pictures. Under Jewish law images of dead bodies should not be viewed without express permission. The absences in the album are visible; they stand for the dead Jews and Palestinians yet also for material traces of the latter being erased from Jerusalem's history. Phillips appears in one of

Zaarour's photographs demonstrating how, ultimately, the potential of images to clarify events depends on their interpretation in the present as much as their context in the past.

While *The Battle for Jerusalem* was largely ignored in the press, despite being released internationally through First Hand Films, other aspects of the season, such as *Storyville: my Israel* received positive comments, most notably from the *Jewish Chronicle*, the UK's oldest Jewish newspaper, which has often criticized representations of Israel and its history that it perceived as prejudicial (Round 2008a). *My Israel* offered an account of the experiences of the Israeli Yulie Cohen, who was injured in a terrorist attack on British soil in the late 1960s and who, some years later, contacted her attacker, who was held in a British prison, in order to meet and eventually to forgive him for his actions. Indeed, and surprisingly given the frequent criticisms in the *Chronicle* and elsewhere of Jeremy Bowen's work for an apparent bias towards Palestinians in his Radio 4 reports (BBC Trust 2009), *The Birth of Israel*, a BBC Two documentary presented by Bowen, the corporation's Middle East editor, was also positively reviewed. While the criticisms of a number of Jewish bloggers was noted, the *Chronicle*'s journalist Simon Round considered the programme to have been a fair account offering insights for those without expert knowledge of the field, although in his view it let the British 'off the hook' over their failure to implement partition (Round 2008b). Produced by BBC Northern Ireland and directed by Toby Sculthorp, a BBC investigative series which has run since 1953, *The Birth of Israel* shares with *Panorama* its discussion of contemporary events of global significance, and a modified version, *Our World, the Birth of Israel* was aired on the BBC News channel in the same month, underscoring its significance to contemporary politics. Moreover, the involvement of BBC Northern Ireland in its production points to the degree of similarity between the divided communities of the Holy Land and of Northern Ireland, although the full documentary was aired only in England and Wales, despite the aim of BBC Northern Ireland to 'provide something of value for everyone in the community through a broad range of programmes and services which inform and stimulate debate'.[20] Perhaps in this instance the potential for similarities to be perceived between the two communities meant the programme was not considered suitable for airing; certainly, for decades Republicans in the province drew parallels between their own experiences and those of Palestinians, while peace workers in the latter have sought to learn from the degree of success achieved in the former (see Strenger 2007). The symbolic significance of Israel/Palestine stretches beyond the Middle East and its commemoration may be controversial among those with no religious or cultural ties to those onscreen.

Declaring the state a catastrophe from its inception, the documentary begins with the assertion that what happened sixty years ago 'still shapes lives in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories'. Unlike *The Battle for Jerusalem*, in which the Palestinian correspondent is an elderly man describing his family's relationship to the city, *The Birth of Israel* relies upon more stereotypical footage of young Palestinian men running in the streets, or as the victims of violence, as well as eyewitness testimony

from members of the Israeli armed forces and government, and Palestinian authorities: at no point is a history from below attempted, although this is not unusual in history programming. The use of footage from the 1930s is though more germane to history programming, as scenes of an early kibbutz overlay Yad Mordechai kibbutz in the present, while Bowen intones that 'History is never far away'; later the field at the kibbutz in which Israeli soldiers fought the Egyptians in 1948, and which serves as a memorial dotted with sculptures representing the Israeli fighters, is overlaid with footage of the conflict. Bowen's account differs, though, in that it also forefronts the double significance of the anniversary as both a celebration of the Jewish state and a marking of the Palestinian al-Nakba. He contrasts the simple lives and local politics of Arabs in the region a century earlier with the lives of Palestinians in the present, although the former's idealization among the latter is noted, whilst the familiar pattern of European brutality against indigenous peoples is apparent; only later are the similarly ancient roots of Judaism in the region acknowledged.

Predicting that without agreements that deal with the nature of the 1948 settlement, agreement will never be reached, the final section of the documentary includes the assertion that 'memory and history stands on every street corner', and an ostensibly black and white shot of a house turns into colour, while the only female eyewitness in the entire programme, the General Director of the Centre for Jerusalem Studies at Al-Quds University, explains how her father has for sixty years has been dispossessed of his family home, much as the Zaarour family home from which they were expelled forms the conclusion of *The Battle for Jerusalem*. Underscoring the links between history and concerns in the present along both domestic and political lines, the effects of the anniversary are offered to a British audience in a manner which attempts to avoid alienation from the subject matter. Their varied responses underscore the importance of considering the audience*s*, rather than audience, of history programming, as well as additional means by which viewers are encouraged to receive the broadcast, whether through positive newspaper overviews or outright condemnations, online accounts, or based on personal or familial experience of local or international events.

Histories rarely seen on TV: regional and national industrial action

While it may perhaps be understandable that some international histories are little considered on British television, appearing only for particular anniversaries, the same can also be said of some national and regional pasts, particularly those which relate to recent conflict and do not involve societal elites. For example, only in very recent years have British broadcasters considered to any great extent the Miners' Strike, and in their earlier failure to do so they had up to that point mirrored museums such as Beamish Open Air Museum in north-east England, which has been criticized by some scholars for offering little account of, for example, the General Strike of 1926, favouring instead a narrative suggesting the region's past was largely harmonious (see e.g. Bennett 1994: 110–14). Held over the Conservative government's policy of pit

closures in the UK, the Miners' Strike began in 1984 and ended the following year with defeat for the striking miners, and continues to be a contentious issue, particularly in the regions of the country in which coal mining was an important part of the local economy. Unsurprisingly, then, alongside national programming in both 2009 and 2010 marking the strike, particularly on More4 and the BBC, there was also region-specific coverage. Most notably, the regional BBC news and current affairs series *Inside Out* covered the anniversary of the beginning of the strike in some, but not all, regions, and in different ways depending on the area. Whilst the East Midlands episode and that of Lincolnshire and Yorkshire were similar in terms of the overarching narrative of the events, the former focused on Ollerton, the Nottinghamshire village in which the BBC Two presenter Rob Pittam grew up. Using a combination of Pittam as presenter, original footage and oral testimony, in this instance interviews with local people, the episode focused not only upon the events of the strike, but the ongoing effects of economic recession in the area, particularly because of Pittam's role as presenter of the economic affairs series *Working Lunch*. In addition, as a village with large groups of both working and striking miners, the strike's continued contentious nature, particularly in Nottinghamshire, was considered. In the South East too, the series offered only a brief overview of the after effects of the strike in Kent, despite Kent miners' active role in the action, arguably reflecting the greater significance of mining to the historical identities of Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire and the extent to which this is represented, or ignored, in regional programming.

At a national level, the strike was also marked intermittently throughout 2009–10 by BBC and Channel 4 programming, including radio: an example is *The Battle of Orgreave*, discussed in our chapter on reenactment, which alongside interviews with those involved in the strike and footage from the 1980s, involved a huge number of individuals reenacting events that had occurred seventeen years earlier,[21] with footage of the reenactment combined with occasional brief snapshots, black and white photographs, of the conflict. That photographs are shown very briefly means there is little time for reflection upon their aesthetic qualities; rather, they act as evidence, verifying and authenticating the reenactment. They also disturb the narrative of events, reminding us of the ultimately artificial nature of the reenactment while offering tantalizing glimpses of what really happened, or at least, what was really captured on film. Although the film was not aired until 2002, the year following its creation, and not upon an anniversary, it was re-broadcast to form part of the More4 Miners' Strike Night in June 2009, alongside *Strike: When Britain Went to War*. Originally broadcast around the twentieth anniversary in 2004, the film was created during the period in which the second of the Employment Relations Acts, through which the Labour government sought to further 'modernize' trade unions and promote partnerships between employers and unions, in what has been seen by some commentators as part of their neoliberal agenda, was in preparation; such influences are apparent in the film (Smith and Morton 2006). The third programme of the Night was *Which Side are you On?*, a documentary directed by Ken Loach and commissioned for ITV's arts series *The South Bank Show* during the action but which was not broadcast due to

its apparent partiality in representing the strike; it was aired on Channel 4 in 1985 (Cranston n.d.). Shortly before Strike Night began, the Channel 4 and More4 Head of Documentaries Hamish Mykura asserted that the films had been selected as they 'depict the strike from a political, artistic and historical perspective, and are a record of a moment unique in the post-war period, when the political future of Britain was fought over in pitched battles at Britain's collieries and power stations' (quoted in Holmwood 2009b). More4, which was launched in October 2005 as a digital channel aimed at an over-30 audience, in contrast to E4, aimed at under-25s, itself had controversial beginnings when its planned launch in early 2005 was delayed by the then Channel 4 Chief Executive Andy Duncan, formerly of the BBC, who wished to review the More4 remit. Under the previous Chief Executive, Mark Thomson, More4 had been conceived of as a channel offering repeats of Channel 4 programming, particularly drama, documentary and lifestyle. However, after consultations with Ofcom over the remit, it was determined that More4 should also broadcast 'challenging, original content' aimed at 'people with a curious mind' (Grimshaw 2005). The Channel 4 remit at the time of the launch was to provide a range of distinctive, high quality, diverse programming demonstrating innovation in form and content and appealing to a culturally diverse society, as well as having educative value.[22] This may be seen in the choice of Strike Night programming; indeed, the earlier controversy surrounding the material broadcast underscores the More4 interpretation of 'challenging' material. Further, the appeal to those 'with a curious mind' is rather similar to the original BBC Four branding at its launch in 2002, three years before More 4, as 'a place to think'. The choice of programmes may be seen, then, as both an example of event television, representing a subject rarely considered outside of *televised* public history, but also as part of an ongoing campaign to cement the More4 identity as a serious, yet challenging, channel.

Strike begins with the assertion that 'Britain 1984: was George Orwell's nightmare vision of a police state about to become a reality?', while footage of the 1956 film *1984* is shown, before the visual material moves to British dance and pop band Frankie Goes to Hollywood's *Two Tribes* video, and the narrator continues: 'The nation was locked in a titanic struggle between two armies. Both were led by revolutionaries, and both were hell bent on the other's destruction.' The influence of accounts of the strike, particularly left-wing interpretations such as that of Jeremy Deller, the organizer of the Orgreave reenactment, which represent it as a civil war are apparent, and underscore More4's status a channel seeking to challenge.[23] In the opening section the narrator, the northern English actress Sarah Lancashire, asserts that whichever side won 'would shape the future of Britain for generations', again acknowledging its significance in the present. Music in particular is used to define different aspects of the era – Wham's *Jitterbug* video is used to symbolize a jubilant post-Falklands War Britain alongside footage of a pregnant Princess Diana and a smiling Margaret Thatcher – until the Olympic success of Torvill and Dean, skating to Ravel's *Bolero*, completes the overview of an ostensibly successful nation. However, the reference to the skaters' Nottinghamshire origins acts as a signpost to narrative developments and rather bizarrely we see Neil Kinnock, Labour party leader

during the strike and one of the documentary's eyewitnesses, whose 'I warn you' speech on the eve of election defeat is still much cited as a warning of the perils of untrammelled capitalism, singing the tune of the *Bolero*. Later the *Bolero* is used as a soundtrack to recent footage of areas which faced pit closures in the 1980s, and it is followed by an interview with a former miner filmed, within the now-idyllic Nottinghamshire countryside, stripped of its industry. The miner expresses his continued surprise at the fate of the strike, as for him it represented a search for a fairer deal for mineworkers. Through such images the idea of an economically and ideologically polarized Britain, past and present, is underscored. Later, as a former Metropolitan police officer is interviewed, this is emphasized further; the overtime he received for the additional work over the period of the strike, he explains, allowed him to buy a flat, golf clubs and a sports car, and his account is interspersed with images of police officers physically restraining miners. Incorporating other aspects of the material culture of early 1980s Britain, from comedian Alexi Sayle to representatives of the fashion industry, its contrast to footage of industrial action, the underbelly of the decade which has received little attention in documentaries or nostalgic depictions of the era, is emphasized in contrast, perhaps, to the neoliberal approach of the Labour government then in power.

The use of music in the film may be interpreted using the insights of Emily Keightley and Mike Pickering, who suggest that music as well as photographic images can be part of 'technologies of memory' which encourage recollection; for audience members as well as those appearing onscreen, then, music offers a way into the past, as it has 'strong and resonant associations with both personal and public memory' (Keightley and Pickering 2006). A similar use of music is apparent, as we discussed in the previous chapter, in *1983: The Brink of Apocalypse*, produced by Flashback and aired on Channel 4 in 2008. Music has especially been utilized in documentaries considering *zeitgeschichte*, recent history, which themselves are evidence of a broader drive among broadcasters to garner a younger audience. Although this contrasts with the over-30 audience sought by More4, the approach offered to the events – that conflict was inevitable, that Britain was polarized on the brink of civil war – is unequivocably challenging. As footage of the time is shown of a southern English policeman describing how the people and towns of the north of England are 'different', with the south being preferable, the lines 'I don't wanna be here no more' from Nik Kershaw's 1984 hit 'Wouldn't it be Good' are heard; although ostensibly we seem to be encouraged to sympathize with the officer, the former policeman speaking some years later curdely highlights the economic gains of those participating in the suppression of the strike. The film also offers a revisionist account of the involvement of the Met in the strike through the testimony of the former Met officers, although not that of the miners; other histories have tended towards viewing the effects of the introduction of the Met as negative, leading to additional violence.[24] The sense of a completely divided nation is continued; as well as geographical division, the accounts of former university students also emphasize the gulf between working-class workers, whom they were keen to meet and support, and their own middle-class lives. Indeed, likening miners to 'the savage in *Brave New*

World', the politician and former Oxford student Boris Johnson is interviewed drawing out these contrasts. Playing further on the idea of the exotic, to the music of Frankie Goes to Hollywood, a former miner reveals how he and his colleagues were supported by gays and lesbians of London, who up to that point he had viewed as 'not normal'. Concluding with footage of Torvill and Dean's ice dancing, interspersed with, for example, images of miners being spun around in order to be handcuffed by police, the aesthetic similarities are striking despite the different subject matter, and unify the film's focus both on popular culture and industrial politics. As the closing images, of former coalmining areas in the present, are seen, some of the final words go to a former miner from south Wales, where 'shops have been closed … there's nothing at all here', suggesting, perhaps, the need for further reflection by the audience and indeed, by the then government, who were in the process of creating parliamentary Acts in order to define but also limit the power of trades unions.

The BBC too broadcast a number of programmes, primarily on BBC Four, that drew upon a substantial archive including a number of episodes of *Panorama*.[25] However, little new material was offered on BBC channels, other than *Inside Out*: *The Miners' Strike* (2004) on BBC Four, a documentary produced and directed by Steve Condie to mark the twentieth anniversary of the strike which through footage, testimony and reconstructions was re-broadcast, and offered insights into the dispute. According to Boing Productions, who were responsible for producing the title sequence, influences were drawn from

> Danny Boyle's *Trainspotting* [it] … follows one of the striking miners being pursued by cops in riot gear through the back alleys of a housing estate in a Northern mining town. Every shot within the title sequence has been treated to give a filmic and frenetic feel.[26]

Such comments are revealing; they demonstrate a desire to make the events depicted seem contemporary, but also to give industrial and union history the aesthetic qualities of popular British-made films, layering the meaning of representation in a manner familiar to BBC Four and BBC Two viewers. Certainly, when compared to *Strike* it is apparent that both the BBC and Channel 4 selected programming that best fit the channels' remit as well as perceptions of their audiences' interest in events several decades earlier.

Related to their televised output, the BBC also undertook, with the University of Leeds, and funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, sustained research into the best use of their own archival material relating to the strike. A selection of material was to be curated by BBC journalists, and those involved in the strike as miners, police, women's group members, and other interested parties, as part of the corporation's broader aim to assess public engagement with archival resources. In so doing, the ongoing significance of residual animosity towards strike breakers and the BBC were apparent, the researchers concluding that 'even' the BBC was

viewed with suspicion in some communities because of their original reporting of the strike. The 'insightful and relevant' (Popple and Powell 2009: 29) local programming planned for BBC North came to fruition to some degree with *Inside Out*, but more obviously the main 'deliverable', online access to such materials, may be seen through, for example, the Sheffield and South Yorkshire BBC website, where written and oral testimony, and archive material, as discussed by the contributors to the University of Leeds' project, are currently available to the public (p. 25).[27] Drawing on the differing regional responses to the strike, and the BBC's desire to be perceived differently among a number of communities affected by the strike, the corporation's largely regional broadcasts, can be better understood.

History rarely seen on TV: women's histories

Women's history – and indeed, history by women – is another area, alongside industrial action, rarely seen in public historical accounts. Where it is depicted it has often been criticized as limited or otherwise unrepresentative: for example, among other scholars and museum professionals, the early pioneers Elizabeth Carnegie (1996), Kath Davies (1996) and Gaby Porter (1988) noted the extent to which women's lives rarely appear, or appear in truncated form, in museums. Their work has been continued and broadened into considerations of gender and sexuality by the work of Amy K. Levin (2010). Similarly, as Erin Bell has noted elsewhere (2008), on British television the absence of women's history tends to take at least two forms: a lack of representation and discussion of the particular experiences of women in the past, but also a dearth of female historians on UK television. Although created and aired prior to the beginning of the period considered in this book, the BBC's *A Skirt Through History*, broadcast in May and June 1994, is a significant and rare example of a series aiming specifically to offer an overview of different elements of women's history, focusing upon individual women and their historical contexts in Britain and overseas, including a suffragette, a seventeenth-century Italian artist, an enslaved woman and a slave owner. Although the series could not of necessity represent the history of all women, it was an example of what could be done; of the potential for women's history to be televised, although the heavy dramatization of most of the episodes meant there was little room for explicit acknowledgement of the work of historians of women in identifying and highlighting such 'hidden' histories in the late twentieth century.

The following decade saw a few high profile female historians onscreen, most notably Bettany Hughes on Channel 4 and more recently the BBC, increase their portfolio of televised history programming alongside the male historian presenters discussed in our consideration of the business of television (see also Bell and Gray 2007a and b). However, they continue to be the exoticized exception rather than the rule, and their appearance is commented upon to a degree unknown in the discussion of male historians. As one historian interviewee noted of a series she had been involved with in 2001, her apparently frequent changes of outfit, the result of filming over several days, were one of the main aspects of the series which received press

comment, despite her legitimacy as a published scholar and expert in the field. Indeed, more recent examples, almost twenty years after *A Skirt Through History*, suggest that this continues to be the case, with female scholars who do gain media interest often reduced to figures to be criticized or praised on the basis of appearance rather than their knowledge or their ability to express ideas to an audience. For example, in a related field the departure of archaeologist Mick Aston from the long-running (1994–present) Channel 4 series *Time Team* was largely ascribed to the introduction of a female co-presenter, Mary-Ann Ochota, a former model whom, it was rarely reported, also holds an archaeology degree from the University of Cambridge and was one of proportionately few female archaeologists in the series (see e.g. Aston 2012; Hough 2012). That she left after a short period of time may reflect the independent production company's difficulties in finding the right combination of individuals for the reformatted series, but press comments regarding apparent conflicts between Ochota – largely positioned as a former model rather than a graduate archaeologist – and better established, older male archaeologists seem also to reflect the wider problems faced by women attempting to break into history and related programming in the face of heavy press surveillance. While this does not of course relate to the broadcaster, it does illuminate a wider media culture which positions women in rather different and less flattering ways to men.

However, as we discuss in our consideration of the business of television, such 'everyday' history programming does often offer the opportunity for female historians to appear onscreen. This is despite the comments of well-known male historians, most notably David Starkey, that alongside the work of female authors such as independent scholar and novelist Alison Weir, female historians appearing on television, especially those who discuss women's history, are part of a broader move to 'feminise' history (Adams 2009). Recent examples of history programming which included aspects of women's lives have been discussed in our reenactment and landmark chapters; specifically, many of the hybrid genres and new formats developed in the last two decades have offered new ways to represent and incorporate the history of women into a larger historical picture. *Who Do You Think You Are?* and various reenactment series are examples of this, although of course the latter are not without their critics in terms of the role of female participants, as we outlined.

Similarly, event television at times allows specific aspects of women's history to be incorporated into a wider national narrative: *Spitfire Women* (BBC Four 2010), part of the commemoration of the Battle of Britain is an example of such programming, although its position on BBC Four suggests a rather lower budget was lavished on it than on other aspects of the season. Like many other productions for the channel it was later, though, aired on BBC Two after garnering a very respectable audience of more than half a million viewers on BBC Four. The role of BBC Four in commissioning more intellectually and demographically adventurous programming also includes its success in reintroducing oral history after some years' absence; the work of Steve Humphries through his independent production company Testimony Films, for example, often includes and sometimes focuses specifically on the experiences of women in the twentieth century, using ordinary people as rich sources of insight and

information, although the reasons for the commissioning of such programming have arguably changed over the period considered in this book, as outlined in our introduction. In addition, such work has returned to British television channels more generally in large part because of its commissioning by BBC Four.

However, while the efforts of BBC Four may have led to additional hours of history programming dealing specifically or partially with the history of women, it is still notable that there is a void in most big budget, 'landmark' series. As we considered some time ago (e.g. Bell and Gray 2007a and b), the BBC's *A History of Britain* (2000–2002) offered a national narrative led by an authoritative male historian, largely based on the experiences of elite groups, while the parallel (BBC Two Scotland 2001) series *In Search of Scotland* engaged a female presenter–historian, Dr Fiona Watson, and some female talking head historians, but did not position the presenter in a similarly authoritative manner to Simon Schama; indeed, her interviews with male experts arguably positioned her instead as a presenter rather than a scholar (Bell 2008). In more recent years there has been little consideration of women's history, either stand-alone or as part of broader accounts: as we considered in our previous chapter, preconceptions of what an audience wants to watch may well hamper the production of such programmes in greater numbers. David Starkey's *Monarchy* series on Channel 4 (2003–7), discussed in our chapter on landmark programming, necessarily considered queens, while Simon Schama's *A History of Britain* (BBC 2000–2002), discussed in the same chapter, included an episode on Elizabeth I and Mary Queen of Scots, and another on women in the Victorian era. Rarely if ever, though, have landmark series made more strenuous efforts to include non-elite women in their historical accounts and to discuss the specificity of their lives in contrast to those of non-elite men; or indeed to contextualize fully the experiences of those elite women whose lives *are* considered onscreen. The same may be said for the inclusion or absence of the histories of Black Britons (for example): the tendency to air Black history only in the form of commemorative programming means that wider historical contexts into which Black Britons' varied experiences and histories should be placed are rarely apparent and are instead limited to those which fit specific anniversaries, usually relating to a celebratory national story of abolition or liberation.

Everyday history programming sometimes, though, allows female historians as presenters, and histories including, if not specifically considering, women are also aired. Examples of such programming have been considered in our chapter on the business of television and suggest that while larger budget series tend to veer towards safer options, in this instance ways of representing the past already known to be popular (see Gray 2010), material broadcast outside of peak viewing times may offer the opportunity for female presenters, and histories including women, to be viewed. That such 'domestication' offers some, often female, viewers the opportunity to view programmes which they find meaningful in their everyday life may be seen as beneficial (Christensen 2002: 5). However, to some extent this also parallels media historians' accounts of the role of daytime soap operas on early radio in 'ghettoising' female radio listeners (see e.g. Hilmes 1997), and in relation to television

(Moseley 2000) should not be overlooked. While day- and peak-time programming may both include historical content, the latter, especially landmark series, are far less likely to include female presenter–historians or the history of women. That is not to suggest that female audience members do not watch landmark series; rather that the type of programming audiences are believed to seek continues to limit what is aired and when, despite viewing figures and responses that suggest the contrary.

In conclusion to this chapter, then, we will begin by considering the 2011 Royal Television Society's Huw Weldon Memorial lecture, delivered by Bettany Hughes and entitled 'TV – Modern Father of History', and broadcast on 18 October 2011 on BBC Two.[28] In her introductory remarks in the first few minutes of the lecture, Hughes recounted that:

> … Back in the early 1990s I went into the BBC for a meeting with a senior producer. It seemed to me that history just wasn't getting a fair crack of the whip. And so I talked animatedly about the discoveries that could be made, the insights made; I waxed lyrical about the natural connection between our lives and the lives of those who'd gone before us. But then came that awful moment when I realised that I was doing all of the talking, and what was coming from the other side of the desk was a chill wind of disapproval. 'Let me tell you something', the producer said. 'One. No one is interested in history any more. Two. No one watches history programmes on television. Three. No one wants to be lectured at by a woman.' Well, as you can imagine, that put a certain degree of fire in my belly, not just because the man in front of me was revealing attitudes to sexual equality that would have sat quite happily in the more repressive regimes of antiquity, but also because he was proving himself ignorant, and out of touch [shot to a young female audience member], instinctively and intellectually I knew he was wrong.

That Hughes was willing to relate such an account is interesting, and it may point to changes within terrestrial broadcasting norms, offering as it did an explicit criticism of relatively recent practices and beliefs which, it was implied, may now be discussed because they no longer exist. Continuing with her discussion of the important links between television and history, she emphasized the rising volume of original history programming produced by the corporation, and its popularity among adults and children alike, before moving on to assert the shared aims of history and television: specifically, to understand the unknown; those people who live beyond our direct experience, chronologically, geographically or culturally, particularly embodied in the televised work of historians such as Michael Wood. That, as Hughes noted, the majority of historians appearing onscreen are still male is of great significance for the type of history being offered and may lead to history closing minds rather than opening them in the manner sought by Herodotus. Indeed, seeking perhaps to shock the audience Hughes continued with the revelation that the first female historian presented a series, rather than an individual programme, on the BBC in 2000, a mere

eleven years earlier: Hughes's *Breaking the Seal*, produced by the BBC and Open University, which considered historical records. Listing a range of female historians, especially on the BBC, she went on to assert the success of their series, pointing to the failure of earlier commissioning editors to recognize such potential.

Unsurprisingly, given the probable expectations of public lectures by the live audience and the broadcaster, Hughes did not to a great degree criticize history programming in recent years; aside from raising the questions of whose history is offered and by whom, this was not discussed further either in the lecture or a related interview (Singh 2011). Yet, as aspects of this book as a whole demonstrate, Hughes's questions are important and continue to be relevant to history programming on British television; while more female historians appear onscreen, the history of women is still rarely aired. In addition, as we discussed in our consideration of the business of television, some recent scholarship has exacerbated this by perpetuating dominant ideas of femininity, particularly of female historians onscreen. Further – among other examples – Black history or historians, and contentious aspects of the national past, remain among the histories occasionally marked publicly but otherwise largely ignored, and without which, as Hughes noted in her lecture, minds may be closed. As we noted at the beginning of this chapter, history on television and elsewhere may be rejected altogether by groups and individuals under- or misrepresented by it. As we remarked in our discussion of the perceived audiences for history programming, the idea of 'duty to integrity' is absent from media professionals' discussion and while we are not suggesting that this stems from a rejection of the need for integrity in their work, it does highlight the relatively greater importance they ascribe to gaining significant audience figures and/or the 'right' type of audience. Unfortunately, the effect of this is often to ignore or downplay histories which are not perceived to fit into a channel's remit or identity, or a desired audience's requirements.

Conclusion

While this book considers in the main more 'traditional' factual programming, we have also considered programming which offers a rather different interpretation of the past and its uses in Britain in the twenty-first century. However, there are a number of areas in common, despite the rather different institutional, political and economic situations represented by the beginning and end of the period. Perhaps most significantly, given the growing and competitive use of the internet by all broadcasters, the range of materials offered on different 'platforms' has expanded significantly. In addition to web-related materials, a range of other peripheral or extratextual materials such as books of the series and DVDs continue to be available. While the involvement of 'ordinary people', rather than a selected group of volunteers, in reenactment series in particular but also through the websites of other series points to attempts to make some history programming more democratic in its creation and/or consumption, the existence of additional material available to the interested viewer supports this. Further, although the national narratives offered by some of the series discussed

in this book have little room for alternative explanations or subaltern histories, others such as *Great Britons* and *High Street* both ostensibly granted a voice to the 'ordinary' citizen and allowed them to engage in a form of public history in the course of the series but also, in the latter case, through 'Turn Back Time' events held throughout Britain which sought to offer families not directly involved in the filming insights into the effects of the past in the present, primarily through setting up shops and exhibits in various public spaces such as shopping centres and with involvement by local museums.[29]

Of course, as we outlined in our introduction, to suggest that all television history is a form of public history and therefore democratic in contrast to academic history is contentious and, as we have demonstrated by looking closely at televised output, almost certainly inaccurate. As some scholars have argued of official public histories, the term 'public' may in some contexts obscure a continuing tendency to offer to citizens an elite perspective and limited interpretations which ignore or erase the lives and experiences of groups who do not fit the national biography (Seed 2000; Peers 2002). Certainly, as we have demonstrated in this chapter, while it is useful to be aware when considering history programming, including preconceptions of its likely audience by the broadcasters themselves, of the role of gender, racial and ethnic and class-based prejudices, this has led to a large number of histories rarely being seen, particularly when the groups (Black; Asian; women) and/or the events (pre-living memory; politically contentious) are perceived to be difficult to weave into a national biography written in part through the output of national broadcasters and informed by regional, national and international changes to the broadcasting landscape in recent years. However, as we have additionally identified, it is certainly not impossible to create and broadcast commercially successful factual history programming which incorporates a large degree of involvement by members of the public; which is less closely related to national identity politics than other forms (Champion 2003); and which is, more significantly still, able to offer insights into a range of human experience in the past and present.

NOTES

Introduction

1 The History and Policy website gives further information on the group: www.historyandpolicy.org
2 Roly Keating, the first Controller of BBC Four, referred to this as a 'phenomenal growth unique in TV markets' which for him tapped into a latent curiosity and fascination for the past. In his words 'you can feel the appetite which is there' (in discussion at the IHR 'History and the Media' conference, University of London, December 2002).
3 This was referred to by Wayne Garvie, then head of entertainment at the BBC, in an address at the University of Lincoln 2004.
4 Anonymity was offered to the majority of interviewees and when this was the case we have respected their wishes throughout.
5 See 'The Public History Committee', Historical Association website: www.history.org.uk/resources/public_resource_2771_75.html
6 It is appropriate to note briefly here Pierre Sorlin's recent point (2011) that television, particularly oral testimony, is 'uniquely equipped to remedy … inherited prejudices' by offering a route to onscreen interviews and, potentially, reconciliation between conflicting groups.
7 Jane Walton quoted in 'Vox Pops', *Oral History* 33 (2005) p.34.
8 For further details of the panel see 'Eminent Historians debate Public History and the Historical Record', Historical Association website: www.history.org.uk/resources/public_news_1036.html
9 See e.g. the reenactment of the Silksworth evictions in February 2012, marking the aftermath of the strike at Silksworth Colliery near Sunderland in November 1890, with visitor participation in the form of booing crowds: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ccr4w8l6O2E&feature=player_embedded#
10 BBC 'People's War' website: www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/
11 See www.bl.uk/reshelp/findhelprestype/sound/ohist/ohnls/nlsjew/jewish.html
12 Champion reiterates these points in his website (c.2007): www.doingpublichistory.org
13 See also Raphael Samuel's denouncement of 'literary snobbery', a belief that knowledge might only be found in books (1994: 262). Justin Champion made a similar point in his criticism of scholarly engagement with history on TV (2003). Ann Else (2001: 123) refers to the 'jumbled popular historical landscape' in New Zealand, which historians should notice, and not merely identify 'inaccuracies and simplifications'.

14 For these and further statistics see: www.immediatemedia.co.uk/advertising/magazines/bbc_history_magazine_.html
15 For an example of the latter see Lay 2012, considered further in the following chapter; for further statistics see: www.historytoday.com/sites/default/files/History%20Today%20MediaPack2011.pdf.
16 Parita Mukta quoted in 'Vox Pops', *Oral History* 33 (2005) p.35.

1 The business of television: public service to brand identity

1 Documentary series strands have also been a feature of factual programming.
2 www.open.edu/openlearn/history-the-arts/history/the-making-timewatch
3 The letter was reproduced on *The Guardian*'s website: www.guardian.co.uk/media/2007/oct/02/bbc.television1
4 Starkey's notorious appearance on Jamie Oliver's *Back to School* (Channel 4 2011), in which Mary Beard also appeared and successfully taught teenagers Latin, was evidence of just how inappropriate his 'sage on the stage' mode was for school teaching!
5 Janice Hadlow speaking at the Institute of Historical Research Conference *History and the Media*, London, December 2002.
6 According to an independent producer running his own small production company in the West of England, *The One Show* scoops up regional stories that could previously have been pitched for thirty-minute regional scheduled opt-out slots.
7 The Midlands Television Research Group was established in 1995 by Charlotte Brunsdon, Tim O'Sullivan and Ann Gray. The group consists of television scholars from the Midlands region of the UK and, as well as permanent academic staff, includes a more transient but significant population of PhD students. Current members, including the above, are Rachel Moseley, Helen Wheatley and Helen Wood, and have included Jason Jacobs, Catherine Johnson, Iris Kleinecke-Bates and James Bennett.
8 See http://reload1.geschiedenis.vpro.nl/artikelen/16752091/
9 See 'Anglocentricity and the BBC go hand in hand', *The Herald* 15 November 2002: www.heraldscotland.com/sport/spl/aberdeen/anglocentricity-and-the-bbc-go-hand-in-hand-1.133938
10 Jeremy Isaacs, though, is cynical of her decisions made while Controller of the channel and places them within Thompson's wider populist agenda from 2000: see the following chapter on landmark programming (Isaacs 2006: 420).
11 In response to the absence of Black figures the '100 Black Britons' website was created, which placed Mary Seacole in first place; see www.100greatblackbritons.com/list.html
12 Similarly, the BBC One series *Fake or Fortune* (2011–) investigates the provenance, or genealogy, of artworks in order to authenticate or refute the owner's claims about them, the latter often based on family stories. Presented by Fiona Bruce, who appeared in *Who Do You Think You Are?* series 6 (2009), parallels between the series are apparent.
13 The NRS system of demographic classification, the standard for market research, identifies ABC1's as upper to lower middle-class individuals.
14 This series originated in a one-off edition in April 2007 presented by Sue Perkins and Giles Coren as part of the BBC Four Edwardian season, the title being a reference to the Morgan Spurlock film *Supersize Me*. Perkins and Coren reenacted an Edwardian couple eating typical food of the period.
15 Taylor Downing, CEO Flashback Productions and a close colleague of Jeremy Isaacs, although not on *The World At War* has written about the making of this series for the BFI TV Classics series (2012).
16 The autonomy of the ITV companies to offer their own programmes to the Network was lost entirely in 1992 when the ITV Network Centre was established, taking over the commissioning as well as scheduling for the ITV Network.
17 See Wall to Wall – *You Don't Know You're Born*: www.walltowall.co.uk/program/You-Dont-Know-Youre-Born_6.aspx

18 Paxman, *The Victorians: Britain Through the Paintings of the Age* (BBC Books: London 2009); Marr, *History of Modern Britain* (MacMillan: London 2007).
19 Diane Charlesworth, MA thesis, University of Lincoln (forthcoming)
20 For example, those surrounding the case of Miriam O'Reilly, a former presenter of *Countryfile* who successfully sued the BBC for age discrimination. At the age of fifty-three, in 2009, O'Reilly was dismissed on the grounds that the programmes move from daytime to prime time required younger presenters and the employment tribunal agreed that she had suffered age, although not sex, discrimination.
21 For further details see www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-2134146/Too-ugly-TV-No-Im-brainy-men-fear-clever-women.html
22 See Lucy Worsley's website for further information: www.lucyworsley.com/blog/i-respond-to-my-detractors-and-defend-my-bonnet-2/

2 Landmark and 'flagship' television: heritage and national identity

1 This is borne out by Kenneth Clarke in his autobiography *The Other Half: A Self Portrait* (Hamish Hamilton: London 1986).
2 Emma Hanna discusses at length the vexed issues relating to the source, status and veracity of film archives used in this series (Hanna 2009).
3 This is in part because Jeremy Isaacs bought the world rights to all the archive footage used. The BBC did not clear the rights for *The Great War* archives until its DVD release in 2007. We are grateful to Taylor Downing for bringing this to our attention. See also his forthcoming BFI TV Classic on *The World at War.*
4 Isaacs notes the role of television researchers in finding sources, such as film archive and people willing to speak to the camera about their experiences. Much of this archive still exists. Norma Percy's films based on recent political events, e.g. *The Death of Yugoslavia* (BBC 1995) and *The Fall of Milosevic* (BBC 2003) have also provided the King's College London archives with a mass of material which will be useful to future researchers.
5 www.youtube.com/watch?v=9yLVOofyyNU&feature=related
6 One such was the Commissioner for Factual Programming at Five whom we interviewed in October 2008.
7 A six-part documentary about The Opera House, Covent Garden, London.
8 *A History of Britain* transmitted on BBC Two in October 2000 with a repeat on BBC One. Series 2 transmitted in 2001 and Series 3 in 2002.
9 Helen Wheatley, in her analysis of the BBC's natural history series *The Blue Planet*, argues that specially composed music is iconic of high expenditure and therefore 'quality'.
10 See www.bbc.co.uk/bbcfour/features/schama-lecture.shtml. A version of 'Television and the trouble with history' is reprinted in the Cannadine (2004) collection, pp. 20–33.
11 'The burden of television history', a keynote speech delivered to the World Congress of History Producers in Banff 2001. http://history2001.com/index.html.
12 Televising History 2009 conference held at the University of Lincoln, July 2009.
13 'It may be history, but is it true?' Joint conference IAMHST/IWM/BUFVC Imperial War Museum October 2004.
14 Journalism, however, is not new to Professor Ferguson who was, under a pseudonym, German correspondent for *The Daily Telegraph* while researching for his PhD.
15 Denys Blakeway, at the Imperial War Museum Conference October 2004.
16 David Rowan. Interview: Janice Hadlow, BBC Four (*Evening Standard* 16 June 2004).
17 The *Daily Mail* online Showbiz boards: www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/chat/r/t-9920501/index.html
18 See e.g. the Virtual Sztetl website: www.sztetl.org.pl for discussion of the use of 'everyday' photographic material – family albums – to reveal international histories.

19 From the 1970s until the 1990s a large number of OU programmes relating to specific courses were aired on the BBC, although by the late 1990s the OU BBC department had been disbanded and it was agreed in the early 2000s that the OU would no longer transmit course material on the BBC.
20 However, historian David Starkey appeared in the 'My life in a box' segment of the weekday chatshow *The One Show* (BBC One 2007–present) in which guests, triggered by artefacts, discuss their and their family's lives.
21 BARB figures suggest an average of around 3.4 million although *Broadcast* reported on 19 January 2005 that initial audience figures were more than 4 million, a one-sixth audience share, making *Auschwitz* more popular than the Channel 4 series *Celebrity Big Brother*. www.broadcastnow.co.uk
22 See http://forums.digitalspy.co.uk/showthread.php?t=182676
23 For a transcript of her words see Bell 2010, p. 82.
24 See Wilmhurst's website for further details: www.paulwilmshurst.com/
25 She died before the film was made; her words were drawn from testimony she gave in 1982 at the Atomic Bomb and War Judgment Court of Sendai: www.asahi.com/hibakusha/english/hiroshima/h00-00028-3e.html
26 This refers to the inclusion, at the commissioning stage, of television, web, mobile and interactive television activity.

3 Commemorative and 'historical event' television: memory and identity

1 See Adrian Wood's website: www.bdm-uk.net/adrianwood/
2 A decade earlier there was little programming. On BBC One and BBC Two, as the BBC annual review noted, 'Cameras were … at [the] anniversaries of Dunkirk and the Battle of Britain' (in 2000) but little else was offered.
3 See www.channel4.com/programmes/blitz-street/articles/interview-tony-robinson
4 See Blast Films homepage: www.blastfilms.co.uk/
5 See Jones *et al* (2006) for an example of scholarly rejection of the idea that the psychological effects of the bombing were particularly significant or damaging, although such studies rarely consider the long-term effects on those involved.
6 See the production company's synopsis at: www.dangerous.co.uk/programmes/programme_dday.asp
7 A short film outlining the aesthetics of the documentary is available on the Dangerous website.
8 For details of responses both to the BBC programme and the Channel 4 news report, see http://groups.yahoo.com/group/polesingreatbritain. Viewers writing in other online forums who did not identify as Polish were positive about the programme although some comments were made that the Poles in Rene's home town should feel 'shame and embarrassment' for not being more active in defence of their Jewish neighbours, which may legitimize criticisms of aspects of the film for perpetuating the stereotype that non-Jewish Poles were/are anti-Semitic. See e.g. www.handbag.com/community/forums
9 See Holocaust Memorial Day Trust website: http://hmd.org.uk/about
10 A long-running (1981–present) BBC series which allows members of the public to bring items to be valued and otherwise discussed by antiques experts.
11 The use of unseen reporters speaking over original footage differed from the use in 1989 of studio-based reporters and pencil sketches of key events such as parliamentary discussions, and with actors for key figures.
12 It should also be noted that some of the BBC output, like ITV's, offered coverage of live celebrations. Beginning on the morning of the 8th with *Buckingham Palace: The Day Peace Broke Out* and via the 1969 film *Battle of Britain*, the channel arrived at *Memories and*

Celebration: A Brief Period of Rejoicing in the late afternoon before *News 45*, which was followed by further live material into the evening.

13 See the British Universities Film and Video Council (BUFVC) Digitisation Project website for this and related clips: http://newsfilm.bufvc.ac.uk/article.php?story=200510081953092

14 See BBC Four, Nation on Film webpage: www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006xjtm

15 See BBC at War – End of the War: www.bbc.co.uk/historyofthebbc/resources/bbcatwar/end_war.shtml#five

16 The People's War website is still available online although not updated: www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar/

17 See BBC On This Day: http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/witness/august/9/newsid_4720000/4720807.stm

18 BBC News website: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/talking_point/4667829.stm

19 For examples of viewer responses on a website dedicated to the history of the Great War, see http://1914–18.invisionzone.com/forums/index.php?showtopic=109377

4 Reenactment: engagement, experience and empathy

1 Caroline Ross-Pirie, the series' director, has commented on the relatively high level of funding it received, comparable to drama series. It is important to note, though, that other 'reality' series such as the 1978 archaeological series *Living in the Past* predated it by some decades; see Mark Duguid's summary for further information (Duguid 2003–10).

2 See www.pbs.org/manorhouse/ the website of the PBS version of the series.

3 This was confirmed by Alex Graham at the 'Televising History 2009' conference, University of Lincoln, July 2009.

4 *The Edwardian Country House* VHS Channel 4 (2002).

5 For an overview of the episodes of the series, see www.channel4.com/programmes/the-edwardian-country-house/episode-guide/series-1

6 For further discussion of the gendered nature of reality history series, see Bell 2008.

7 According to one of those involved in the production of the series the supper was, though, planned at the beginning of filming and so raises an interesting question about the scripting of such series beyond etiquette guides.

8 English Heritage Festival of History overview: see www.english-heritage.org.uk/daysout/events/foh-2011/whats-on-2011/ and *BBC History Magazine* July (2011) Festival of History supplement.

9 See the CBBC (Children's BBC) website: www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b007y6ck

10 See Mumsnet 'Telly addicts' section: www.mumsnet.com/Talk/telly_addicts/458975-bbc-tv-evacuation-manor-house-for-the-children/AllOnOnePage

11 De Groot too notes the contentious nature of the treatment of animals in 'reality history' series (2009: 172). For the emailed response from the BBC, see Vegan Forum: www.veganforum.com/forums/archive/index.php/t-18283.html

12 Press release 21 August 2008: http://about.channel5.com/press/press-releases/five-unveils-autumn-highlights

13 Amanda Cable (2008) 'Bonding with the boys', *Daily Mail* 1 November: www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-1081993/Bonding-boys-Lets-dangerous-Dad.html

14 See the soap actor and comedian Bradley Walsh's website: www.bradleywalsh.co.uk/tv-dangerous-adventures-for-boys.php. Walsh appeared in the SAS episode of the series, aired on 18 November 2008.

15 Although some of the advertisements may have deterred viewers: see the Digital Spy viewers' forum for responses (November 2008): www.digitalspy.co.uk/forums/showthread.php?t=931471

16 www.youtube.com/watch?v=RxtbCufq58U

17 The use of presenters as 'avatars' standing in for the audience and experiencing aspects of the past in *Great Britons* and *The Worst Jobs in History* (Channel 4 2004, 2006), in which

the presenter Tony Robinson dressed in the clothing of and otherwise reenacted various unappealing careers, as well as the dietary history series *Edwardian* [and other historical periods] *Supersize Me* in which comedian Sue Perkins and restaurant critic Giles Coren dress and eat as if they lived in an earlier era, are discussed at substantial length by de Groot (2009: 82, 112).

18 P&P Tours offer 'A Shropshire Double Bill' which promises that tourists will 'hear juicy production anecdotes': www.pandptours.co.uk

19 www.petersommer.com/turkey-travel-news/victorian-farm-bbc-tv-series/

20 See also Jan Bjarne Bøe's consideration of the Norwegian broadcasting of the series (2011).

21 H. L. Warren (trans) (1914 [20–30BC]) 'Timber', *Ten Books on Architecture*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, pp. 58–64.

22 See the official trailer on YouTube: www.youtube.com/watch?v=5lMy7brTPbw

23 However, according to a report commissioned by the BBC, older (50+) as well as white and lower middle-class (C1/C2) attendees were overrepresented: 'Hands on History Turnbacktime events', 15 December 2010.

5 Who do 'they' think 'we' are?: considering the audience

1 www.digitalspy.co.uk, 8 May 2012.

2 Jo Clinton Davis, then UKTV Head of Commissioning and from 2007 ITV Controller of Popular Factual, and Stephen Lambert, then RDF Media Chief Creative Officer and from 2008 Chief Executive of Studio Lambert are quoted in the Round Table discussion amongst representatives of Channel 4, BBC and UKTV as well as several independent production companies: Realscreen.com 'Fact-finding mission', 1 January 2006: http://realscreen.com/2006/01/01/

3 Janice Hadlow speaking at the Institute of Historical Research Conference History and the Media in London, December 2002.

4 http://about.channel5.com/programme-production/commissioning/commissioning-teams/factual

5 BARB (Broadcasters' Audience Research Board) is the organization responsible for the official measurement of UK television audiences. Viewing estimates are obtained from a panel of television-owning private homes representing the viewing behaviour of the 26 million TV households within the UK. The panel is selected to be representative of each ITV and BBC region, with predetermined sample sizes. Each home represents, on average, about 5,000 of the UK population.

6 Richard Melman worked for JIP at this time and was also involved with *Cold War*.

Conclusion

1 This area of research was undertaken on the Televising History project by one of the doctoral students, Sarah Moody, who disseminated her findings at a number of British conferences.

2 IVCA Clarion Award winners 2007: www.ivca.org/award-schemes/clarion-awards/ivca-clarion-awards-winners-2007.html

3 BBC Statements of Programme Policy 2007/8: www.bbc.co.uk/aboutthebbc/statements2007/pdf/BBC_SoPPs_200708.pdf

4 See www.bbc.co.uk/bbcfour/documentaries/features/racism-history.shtml

5 BBC Statements of Programme Policy 2006/7 pp 4–5: www.bbc.co.uk/aboutthebbc/statements2006/pdfs/sopps06_07.pdf

6 See www.ligali.org/review.php?id=33

7 Campaign Media website, 29 November 2002: www.campaignlive.co.uk/news/165658/CAMPAIGN-MEDIA-AWARDS-Campaign-Gold-Award–Media-Campaign-Year–Channel-4-Indian-Summer/

8 See the Netribution documentary website: www.netribution.co.uk/stories/29/845-documentaries-on-indian-independence-eligible-for-award, 8 August 2006.
9 The director's brief comments about the film, and the film itself, are here: http://wn.com/Hemalatha
10 For details, see the production company website: www.illumina.co.uk/pdfs/EMPIRES_CHILDREN_ONLINE_DRAFT_3.pdf
11 For an overview of episodes see: www.channel4.com/programmes/empires-children/episode-guide/series-1
12 For further insights into the first months of BBC Four see the related Press Pack for BBC Four available online: www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2002/02_february/14/4presspack.PDF
13 See Yusin (2007) abstract.
14 Reviewers of Paxman's book have made similar comments, see e.g. Porter 2011.
15 See http://forums.digitalspy.co.uk/showthread.php?t=1157835
16 See http://www3.open.ac.uk/media/fullstory.aspx?id=17252
17 See for example the work of Anna Bernard, 'Nation, narration and Israel/Palestine: towards a relational literary history', University of Lincoln Humanities Research Seminar, 2 November 2011.
18 The documentary is also known as *Jerusalem Cuts* and is distributed by the Swiss-based company First Hand Films: see http://filmsbazaar.com/index.php?film=1000185 and www.firsthandfilms.com/statement.php, who tellingly, given their link to BBC Four, seek 'stories told, well told, differently told, and to believe in captivating audiences, as small as they might be'.
19 See the *Storyville* webpage on BBC Four: www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006mfx6
20 See www.bbcgovernorsarchive.co.uk/annreport/nations_regions_review.html
21 For further details of the organization of the reenactment around the anniversary see www.historicalfilmservices.mysite1952.co.uk/orgreave.htm
22 See the channel's website for an overview of their remit in 2003 and 2010: www.channel4.com/info/corporate/about/channel-4s-remit
23 Indeed, in *Strike: When Britain Went to War* Bernard Ingham refers to footage of the Orgreave events as reminding him of 'civil war pictures in modern dress'.
24 A number of newspaper articles, regional and national, published around the twenty-fifth anniversary of the strike reconsidered the role of the Metropolitan Police: see for example Hume 2009 and McIntyre 2009.
25 See the Panorama web team blog: www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/panorama/2009/03/the_miners_strike_the_bitter_l.html
26 See the Boing productions website: www.boingproduction.co.uk/boing/The_Miners_Strike.html
27 'Miners Strike', BBC Sheffield and South Yorkshire website: www.bbc.co.uk/southyorkshire/content/articles/2009/02/24/miners_strike_audio_video_feature.shtml
28 See Hughes' website: www.bettanyhughes.co.uk/home/talks/previous-talks/huw-wheldon-lecture-2011 for a link to the lecture.
29 However, according to the BDRC Continental report, older (50+) as well as white and lower middle-class (C1/C2) attendees were overrepresented: 'Hands on History Turn Back Time events', 15 December 2010.

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