Remembering Television
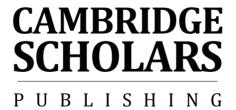
Remembering Television:
Histories, Technologies, Memories

Edited by

Kate Darian-Smith and Sue Turnbull

**CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS**

P U B L I S H I N G

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CHAPTER ONE

REMEMBERING AND MISREMEMBERING TELEVISION

Kate Darian-Smith and Sue Turnbull

When asked "What is History?", one of the schoolboy characters in the award-winning novella *The Sense of an Ending* by Julian Barnes offers the following definition attributed to a fictitious French scholar: "History is that certainty produced at the point where the imperfections of memory meet the inadequacies of documentation." (Barnes 2011, 7) As the essays gathered in this volume reveal, the history of television in Australia is indeed an uncertain matter, constructed as it often has been on patchy documentation and limited archival sources. These sources frequently have been accompanied by the memories—sometimes solicited by scholars—from individuals and communities about the "coming" of television to Australia and its subsequent personal, collective and national significance.

Yet we might ask whose memories have been collected or forgotten in the published histories of television—whether these are scholarly, popular or nostalgic accounts. How do the histories of television in Australia intersect with the growing field of memory studies to create new understandings of the cultural, social, institutional and political meanings of television in our everyday lives? And how might we theorise the relationships between history, television and memory?

This collection explores these issues, including an interrogation of media and television scholarship more generally. As John Hartley points out (this volume), in the endeavour to establish television studies as a serious field of academic inquiry, there has emerged a significant rift in what counts as knowledge. Thus the everyday "informal knowledge" about television and its technology as experienced by those who are watching it has been displaced by the "formal knowledge" of those equipped with the appropriate fashionable theory to analyse it. But there are cracks in this divide. As many chapters in this collection demonstrate,

the methodological practices of oral history and interviews with people about their memories of television have created new archives about television's place in everyday life, and have also altered the relationships between the past and the present. The internet, for instance, provides a forum—as Alan McKee's chapter in this volume clearly reveals—for amateur archivists and "professional" enthusiasts to document their own individualised memories of television *as* history in ways that may unsettle more conventional academic approaches.

Theoretical developments and methodological practices within the discipline of history itself may also disrupt existing histories of television. Most scholarly work on television in Australia—and indeed internationally —has been concerned with contemporary rather than historical issues: the coverage of current affairs and news; the impact of broadcasting technologies and regulations; and the production and reception of television programs. As Toby Miller and other scholars have emphasised, the experience of television has been "a fundamentally national phenomenon", particularly during the period from the 1950s to the 1980s (Miller 2010, 53). However, recent interest by historians in tracing the transnational flows of ideas, peoples, technologies and cultural production can provide important new insights into the global dimensions of "national" television as it was produced and experienced in Australia across several decades.

Memory studies also complicate and enrich our understandings of both television and history. The theorisation of memory and its engagement with politics and questions of identity, belonging, affect and temporality position the media as a both a repository and creator of memories—from the shaping of the inner, subjective self to the spheres of the social and the public. In discussing memory research and the cinema, Susannah Radstone (2010, 341) refers to as

> an "'intermedial" field of cultural memory, that extends to literature, photography, television, digital media, and beyond, articulating with public discourses and domains of many kinds as well as becoming assimilated within the hybrid scenes of our inner world.

This provides a useful positioning of television (and the media more generally) within memory studies, but as Radstone also points out there is still much research to be undertaken on how memories may be articulated across media, and between institutional and national sites (341).

The centrality of memory to the writing of history is now widely acknowledged, although debates continue about the oppositional role memory may play in the articulation and circulation of historical narratives. In an Australian context, the practices of oral testimony and the

interrogation of the past through memory work have been important in challenging and redefining national histories, including those about the place of Australia in the world—and the role of popular culture within Australian society (see Darian-Smith and Hamilton 1994; Radstone and Schwarz 2010). It is this integration between memory and history that informs the chapters in this volume, as scholars explore the "remembering" and meanings of television from a range of disciplinary perspectives.

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In his overview of television and its relationship with history, Paddy Scannell identifies a number of established approaches. There are, first, institutional histories of broadcasting, exemplified by the multi-volume documentation of the British Broadcasting Corporation—an extra-ordinarily ambitious project that commenced in the 1950s under the authorship of the eminent British social historian Asa Briggs (1961–95), and continues to this day. Other scholars followed Briggs in producing national histories of broadcasting, including Erik Barnouw on broadcasting in the United States (1966, 1968, 1970), Peter Day on New Zealand (2000) and Ken Inglis's masterly study of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (1983, 2006). Although some scholarship has begun to investigate broadcasting in wider comparative and regional contexts (see Hilmes 2004), this has not dislodged the primacy of the national and the institutional in historical narratives of broadcasting and its production, organisation and reception.

A second approach to the history of television has focused on technological innovation and development. In general, technological histories offer a narrative of progression, with the evolution of communication technologies from "wireless" telegraphy through to radio and then television transmission portrayed as almost seamless and certainly inevitable. Building on Adrian Forty's (1986) work on radio, Scannell argues that "the mediating stage in the transition from technology to domestic equipment is *design*" (2005, 55). The transformation of the broadcasting technologies used in making television, to the very materiality of the television set as an ordinary, domestic object—with a presence both invisible and integral as "part of the family" (Darian-Smith and Hamilton, this volume)—has been instrumental to the place of television and television programming in everyday life. Histories concerned with questions about the social and cultural meanings of television, and the impact of its technologies in enabling and disrupting our lives, form the third approach identified by Scannell: that of media histories and the study, across time, of how different communication

media become embedded in society. As Scannell (2005, 51) observes in relation to history and television:

> Television today makes the historical process visible. Through it we see the manifest claim that human beings do indeed make history; their own histories, the history of the country in which they live, the history of the world. But what is much harder to see is how to account for and understand these interlocking historical processes that are all embedded in each other.

One of the ways in which television has been embedded in the "interlocking processes" of the past might lie in the medium's role as a marker of modernity in the national imaginary; or the way in which memories of television constitute (in John Hartley's terms) both a history of "me" in terms of the individual and a history of "us" constituted as a group, family or nation; or the way in which our memories of the past are bound up inextricably with television as a companion to the experience.

Chris Healy's chapter in this volume terms this "companion memory", which is elicited through a set of memorial practices in which television's co-presence with the viewer becomes a form of historicity itself. Healy also notes that the history of television in Australia has often been overlooked by historians, who have been more interested in the ways that the historical content, from documentaries to historical dramas, has been portrayed in television programming. Healy argues that a truly comprehensive history of television needs to incorporate, rather than separate, the history *of* television and the history *on* television.

Another critical aspect of the relationship between television and history—and one that is central to Healy's notion of "companion memory"—is the mediation of memory by television. This may be particularly so in relation to the televised representations of key news items, which in a global context would encompass such events as the funeral of US President John F. Kennedy, the Vietnam War and other conflicts, the 9/11 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York in 2001, or more recently the 2011 tsunami and disaster at the Fukushima nuclear plant in Japan. In Australia's case, nationally significant televisual moments include the dismissal of the Whitlam government in 1975 and a series of natural disasters from Cyclone Tracy in 1974 to the Queensland floods of 2011. In each of these examples, television is the medium through which most people (except those who were there, obviously) witnessed history—albeit history as it was specifically framed for television within specific cultural contexts.

Television's role in mediating our understandings of news and current affairs, and in mediating the personal and national memories of those very events, may be highly contested. Through new research on the Australian television reporting of the Vietnam War during the 1960s and 1970s, Fay Anderson (this volume) argues that its influence was inconsequential in shaping Australian public opinion. Not only was there little coverage of the war's front line on Australian commercial and national television news, but the Australian government and the television networks themselves censored anti-war and other unfavourable content. Drawing upon interviews with Australian journalists who have first-hand recollections of the Vietnam War, Anderson's study serves to disrupt the popular memory that Vietnam was an "uncensored war", and that television coverage contributed to growing anti-war sentiment. This finding points to the dominance within Australia of a narrative that highlights the American experience and the role of the US media during the Vietnam War. It shows how popular memory—and, as Anderson points out, the widespread perceptions within the Australian military and the Australian media today—may be at odds with the historical record located in the archives.

 Pioneering Australian media scholar Liz Jacka has argued (2004) that in the wake of the "cultural turn" within television studies, writing the history of television in Australia presents several "problems and challenges" to conventional wisdom about the past. These include the need for a more expansive and probing analysis of the relationship between discourses about television, incorporating its programming and reception, and the social history of television within a multitude of Australian localities and across several decades. As is revealed in this collection, however, current histories of television have been shaped not only by the questions asked about broadcasting, technology and the nexus between society and the media, but by the sources available.

Histories of Australian television have been constructed from data as diverse as audience ratings (Jones and Bednall 1980) and the collection of "great moments" of television as nominated by Australians (McKee 2001), or with a focus on television advertising (Crawford 2006) or types of programming from news and current affairs to sport and entertainment. In tracking Australian histories of the media and their reception, Arrow, Griffen-Foley and Hughes-Warrington (2009, 68) acknowledge the inadequacy of archival sources:

> Those wishing to know what readers, listeners, and viewers thought of the
> ideas they encountered in the press, radio, film and television and how they

might have drawn such ideas into their lives and communities, deal more often with absence rather than the presence of evidence.

The same "absence of evidence" can be found in public archives in Australia, where historical material relating to the history of television, has—with the notable exception of archival records relating to the institutional history of national broadcasting—been uneven, if indeed it exists at all. As Lynn Spigel (2005) argues in an essay on the preservation of TV heritage in the United States, the logic of any television archive may be inexplicable. Apart from the fact that many early television programs were never recorded, and thus are accessible only in remembered form, those archives of television material that do exist are often incomplete, with the collection of recordings often partial or serendipitous. For example, the US Library of Congress was extremely slow in its establishment of a television archive:

> There was an attitude held by the Library of Congress acquisitions officers toward television programming which paralleled that of the scholarly community in general. The library simply underestimated the social and historical significance of the full range of television programming. There was no appreciation of television's future research value (Library of Congress website, cited in Spigel 2005).

As a result, very little material relating to US television during its "golden age" of the 1950s and 1960s was collected and preserved by the Library of Congress.

In the case of Australia, as Alan McKee (2011) has observed, while the National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA) has been active in its preservation of television current affairs programs, this has not extended to the collection of recordings of games shows, lifestyle programs and human-interest stories. In other words, a hierarchy clearly operated in relation to the perceived importance of preserving "serious" programming as opposed to what might be glossed as "entertainment". Yet, when McKee turned to YouTube—where "ordinary" people upload clips of their own favourite television moments and shows—he found that it was entertainment rather than edification that had been archived by Australians eager to share their memories and experience of television. Furthermore, although this YouTube historical archive of television clips, bloopers and programs might be ephemeral and unstable, he found it was more accessible than the NFSA website. The difference between the official NFSA archive and the unofficial YouTube postings is salutary, pointing to the very different ways in which the history of television may be collected

and archived—and remembered—through the acts of both collecting and viewing this material.

In these official and alternative histories of television, it is important to consider what gets remembered, by whom and for what purposes. Even more importantly, we need to consider what narratives and histories of television and its content, audience reception and broader cultural meanings may be marginalised or even forgotten. In this way, the role of the television archive can function as a technology of memory—or, perhaps specifically, as a means of collecting and preserving particular stories. For example, the archive of screen memories produced by the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI), as described by Helen Simondson in this volume, does not consist of a collection of memories that have been produced by and about television. Instead, the ACMI digital storytelling archive combines the technology of the small screen and the familiarity of its story makers and viewers with the scale and domesticity of television, in its recordings of the personal history and memory of individuals and communities.

Television may also be called to memory through the staging of celebratory events, including those that accompany historical "moments", and may provide an officially sanctioned version of the past. In Australia, the fifty-year anniversary of the commencement of television broadcasting in 1956—a date that in reality only applied to Sydney and Melbourne— was celebrated as a national event. The television networks screened several commemorative programs, and a number of popular and highly nostalgic publications were released (Luck 2005; Clark and Samuelson 2006; Horgan 2006; Place and Roberts 2006), including one solely on the national broadcaster ABC TV (Bowden 2006).

The anniversary was also marked by two significant exhibitions at major cultural institutions: *On the Box* at the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney and *TV50* at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image in Melbourne (see Hartley 2006). Both exhibitions proved extremely popular with visitors, indicating widespread public interest—particularly from older generations who could recall Australian television's early decades. Some volunteered their own memories of television, prompted by the exhibitions; these were then circulated in the print and electronic media. In a parallel case study, Geoff Lealand's chapter in this volume describes the commemoration activities during 2010 of fifty years of television transmission in New Zealand. These were primarily celebratory television programs, which largely ignored—or even "misremembered"—the experiences of "ordinary" viewers, a predicament that Lealand set out to

correct through the establishment of a blogsite intended to capture individual recollections of television.

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Fig. 1-1. Paul, Anthony and Michael Atkin watch television at their Croydon Park home, 18 November 1957
Source: Fairfax: FXJ205318. Reprinted with permission.

One of the most revealing aspects of initial Australian encounters with television is the way in which the experience was "prefigured" (after Biltereyst, Mathjis and Meers 2008) in the press for the viewing public. As Nick Herd's chapter reveals, this prefiguration stretched as far back as 1885, when television was first imagined as a technology that would enable "seeing at a distance". Commentary about television subsequently increased in volume during the 1920s and 1930s in the Australian press, where numerous reports of experiments with the medium in Britain and the United States, and at home in Australia, were described in detail. There was, however, much speculation in Australia about when this new medium of communication might become a viable reality. World War II delayed the introduction of television in Europe; in Australia, too, wartime

priorities were to redirect technological expertise away from its introduction of television over a decade.

However, what is particularly interesting about the prefiguration of television in Australia was how routinely the Australian experience (or expectation) of television was situated in relation to both the United States and Britain. This can be seen clearly in numerous press articles. For instance, in 1950 (some years before the introduction of television in Australia) an article in the *Kyabram Free Press* announced the forthcoming visit of the Astor Radio's Mobile Television Unit to this small country town in Victoria, to conduct "Television Trials". The demonstration receivers had been purchased in England at a cost of £45, while the accompanying camera and the transmission equipment were "also of English Manufacture" and "identical" to the equipment that was supplied to the BBC. The quality of the pictures to be seen in this demonstration held at the Kyabram Mechanics Hall was described as "similar in all respects to those seen in 200,000 homes in England". As justification for this Anglophone bias, the article asserted that Britain led the technical development of television, and that the images seen in the Kyabram demonstration were "a great deal better" than those received in 2.5 million homes in the United States. It was noted that while the imported sets used in the experiment would cost only £38 in Britain, this would increase to between £70 and £90 in Australia as a result of tax and other importation charges (*Kyabram Free Press*, 27 July 1950).

When the Astor television set finally became available, sets were advertised in the *Kyabram Free Press* at the staggering cost of "only" 179 guineas, but with the assurance that they had been "Specially designed for Fringe Area Reception" (*Kyabram Free Press*, 5 December 1957). What this special design entailed is unclear, but as Sue Turnbull and Stephanie Hanson both suggest in their respective chapters in this volume, this kind of "special design" indicates the many problems encountered by those living in regional Australia when it came to obtaining access to television transmission. The continent's vast spread, and in some areas its mountainous terrain, delayed equal access to television across Australia. Although viewers in Melbourne and Sydney could, by the end of 1956, watch television on one national and two commercial stations, broadcasting was not available in other state capitals for some years, and in remote Australia for some decades.

The endeavours of Australians who lived outside state capital cities to view television are the specific subject of Hanson's chapter. Her detailed research on the south-eastern corner of Australia, in an area caught between the sea and the mountains of the Great Dividing Range, reveals

the frustrations of rural communities as they attempted to "capture a signal". Non-existent or reduced access to the new technology of television only increased its assumed status as a medium of social and national connection. Nonetheless, the introduction of television has most often been remembered (or misremembered) as a national event, with the pervasiveness of television programming—including Australian content—as a common and unifying experience that brought Australians together. Hanson demonstrates how in country Australia the memories of the early years of television are bound up in a broader and ongoing discourse about rural misfortune and the lack of services that are seen to characterise the urban–rural divide.

The histories of television's transmission, reception and meanings within the everyday lives of non-metropolitan Australians serve to recuperate the rural cultural studies and the histories of rural communities (see Darian-Smith, Gorman-Murray and Gibson 2008) as both a part of and a disruption to the idea of a national narrative. They also highlight the significance of place and time to the ways in which television is experienced and remembered. In a perceptive analysis of Sydney as a site where television is produced, and a city that has variously been represented as a locale in television programs, Albert Moran (2010, 254) points to the usefulness of the terminology "Television in Australia" rather than the more encompassing and nationally focused "Australian Television". Sue Turnbull's chapter in this volume also highlights the significance of place, as opposed to nation, in the ways television is remembered and located within some life story narratives.

Place is not the only determinant of how television was experienced. One particular set of neglected memories of television is that of the many migrants who came to Australian after World War II. In their chapter on the first decade of television in Australia, Kate Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton not only explore the rapid take-up of the new technology and the ways in which the television set was integrated into the interior design and decoration of Australian homes, but reveal how the arrival of television in Australia coincided with mass-scale immigration from Britain and Europe. Tracing a history that has partially been retrieved through oral interviews, they argue that television played a key role in the integration of migrants—especially those from non-English speaking cultures—into the "Australian way of life". At the same time, the presence of much US and UK content also meant that television had a key role in bringing the values and "sounds" of other cultures—particularly American culture—into the domestic spaces of Australian homes.

From 1980, the role of the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) in presenting "multicultural" television programs in languages other than English was to have an impact on how ordinary people imagined themselves in relation to the rest of the world (Ang, Hawkins and Dabboussy 2008). Kelly Jean Butler's study (this volume) of the ABC's popular documentary program *Australian Story*, which consists of the first-person testimonies of individuals who have had life-changing moments or interesting biographies, raises yet again the significance of the national in the histories of television programming and reception. Butler argues that it is the common elements present across the extraordinary diversity of the Australian experiences recollected in *Australian Story* that unite audiences "to produce a loose form of national community through the affirmation of shared stories".

Everyone has their own memories of television, their own significant moments, their own recollections of how television played a role in their past—and in these memories, how television was imbricated in the routines of everyday life, the structures of family, the business of being. Favourite programs are core to what may be emotionally charged recollections of and experiences associated with television; remembering television is a highly subjective process, and for many people it is a pleasurable one. In her chapter, Frances Bonner explores the "spin-off" products generated to promote television programs and celebrity personalities, ranging from cookbooks to annuals to pens and photographs. As the programs they were produced to promote are no longer broadcast, many products from the early decades of television continue to have a status and meaning of their own, and have often become highly collectible and historic items. This material culture of television is not just important as a trigger for memories, Bonner argues; these things are "technologies of attachment" that open up "the richness of the televisual experience".

Indeed, it is the very richness and diversity of the experiences, meanings and influences of television in Australia that run throughout the discussion in all the chapters in this volume. In bringing the different approaches and investigations of the contributors together in one book, our aim has been to highlight how new and multiple stories of television history might be narrated, theorised and researched. The chapters have been arranged into three sections entitled "Histories", "Technologies" and "Memories", but we acknowledge that these themes are intertwined and highly dynamic. Our hope is that *Remembering Television* will serve as both a provocation and an invitation to join us in rethinking the role of the medium and its history—not in the pursuit of any certainty about the past, but in the construction of a more complex account that allows for the

inclusion of those memories about the experiences of television in everyday life that hitherto have been overlooked or forgotten. Everyone, it seems, has a story about the place of television in their lives. It is time to listen, and to reflect on what these narratives might tell us about the remembering and misremembering of television in Australia, and the relationships between history, memory and the media more generally.

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PART I:
HISTORIES

CHAPTER TWO

A GAP IN THE RECORDS:
TELEVISION AUDIENCES
AND THE HISTORY OF "US"

Sue Turnbull

National television archives routinely collect all manner of material about the medium, including information about producers, performers and writers, as well as copies of the programs in which they were involved. While this is already a highly selective archive (see McKee, this volume), in media studies terms the industry and text side of the television equation has been relatively well attended to. Less well observed is how television was actually watched or what it meant to those who were doing the watching in specific historical, geographical and cultural locations, both then or now. In industry terms, the audience is rarely visible except as an anonymous ratings statistic, which is best regarded as the currency employed in the TV trade to leverage funds. However, these statistics don't tell us very much about how television was woven into the lives of its audience in any real way. With this gap in the records in mind, it is salutary to note how often claims are made about the experience of television or the impact it has had on its viewers without anything but the slightest of clues.

In this chapter, I therefore discuss some of those occasions when the Australian television audience has been sighted in all its peculiar and local specificity. The chapter begins with a revealing personal anecdote by an academic (Morris 1990) before proposing how a different kind of television history might be constructed by those who lived it. This proposition is based on the first stage of an ARC research project on Australian television and popular memory in which I am currently engaged with some of the other contributors to this volume.[1]

In her essay "Banality and Cultural Studies", Meaghan Morris (1990) rehearses a personal memory about the coming of television "rather late" to Australia in 1956, and later still in the country region in which she

lived, "where the distance between towns was immense for the technology of the time" (1990: 15; see also Hanson, this volume). For Morris, the arrival of television was heralded by the voice of Lucille Ball shattering the "pervasive silence" of the bush some time in the early 1960s and the concomitant fear on the part of unspecified others that "by some mimesis or contagion" of her shrillness, Lucy would "metabolically transform" Australians into something else—Americans and/or possibly feminists. Morris then reveals, in a memory of a memory, that her father's primary objection to Lucy was her American accent, which reminded him of the Pacific War, something he would rather forget. Morris proceeds to juxtapose this Lucy anecdote with yet another television memory from 1974: the announcement on Christmas Eve that something had happened to the Northern Territory capital of Darwin, although no further news or images were forthcoming. It took twenty-four hours before people learned that Darwin had been effectively "wiped out" by Cyclone Tracy, Morris tells us, conflating her personal memory with a projected collective memory in the process.

For Morris—or rather for Jean Baudrillard, whose work she is discussing here—while the Lucy memory might suggest an historical moment when concern about television was connected with its effects on "the real", the Darwin memory illustrates a growing concern that television itself "generates the real" to such an extent that "any interruption in its processes of doing so is experienced as more catastrophic in the lounge room than the 'real' catastrophe elsewhere" (Morris 1990, 15). Morris then deploys these two memories of television in the service of a larger argument illustrating the increasing banality of cultural studies as a populist enterprise celebrating resistance. Her major point is that that neither French theorist Baudrillard's élitism nor cultural studies populism leaves much place for an "unequivocally pained, ambivalently discontented or momentarily *aggressive* subject". In other words—and these are mine—the experience of the *real* audience remains unaccounted for.

This brings Morris to a discussion of Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1988), a text much in vogue among cultural theorists in the 1980s and 1990s that she characterizes as advocating a "science of singularity"; "a science of the relationships that links everyday pursuits to particular circumstances" (Morris 1990, 27). The problem Morris has with de Certeau, however, is the issue of "voice"—the voice of the theorist who subordinates "the obedient voice of the popular" to his (usually) own project. Morris, it emerges, is on the side of the disgruntled feminists and the voiceless. To provide my own gloss once again, she is speaking here

for the "ordinary" television viewer whose voice is never heard in all its unpredictable orneriness.

I've begun with Morris because her essay, which I have cheerfully cannibalized for my own purposes here, is one of the first TV memories I recalled when contemplating the topic of television and popular memory in Australia. Significantly, the only bits of the essay that I remembered in any detail were Morris's descriptions of the coming of the American sit-com *I Love Lucy*, and her critique of cultural studies scholars for their championing of "resistance" through the appropriation of the popular, a position with which I had considerable sympathy at the time. Looking again at Morris's essay twenty years on, my attention is now on the ways in which it continues to provoke reflection on the topics of television history and popular memory, which have particular resonance for the project of this book and the larger ARC research project on which I am engaged.

The first of these reflections has to do with the expectations of the project itself, the idea that through an exploration of popular memory—which I take to mean the memory of the populace—we will better be able to "understand how a technology like television has been used as a social space by the popular audience" (Hartley 2008, 4). In order to do this, obviously we first have to locate those memories, something that may not be as easy as it seems. The national archives do not routinely collect or hold popular memories of television, unless they are the memories of those who have in some way been involved directly in television production. Morris's TV memories, it might be noted, occur in a paper about something other than memories of television, and are made to do a very different kind of work than to illustrate the "social space" marked out by television. Memories of "ordinary" people (who prove themselves to be extraordinary all the time) are rarely to be found in the traditional and official archives—although, as Alan McKee suggests, other sites such as YouTube and fan-produced archives may well prove invaluable for at least some aspects of our study (McKee 2011).

As John Hartley has argued elsewhere, in an essay that deals provocatively with the topic of television "historiography", television as an object of study is usually constructed within "the endless present of science, policy, journalism and critique" (Hartley 2008, 223). In other words, with a handful of exceptions, the attempt to render television "historically" has barely begun. We are, as Hartley points out, still in the first stages of a "primitive accumulation" of the "knowledge field" (2008, 224). Furthermore, Hartley proposes that there has as yet been no attempt "to integrate television into nation-building narratives" that would reveal

how television as it has been experienced might contribute to a shared cultural history (2008, 238). While this is a perfectly laudable aim, it would appear from the evidence thus far that the concept of the "nation" that might emerge from this study will have to be reimagined in order to accommodate a diversity of television experience across a vast continent inhabited by people more different in their tele-viewing experiences than they are the same.

In order to get to that point, and in the interests of "primitive accumulation", the study in which we have been engaged began by attempting to capture "popular memories" by setting up a dedicated website (http://www.tvlandaustralia.com) that invited people to upload their memories of television. Despite a rush of visitors after a radio discussion of the project on ABC Radio National between 4.00 am and 5.00 am on the morning of Saturday, 29 August 2009, relatively few people appeared willing to post at that time, even though the telephone board at the ABC was full and we spoke to over fifteen people during fifty minutes on air about their TV memories. This experience has led me to speculate (as Lealand also does in this volume) about the viability of this form of data-gathering. Building a website does not mean they will come. It may well be that the people we are trying to attract to the site do not feel comfortable "posting", preferring other means of contacting us. Indeed, I received a number of personal emails and phone calls and even handwritten letters after the show from people who had tracked me down via my university website and who appeared more than willing to share their memories via other forms of mediated communication, with which they felt more comfortable. It might also be noted that this particular group of respondents may be a very select group of shift workers, early risers or even insomniacs who listen to the radio at that time of the morning, suggesting that reflections on the role of television in their lives might well be embedded in other media practices, both then and now.

One of the striking features of those personal memories of television that we have received is how often they reflect a direct and personal involvement with the medium, and it is these personal and significant moments that are prioritized, rather than the everyday routines—which may well be a consequence of the conditions of the telling. Being asked for a memory provokes the need to tell a compelling story. However, even more revealing is that, for the respondents to our study, their television experience is not that of being constructed as a consumer as so many audience studies of television would like to suggest. Instead, it is configured by each and every viewer as an intensely personal "history of

me" (Hartley 2008, 5). Here I might cite an email that I received from Jane Holmes after the ABC radio broadcast:

> The first week that TV was shown in Australia I had my photo taken at the races. I was so thrilled wearing a dress I had made myself and only 19, the guy from the fashion cameras approached me to sit for him. I have never seen the footage but friends and relatives did as they went to the Balmain Bowling Club and they had a TV. I also appeared on *My Home* with Del Cartwright and Tony Ward. Also appeared on *The Marriage Game*. And when my aunt watched *The Perry Como Show* no one was allowed in or out of the lounge room and as a result of that her daughter and her husband were robbed two weeks in a row.

In response, I asked Jane whether she had any photos that were taken on the day at the races and additional information about her *My Home* appearance. The next day I received the following amplification:

> Sorry I don't have any photos of myself on TV. The *My Home* programme was a morning chat show which I was watching while recovering from an ectopic pregnancy operation. I was not allowed to do any housework and was watching TV. I went to make myself a cup of tea and when I came back into the room Tony was saying "So if you have a gripe write and let us know and you could win …" So I wrote a letter complaining about bus conductors—who at the time saw you coming with small children and shot upstairs on the bus to avoid helping you in any way. I then got a telegram from Channel 7 asking me to appear on the programme. This was live to air so I have never seen footage of that either. *The Marriage Game* was a panel of four couples who had to answer questions about their partners. The more you knew about your partner the higher your score. My first husband and I ran third in a field of four so now you know why I have a second husband …

This wealth of detail and associations presents an enormous challenge for our study. How do we deal with the specificity of these memories—these "histories of me"—without being either reductive or not reductive enough? How can we keep from silencing these voices in all their particularity and yet still be able to say something interesting about people, television and the way in which it is remembered? How can we avoid, in Morris's words, silencing the "aggressive" subject as we endeavour to construct a shared cultural history? For example, in his excellent book about early American TV audiences, *A Word From Our Viewers*, Ray Barfield (2008) presents an oral history of the coming of television to the United States, using the letters and interviews he has collected grouped around the following themes—and I'm using some of his chapter headings

here: Anticipations and First Sightings; Test Pattern Days: We've Got TV!; Antennas, Rotors and Hope; TV Behaviours and Protocols. Within each of these chapters, a particular master narrative emerges, constructed around and illustrated by selected quotations.

On the one hand, it could be argued that Barfield is writing a popular book to be read by those whose memories he has collected, which is intended to be enjoyed much in the way that Jane Holmes enjoyed listening to what other people said on the radio about their experiences of television in Australia. On the other hand, what frustrates me as an audience researcher—or whatever I am for the purposes of this project—is that Barfield really doesn't do much with these narratives. They are simply fractured and placed in a larger narrative about the arrival of television without interrogation or critical analysis, so that when it comes to answering a question like "What kind of memories are these?" or "How has television functioned as a shared cultural history?" readers are left to work it out for themselves. Nor does Barfield pay any attention to how these stories might contribute to ideas about the nation and the national, or indeed the local and the regional, which are the emerging foci of our own study about the coming of television to Australia. To be fair to Barfield, he has indeed written a popular book for his respondents to read rather than an academic study that seeks to push the boundaries in terms of thinking through the issues it raises about media history, media practices and how these are remembered and talked about.

However, in thinking about possible approaches to our project, I'm concerned with precisely these problems: what is the best way to provide more insight both into the experience of television and the ways in which it is remembered? For example, notice how even in the two examples offered here, both Meaghan Morris and Jane Holmes tether their experiences of television firmly to their embodied experience of place: the bush and attending the races in a new dress respectively. Nor can I ignore that, for both, the memories of television are connected to other memories: a father traumatized by his memories of war; the unhelpfulness of tram conductors. Furthermore, both Morris and Holmes use their memories of television to do other work. Morris's story about television allows her to move into a discussion of current trends in cultural studies, while Holmes' stories dramatize a range of personal triumphs and tragedies: the making of a dress, an ectopic pregnancy, the failure of her first marriage. What is also blindingly obvious is how different these memories are from the official histories of television as a medium, especially in the ways in which they embed the television experience in other practices.