

University of Massachusetts Amherst

From the Selected Works of Emily E. West

2010

Reality Nations: An International Comparison of the Historical Reality Genre

Emily West, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*



Available at: https://works.bepress.com/emily_west/13/

Chapter 14

REALITY NATIONS: AN INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON OF THE HISTORICAL REALITY GENRE

Emily West

University of Massachusetts Amherst, USA

When 1900 House (Hoppe, 2000) premiered in the UK in 2000, a hybrid television form was born that would spawn spin-offs and imitators over the next several years in several other countries. These series place people in historical settings, asking them to leave their 21st century lives behind, and live within the material and social constraints of the past for a period of three or four months. Part historical documentary, part re-enactment, part gamedoc - like Survivor, and part observational reality show or docusoap - like The Real World, the new historical reality genre drew upon a number of formulae. From the historical documentary tradition it inherited the pedagogical mission of addressing historical ignorance and shoring up national collective memory; from reality genres it drew emphases on entertainment and putting "real people" in visually and emotionally interesting situations.

Historical reality programs have been border-crossers not only in terms of genre, but literally, across national boundaries. One of the prominent features of reality television in general is the part it plays in the increasingly global flows of television concepts (Bignell, 2005). The success of 1900 House led to spin-off House series not only in the UK but in the USA, Australia, New Zealand, and Spain, and closely related imitator series in Canada, Australia, and Germany (Gardam, 2003; Outright Distribution). Many of these series also aired across national boundaries, such as when the US-UK co-productions aired in both countries, and when Australia and New Zealand broadcasters imported the American, British, and Canadian reality series.

An international comparison of the historical reality genre provides a new case study of the global circulation of a reality format. However, it also allows an international comparison of discourse about national identity and its perceived reality, taking the programs themselves as sites for that discourse as well as the discourse (highly mediated of course) of the people who volunteer to take part in them. This chapter takes national sentiment and identity as its primary analytic focus. The historical reality genre might be somewhat globalized, but its orientation is resolutely national, something it has in common with most other genres of

reality TV. While much social theory at this historical moment is rightly focused on the transnational, the global, and the cosmopolitan, we cannot lose sight of the dominance of the nation in delimiting the boundaries of the public sphere for many, if not most, people (Schlesinger, 2008). Further, the nation still serves as a dominant context for feelings of group identity and belongingness. Reality TV has played its part in the examination and re-articulation of national identity and belongingness, across numerous national contexts. These include some of the most successful global exports, such as *Big Brother* and *Pop Idol*, always linked to national or regional contexts. These programs ask who is the best American or French singer, or what will happen when a cross-section of national or continental (as in *Big Brother Africa*) subjects live together under constant surveillance. In addition to these global reality formats there are examples of national self-examinations through the reality genre unique to specific nations and regions – such as Macedonia's *That's Me*, a *Big-Brother*-like reality show featuring representatives of different parts of the former Yugoslavia (Volcic, 2008); or *George ka Pakistan* (Georges' Pakistan), in which an Anglo, British volunteer tries to earn Pakistani citizenship, through a popular vote, by proving that he can “make it” living life in Pakistan.¹ Reality TV, while a global trend that often features the export and circulation of global formats, tends to focus on questions of local, and particularly national, interest.

Historical reality TV, in particular, falls into the category of media memory projects that posit national collective memory, and by extension national identity, as a problem or lack that should be repaired. The settings for these programs are hardly random. They feature times and places with symbolic resonance in national mythologies. Whether turn of the century middle-class Brits, pioneers on the American frontier, or Newfoundlanders eking out an existence in a remote fishing village, these programs purport to revisit the past through the experiences of the reality participants, in order to shed light on the origins of the nation today. The subtext, and sometimes the explicit text, is that the programs seek to recapture the essence of the nation, an essence that is currently elusive. The relation between contemporary national subjects and the historical ones whose experiences are to be re-enacted is presented as problematic. Are contemporary national subjects worthy – are they as hardy and courageous as their national forebears? These questions provide the premise for historical reality television.

For this chapter I examine a sample of seven historical reality mini-series that aired between 2000 and 2005 in English-speaking countries, ranging from four to eight episodes each. They were chosen based on the accessibility of the program DVDs, how well they were received, as well as on my familiarity with the national contexts in which they are set. These series are mainly from the British Commonwealth, and in many cases, are set in a colonial context. The programs examined here include *1900 House* (Hoppe, 2000), *1940s House* (Graham, 2001), and *Edwardian Country House* (Graham and Willis, 2002) (retitled *Manor House* when it aired in the United States), meant to represent 1905-1914 in a big country manor house – all from Great Britain; American series *Frontier House* (Hoppe, 2002), set in 1880s Montana and *Colonial House* (Hoppe, 2004), a re-creation of the Plymouth Colony in 1628; from Canada *Quest for the Bay* (Brown, 2001), which re-creates an 1840 voyage of “Yorkmen” who carried goods and furs for the Hudson Bay Company, by boat, from Winnipeg to Hudson Bay, and *Quest for the Sea* (Brown, 2004), which depicts a remote

¹ Thanks to Dr. Salman Hameed for bringing this program to my attention.

outport fishing village in Newfoundland in 1939; and Australia's Outback House (Borum, 2005) – set on an 1861 sheep station in New South Wales, and The Colony (Hilton, 2005) – set in a remote valley near Sydney in the early 19th century. The British series were joint productions by Channel Four – a British public service broadcaster that, unlike the BBC, features commercial advertising (Born, 2003) – and Wall to Wall Television, an independent British production company. Wall to Wall came to the U.S. and partnered with the New York public broadcasting station WNET to produce Frontier House and Colonial House. Outback House, originally a co-production with Wall to Wall, ended up as solely a production of ABC – the Australian Broadcasting Corporation – Australia's public broadcaster, and The Colony was a private-public international collaboration between production company Hilton Cordell and Irish public broadcaster Radio Telefís Éireann, The History Channel UK and the New South Wales Film and Television Office and its Regional Film Fund. Like the Australian productions, the Canadian "Quest" series were not part of the official "House" series, but were produced by independent production company Frantic Films, which made the programs in association with the cable channels History Television and the Life Network, with funding from the Canadian TV Fund and the Government of Manitoba. The connections with public broadcasters and public sources of funding meant that an educational mission and a nationalist orientation were elements of all the series.

These historical reality series achieved the somewhat rare combination of decent ratings with the prestigious glow of educational, quasi-documentary programming. Of course, these ratings must be interpreted relative to other programs with similar goals, that target similar audiences. Historical reality is certainly not in the same league of blockbuster reality hits like *Survivor* or *Big Brother*, but that has not been the genre's goal. These programs have sought to bring the reality format to a "quality" audience, to be popular within a particular niche, and to merge education and entertainment. However, ratings are important even for public broadcasters, and increasingly so. The ratings success was a major factor in the number of spin-off series inspired by the original Wall to Wall 1900 House production. While *Variety* dubbed 1900 House a "modest ratings success" for Channel Four, with its peak audience of 3.5 million viewers (Fry, 2000), it did double Channel Four's ratings in its time slot (Stanistreet, 1999). 1940s House did even better, with a peak primetime audience of 3.7 million viewers (Broadcast now, 2001), and Edwardian Country House also premiered at 3.6 million (Broadcast now, 2002). When 1900 House aired in the US, it earned an average of almost five million viewers per episode, more than doubling PBS' regular prime-time audience (Pereira, 2001), and making it the highest-rated multi-episode show of the season (Daily News, 2000). The American House spin-offs examined in this chapter, Frontier House and Colonial House, were also considered ratings successes for PBS. The audience for Frontier House was more than six million viewers (Baker, 2002), with Colonial House also bringing "tremendous viewership" according to a PBS executive (quoted in Jones, 2004).

Although the Canadian ratings appear small in comparison, *Quest for the Bay's* debut at 352,000 viewers made it one of History Television's (a Canadian cable channel) highest rated programs up to that point (Posner, 2002). In Australia, Outback House was a great ratings hope for public broadcaster ABC. While it started out strong at 1.2 million viewers, even beating *Big Brother* in Melbourne (Edmonds, Dennehy and Adams, 2005), its ratings dropped significantly in later weeks (Neill, 2005). Meanwhile The Colony aired on SBS - Australia's Special Broadcasting Service - which is tasked to reflect the diversity and multiculturalism of the country, and hence has lower expectations for ratings. The series debuted with 550,000

viewers, which was a record for the first episode of an Australian dramatic series on SBS, and was also the second highest-rated program of the year for the network (SBS Corporation, 2005).

As existing scholarship on the historical reality genre notes, these programs tend to be nationalist projects pursuing an ultimately elusive goal, a way to “know” the past, to transcend facts and dates and get inside the heads of historical subjects (Arrow, 2007; Edwards, 2007; Gapps, 2007; Rymsza-Pawlowska, 2007; Taddeo and Dvorak, 2007). It may be no accident that the original 1900 House series aired on the eve of the millennium, looking back almost 100 years to 1900 with intense curiosity, illustrating the truism that “the past is a foreign country” (Lowenthal, 1999), and trying to overcome that sense of foreignness through the reality formula. Certainly, to some extent, the series were successful. As period expert Daru Rooke comments on 1900 House, while replicas of Victorian houses are produced for museums, even experts are unsure of how things actually worked day-to-day. Joyce Bowler, the matriarch of the 1900 House, expresses her desire that the experience be authentic as possible, saying “Not that I’m play-acting it, but that I’m really living 1900” (1900 House, Episode 1).

Edwardian Country House seems to have been particularly successful in developing an Edwardian mindset among many of the participants. As housemaid Rebecca remarks, at the end of the series:

It’s been bizarre at times. Working alone in a room, suddenly look up and catch sight of myself in a mirror, in all my clothes, surrounded by all these Edwardian things, and thinking Edwardian. I’m not thinking anything whatsoever to do with my modern life. (*Edwardian Country House*, Episode 6)

Some of the “upstairs” family in the Edwardian House slip into their lives of privilege and status even more easily than the servants, such that Anna Olliff-Cooper comments by the end of the series that, “I actually now feel like mi’lady” (*Edwardian Country House*, Episode 6).

However, it quickly became clear that those who chose to participate paired the project of capturing the experiences and perspectives of people in the past with another, more personal project: to examine and come to know themselves. As much as these programs are nationalist projects, they are also projects of the self. Time travel presents a testing ground for getting to know the self, or explore the limits of the self, in a way that people perceive not being possible in their contemporary, everyday, unexamined lives. In this way the historical reality television genre has much in common with other “social experiment” reality programs, such as *Big Brother*, *The Real World*, and *Survivor*. As Mark Andrejevic (2004) has observed, the unreality of reality TV – its artificiality, its “social laboratory” premise, and the way it naturalizes constant surveillance – actually leads many participants to see the experience as an opportunity to be real, to be authentic, and to come to know the self in a way that is understood to be impossible in one’s every day, “real” life.

There are commonalities across the national iterations of historical reality TV that can be attributed to the application of formula, which applies to those programs within the Wall to Wall House franchise as well as its imitators. Despite some of the different conditions of production, and the differing settings and national myths that the programs tap into, what is remarkable is their similarities, even for the series that aren’t officially part of the *House*

franchise, including: some kind of challenge that the participants must meet by the end of the series – particularly prominent in the Canadian, American and Australian versions; the use of experts to show the participants how to live in an authentically historical way; the use of anachronistic video cameras with which participants can record their “confessionals” or video diaries; a festival or party day; and a preoccupation with whether participants are cheating by living outside the historical rules of the day.

Beyond these elements in the genre’s formula, there are similar dynamics of nationalism and the self that unfold across each of these series. Participants report taking part in historical reality series in order to test and come to know the true self. However, having to inhabit historical subject positions is frequently the catalyst for a crisis of the self, as people learn to live within the considerable constraints of the past. In particular, many find that they have to sacrifice their sense of individuality for the roles associated with their actual or assigned gender, race, class, or religious historical identities. In this way, the nationalist project embarked upon by the programs is threatened; the specificities of the volunteers’ experiences expose the abstractions, even the fictional nature of a national identity. The project of bolstering national identity is further threatened by the unpleasant historical realities that the series deal with, particularly the realities of colonialism. However, the theme of sacrifice repairs these fissures, ultimately transforming these programs into commemorative rituals of nationalism, for both participants and viewers. The unreality of reality television, and in particular the ways in which the re-enacted sacrifices can never approximate the actual sacrifices of the past, actually strengthen the series’ nationalist project.

One of the main uses of mass media is the brokering of group identities and sentiments, and given the national organization and regulation of much media, the group in question is often the nation. This chapter uses the analytic lens of ritual to understand how reality television participates in the production of group identities and sentiments. Marvin and Ingle (1999) define ritual as, “memory-inducing behavior that has the effect of preserving what is indispensable to the group” (p.129). Alexander (2004) writes, “Ritual effectiveness energizes the participants and attaches them to each other, increases their identification with the symbolic objects of communication, and intensifies the connection of the participants and the symbolic objects with the observing audience...” (p.527). As symbolic forms of communication that have as the implicit, and often explicit aim, a greater connection between members of the national group through “intensified” connections to the past, or at least to an imagined past, historical reality series are media rituals aimed at bolstering national sentiment.

Modern nations, in particular, must create a sense of groupness and belonging among people who are dispersed, diverse, and often fragmented along lines of ideology, identity, and access to power. The task of creating a sense of national connection to some kind of mythical center is a challenging one. Alexander (2004) writes, “Performances in complex societies seek to overcome fragmentation by creating flow and achieving authenticity. They try to recover a momentary experience of ritual, to eliminate or to negate the effects of social and cultural de-fusion” (p.548). As Benedict Anderson (1983) points out, it is through mass media that these performances are most often disseminated and experienced.

Complementing reflections on the importance of public rituals in group formation, Marvin and Ingle (1999) consider the role of representation in modeling origin moments of group “creation-sacrifice” (p.130). These moments of re-presenting or mimicking past sacrifices understood to have given birth to or strengthened the nation are commemorations

that renew group identities for the time being, until the next commemoration or moment of creation-sacrifice. The reality show volunteers produce a commemorative ritual of sacrifice in part by mimicking the past – creating something that looks like or resembles past sacrifice – what Marvin and Ingle term “sympathetic magic” (ibid., p.130). But in addition they actually do engage in bodily sacrifice – the sacrifices of hard work, deprivation, suffering through difficult conditions, and sometimes even injury. The programs, then, contain elements of both “contagious magic” (actual bodily contact) and “sympathetic magic” (imitation) (ibid., p.130).

In sum, I consider the historical reality genre not as just a globalized reality formula, but as a cultural form whose logic and traction can be traced to the project, common to most national contexts, of producing or strengthening political identities through symbolic forms that hail a national self through the emotional appeal of ritual.

REALITY TV AND THE SELF

Although there are certainly historical insights that one can learn from these programs, they are more so about exploring and discovering the self. Here I agree with Malgorzata Rymysza-Pawlowska (2007), who wrote about *Frontier House*, that:

Reality television...is not so much an account of the event, *but of the experience*. Documentary focuses on actions but reality television turns its attention to the actors. It is personalities that make reality shows memorable, as opposed to specific incidents. (emphasis in original, p.37)

For viewers, the accuracy of the historical setting is probably less important than the feeling that they are watching real people’s reactions to unusual circumstances.

The participants describe a number of different motivations for taking part in these programs. Several people across the series cite their desire to escape the commercialism and distractions of modern life and technologies. A number of the families hope that they will experience more quality time with their children, and come together as a family unit. Some people’s participation is inspired by particular ancestors or family members whose experiences they are hoping to honor through their own re-enactments. And some hope to recapture values that they associate with past eras, such as democracy, spirituality, connection to the land, and community.

In addition to these motivations, we often hear that the past provides a testing ground against which people can more clearly see or perceive their selves. Early in the *Quest for the Sea* series, the narrator asserts that, “Harold, like the others, has come to measure himself” (Episode 1). Joyce, the matriarch of the *1900 House*, looks back on the experience saying, “I’ve not only discovered lots about the period, about history, but about myself as well” (Episode 4). Similar to Joyce, Dan in *Outback House* reflects on his personal growth throughout the program: “This experience for me has become a rite of passage. This is much bigger than just giving something a go, or making a television show. For me this is testing what kind of man I am” (Episode 5). In a final example, Jonathan in *Colonial House*, after coming out as a gay man to the whole colony in Episode 4, reflects:

It's kind of ironic that I had to go back to the 17th century, an era of absolute intolerance, to really find myself, be honest with myself, and come out. And I'm going to take that back into the 21st century, and live with it for the rest of my life.

It's fascinating to see how many participants see a reality show in a historical setting as the opportunity to answer the question "who am I?" and "what am I capable of?" In this sense, historical reality television has much in common with other genres of reality television where, Mark Andrejevic (2004) argues, the "social experiment" and the constant surveillance are often viewed by participants not as intrusions or limits on their personal freedom, but as opportunities for a journey of self-discovery. Ironically, the panoptic experience becomes a guarantor or facilitator of authenticity, such that surveillance comes to be seen as a therapeutic condition, rather than an oppressive one. Although the re-enactment of a past historical era may seem patently artificial, much of reality television trades on the "reality of artifice" (Andrejevic, 2004, p.138). The more contrived the situation, the more of a "real" insight we are supposedly getting into the psyches of the reality show participants. In historical reality television, the fact that the scenario is contrived is never denied or hidden from view. Rather, it is the fidelity or authenticity of the contrivance – how "real" the artificial setting can be made – that is the only question. In fact, in *1900 House*, the first episode was devoted to the transformation of a 1999 house into a 1900 era house, and the struggles and challenges that the historical experts had in trying to re-construct the house with as much accuracy as possible. The construction of the artificial situation was offered as part of the viewing pleasure.

People may choose to take part in these programs to test their true mettle – to come to know the self better in a challenging, unusual, highly monitored situation. However, the programs fundamentally challenge modern ideas of the self organized by choice and self-determination by placing people in historical contexts where the self is organized by necessity, duty, and rigid social norms. No matter the particular historical era in question or the role being enacted, these reality show volunteers find their historical situation to be characterized by fewer choices, fewer freedoms, less room for expression of their individuality, and more constraints – both physical and social. Very soon into her stay in the *Edwardian Country House*, Antonia, who plays a servant, says:

I think I'm going to cope with the independence thing with difficulty. I'm wanting to go downtown now, and explore, and go round the house. And I can't do it all. I just have to be told what to do, where to stand, when to go, when to get changed, what time I'm getting up, what time to have dinner. And I just want to go into town to the pub and have a bevvie [an alcoholic beverage], and I can't, and it's really strange. (Episode 1)

Participants across the series frequently have a crisis of the self at a point where the ways they are compelled to act and be, in order to re-enact the past, give them a sense of losing the self they thought they were. How much of our selves is essential or within us, and how much of our selves is produced by the contexts in which we find ourselves? Participants in historical reality programs routinely face this rather existential question. Sometimes the sense of transformation and turning into someone else is achieved through relatively small details, such as in *1900 House* when Joyce remarks that wearing 1900 dress makes her feel like "a completely different person" (Episode 4), or in *Edwardian Country House* when the maids

observe that the class hierarchy is established very effectively and immediately through etiquette, clothes, and hair (Episode 1).

Modern participants, whose self-image generally demands that they respect the equality of persons, and whose impulse it is to try to make decisions that affect the entire group democratically, have considerable trouble acting out the values of the past organized by hierarchy and obedience. Scholar Michelle Arrow (2007) has drawn attention to the following exchange in Episode 2 of the Australian series *Outback House*, when Juli, who has been cast as squatter's wife (the squatter is at the top of the social hierarchy on the sheep station), tries to resolve a conflict with Carolina the cook, who is her employee. Carolina has been frustrated because the maids who are supposed to help her in the kitchen haven't been working hard enough. Because Juli doesn't run the house with a 19th century attitude towards hierarchy and authority, Carolina has taken on the task of discipline herself, to Juli's dismay:

Juli: We are all equal—even myself.

Carolina: In reality or in the life we're living now?

Juli: No, no, we're still ourselves, and if we're going to make this a success we cannot order each other—we can ask. (*Outback House*, Episode 2)

Later in the series, squatter Paul finds himself in a conflict with his overseer Glen, who like Carolina, wishes Paul would enforce the 19th century hierarchy more rigidly. Finding himself in the relatively privileged position of overseer (which he believes he “deserves”), Glen wants Paul to enforce obedience and respect from the station hands. Paul explains to Glen:

If we were to take the 1860s hierarchy, and replicate it with 21st century people and 21st century values, which we have, plus the options which everybody here has. We won't have anybody here. It would be you, me, and the chickens. (*Outback House*, Episode 2)

A theme across all the series is the ongoing struggle and negotiation that the participants have between their 21st century and historical selves. Often the standards of success for their historical selves – parameters set by the programs such as completing a journey, or producing profit, or accumulating enough goods for winter, or just living in a historically accurate way – are incompatible with their contemporary standards of personal success or integrity. Michelle Voorhees, in *Colonial House*, wants the colony to succeed, but doesn't want to have to attend Sabbath services, even if it leads to a poor evaluation by the inspectors. She says “We are not compromising our 21st century convictions about religion” (*Colonial House*, Episode 6). Sir John, in *Edwardian Country House*, is more willing to sacrifice certain convictions in the interests of historical accuracy, remarking about their period-appropriate fox hunt, “This hunt is part of the Edwardian project. Would I host a hunt in 2001? No I wouldn't. We do things in the house that conscience would not allow us to do in 2001” (Episode 4). Katherine, the eldest daughter in the *1900 House*, is conflicted about the maid-of-all-work that the family has decided to hire, in order to free themselves from the back-breaking housework. She explains:

I know in 1900 that they would be employing somebody who was very poor and who needed the work, and needed the money, and that's the way we should be treating her. But I think, because we're actually a 1999 family, that it's not in our nature to be really horrible to anybody and make anybody do horrible skivvy jobs. (*1900 House*, Episode 3)

Although many historical reality program volunteers may see the experience as an opportunity to “learn about themselves,” many also see that the experience requires them to act, behave, and even think in ways that contradict their values and 21st century identities.

CLASS, GENDER, RACE AND THE HISTORICAL SELF

Many participants in historical reality television have crises of the self in response to experiencing their class, gender, and racial identities in a very different way in their historical context than they do, or are aware of doing, in their contemporary lives. While participants bring their gender and racial identities with them into the past, their class status is assigned by the producers of the program. Class differences and the experience of social hierarchy are most dramatically represented in *Edwardian Country House*, explicitly organized around an “upstairs, downstairs” theme.² Perhaps because of this emphasis, this series comes across as the least celebratory of national identity. Indeed, the program is openly critical of the institutionalized inequalities that enabled the extravagant lifestyles of the Edwardian aristocracy, and frequently points out how unsustainable the system was, especially given changes in the economy and the onset of WWI. The ugly side of the master-servant dynamic is in evidence, both in terms of the contempt that the servants hold for the masters who work them too hard and treat them like second-class citizens, and the ease with which the upstairs family slip into their lives of luxury and blissful ignorance of the hard graft sustaining their lifestyles below stairs.

A common trope of every version of the historical reality genre examined is how women respond to their second-class status, limited freedoms, and lives of drudgery in past historical eras. For some of the series, particularly the *1900 House* and *1940s House* series, the programs end up being primarily about the experiences of women by virtue of focusing on the house itself – the domestic sphere where women reign and spend most of their time. In fact, women across the series begin to experience the eponymous “houses” as prisons, and many find creative ways to justify broadening their horizons. In *Frontier House*, participant Adrienne Clune describes the experience as a six-month labor camp (also observed by Edwards, 2007). Avril Anson, the upper-class spinster sister in *Edwardian Country House*, actually has a somewhat historically accurate nervous breakdown brought on by the enforced inactivity and loneliness of her social position, an intolerable contrast from her modern life of personal freedom and career success. She remarks, “I never for a moment thought I would be so constrained by this gilded cage” (*Edwardian Country House*, Episode 4). While Anson finds the house and its formalities to be a metaphorical cage, the women of *The Colony* quickly reject the physical caging they experience from their corsets and restrictive skirts and dresses, ditching them for more comfortable, but historically inaccurate, clothing that allows them to do the hard daily work on their farms.

It’s striking how many of the women who join the program seeking a generalized connection with the past, or their ancestors, come away with a more particular perspective, informed by their connection to the women of the past and their *specific* experiences. The

2 Upstairs, Downstairs was a British series depicting an Edwardian London House, which aired from 1971-1975 on ITV. It’s a widely shared cultural reference point in Britain that participants, and likely audiences, used to interpret the program.

women volunteers sometimes find themselves torn between re-enacting the way woman actually lived, in order to demonstrate the lack of freedoms and suffering, and changing the situation to conform better to 21st century ideas about gender equality. When some of the women of *Colonial House* try to organize a more equitable share of domestic work with the men, Michelle Voorhees, who bitterly resents her second-class status, nonetheless exclaims, “We don’t have the right to be pissed. We signed up for this trip, and we have to play it out” (*Colonial House*, Episode 2).

Other participants find that their ideas of having a generalized connection to the nation’s “past” become disrupted by the particular racial or ethnic identities that they bring with them to the historical re-enactment. Some of the series aim for historical accuracy in how people of different races and ethnicities would have experienced life in these historical contexts. In *Edwardian Country House*, Reji Raj Singh is cast as an Indian tutor, and therefore experiences both the social possibilities and limits that his Indian heritage would have meant for him in early 20th century Britain. Like the upper-class Indians of the day who served as tutors to the British gentry, he occupies an awkward position in the house’s social hierarchy. His race and position as employee place him below the family, but his education, status, and intimacy with the family place him above the servants, who come to resent the demands he places on them, and the fact that he may dine and socialize upstairs even though he is not a member of the family. When he says, “No matter how I try to be an Englishman, I’ll *never* be accepted as one. I’m an Indian, and I’m proud of it,” it is not clear if he’s speaking about his Edwardian situation, his contemporary one, or both (*Edwardian Country House*, Episode 5).

In *The Colony*, set early in the 19th century, aboriginal people are positioned as part of a native clan who were living in the valley when the European settlers arrived. They are meant to live as their ancestors would have, and engage in historically accurate relations with the European families, in terms of trade and observing the laws and social taboos of the day. Ultimately, the aboriginal experience is very difficult to re-create. First, the bush foods that aboriginals of the early 19th century would have subsisted on are no longer available. Secondly, the aboriginals and Europeans enjoy spending time together and co-operating, reflecting their 21st century sensibilities rather than the 19th century rules. When the producers attempt to re-assert historical accuracy by issuing a Governor’s proclamation that European families caught hosting aboriginals on their land will lose their government rations, and even face jail time, the aboriginal clan choose to leave the project for a time, and go on “walkabout.” Even though much of their experience does not re-create the experience of their ancestors with much accuracy, they still feel the pain of exclusion and dispossession. They feel it, for example, when they are not invited to the big muster party towards the end of the project (a muster is an annual government inspection of the settlers’ farms). A young male member of the Khoury clan, Jarlo, says, “Seeing the redcoats passing, and the horses, made us feel like it was back in 1800 and, man I felt like, we just weren’t allowed to go to the muster, because the redcoats was there” (*The Colony*, Episode 5). On *Outback House* the aboriginal volunteers are more integrated with the whites on the sheep station, but station hand Malcolm has difficulty towards the end of the project when some of the other workers are making claims on parcels of land. Malcolm explains to the camera, “I belong to the land around here. It doesn’t belong to me. I don’t claim it. It claims me” (*Outback House*, Episode 5).

In the Australian and UK series, the programs include volunteers of color with a nod to historical accuracy, although ultimately the depictions are very much limited by modern sensibilities. In the North American series, racial and ethnic identities are dealt with much

more obliquely. In *Frontier House*, there is an African-American cast member, Nate, who marries his fiancée who is white, Kristin, during the series - but for the most part his race and their inter-racial marriage are not treated in a historically accurate manner. In *Quest for the Bay*, one of the boat's crew, Ken, is Cree, but discussion of what his 19th century experience as the only Native American on the boat would have been is never broached. In fact, the Yorkboat and the project as a whole appear to be welcomed by the Cree communities they visit along the way. On *Colonial House*, "colonist" John Voorhees, who is part Native American, comments that re-living this part of American history is sometimes uncomfortable for him. Especially when members of the Passamaquoddy and Wampanoag tribes visit the colony, he feels he is "walking a fine line" between the two sides of his ancestry (*Colonial House*, Episode 1).

African-American Daniel Tisdale decides to take part in *Colonial House*, despite the historical inaccuracy of a person of color being in a 1628 New World colony, citing his identification and pride in being an American as his motivation. He explains, "I love the ideals of what this country was founded on" (*Colonial House*, Episode 1). However, his identification with American history in the abstract is challenged by the specificity of his experiences in the cultural hierarchies of 1628. Tisdale decides to leave the project before it is over, as he comes to realize that the demand for cheap labor and exploitation of indentured servants that he sees in the *Colonial House* setting (although he himself is assigned to the relatively privileged role of "freeman") are just the first steps towards the institution of slavery that was in place just fifty years later. Tisdale explains:

This country was created on the backs of people who didn't have choices. As time progressed during the project I could see this idea of indentured servitude leading to slavery....For me it's a matter of conscience. How do I deal with it and what do I do about it? I've decided that it's time for me to leave. (*Colonial House*, Episode 5)

Tisdale's decision speaks to the stakes of the re-enactments in these historical reality series. As the participants start to inhabit their historical selves and see these historical periods play out, some of them grapple with the ethics of what they are re-presenting. Their struggles demonstrate the extent to which these performances are not just play. Whether the volunteers like it or not, their participation implies their approval and condoning of past circumstances. Tisdale comes to realize that his body is "emitting signs" (Foucault, 1995/1975, p.25) – appearing to resolve the tension between America's colonial past and his race – and not necessarily communicating the conflict he sees between the two. Like the aboriginals in *Outback House* and *The Colony*, he's caught between a project of visibility – being part of the historical reality series in order to assert his identity group's importance and contribution to the nation – and the pain of having to re-live and confront the racism of his nation in a different way than he experiences it today.

The historical reality genre arguably reveals the ways in which nations are truly "imagined communities," and therefore socially constructed rather than natural or "real" (Anderson, 1983). Ironically, it is the experience of historical re-enactment that raises the question of whether the participants' *contemporary* sense of national belonging is illusory, and by extension, our own. Is the idea of a national identity merely a story we tell ourselves that somehow secures our obedience and commitment to a national group? Are national identities fictions that obscure social inequalities defined by gender, race, and class? These

are the questions that the historical reality genre raises quite powerfully in its various iterations. In attempting to revisit and honor the history of the nation, and in recruiting the kinds of people keen to participate in such an endeavor, the actual experiences of many of the participants undermine the story of national identity and unity that seemingly lie at the heart of the genre's premise.

RE-ENACTING COLONIALISM

The nationalist impulse of these programs is undermined by the way the historical reality genre challenges the idea of a unified group that gets to contribute and benefit equally from a national community. Additionally, many of these programs are set in periods where the early colonial context raises the question of whether nations should be celebrated when their foundation is the decimation and exploitation of other nations and peoples. Colonialism is arguably dealt with most consistently in Australia's *The Colony*, which includes four groups - an English family, an Irish family, a white Australian family, and an aboriginal clan - in order to represent the different groups that would have come into contact in Australia's early years. Similar to *Outback House*, the program does dramatize the ways in which aboriginal peoples were displaced from their land. After the Governor's proclamation makes it illegal for the aboriginal clan to visit the European farms, teenager Luana complains, "With this whole law thing, I just reckon this is really a bunch of crap. This is our land, they can't tell us to get off it. It's ours already" (*The Colony*, Episode 3). Deliberately socially-engineered to produce conflict, the program ends up having to explain most of the historical conflict and violence through voice-over, because the program's volunteers for the most part try to live according to 21st century values of cooperation and consensus. Further, as Australian scholar Michelle Arrow (2007) observes, colonialism is "a history that seems furthest from our grasp in terms of representation—it would be ethically impossible to accurately recreate such a history—to re-enact colonial violence, dispossession, and Indigenous resistance in a reality television program" (p.61). This is also why versions of the program such as "Antebellum in the South House" have not been produced, because viewers don't have the stomach for a re-enactment of slavery (Taddeo and Dvorak, 2007).

Edwardian Country House deals with colonialism to the extent that it includes Mr. Raj Singh as the tutor, who tries to teach young Master Guy about the British Empire, working against the grain of the privilege and entitlement that Guy is learning to adopt during his three month Edwardian experience. On the occasion of the "Empire Ball," meant to reproduce the celebrations that would have occurred when George V succeeded Edward VII, writer and social commentator Darcus Howe, a black Briton from Trinidad, visits the house in order to observe Edwardian power and privilege in action. The program invites us to feel the conflict between the patriotic elements of the Ball such as the pageant put on by children for the guests, and the lyrics of Rule Britannia which is sung with gusto - "Britons never never never shall be slaves" - and the experiences of Darcus Howe, his ancestors, and the millions of those who were colonized and enslaved around the world.

The US *Colonial House* worked with two Native nations, although the Native Americans' appearances and perspectives were incorporated in a less-sustained, integrated way than on *The Colony*. Indeed, the program's volunteers start to really get into the colonial

spirit towards the end of the project - sending out map-making expeditions, making plans for expanding the colony, and creating propaganda to encourage other English people to join them in the New World. The ethics of what the colonists are re-enacting remain largely unexamined until the penultimate episode of the series, when the colony is visited by members of the Wampanoag Native American Nation, who in no uncertain terms condemn colonialism for its displacement and genocide of Native American peoples. The senior member of the tribe's visiting party, Ramona Peters, impresses on the colonists the seriousness of their intervention when she says, "Unlike yourselves we are wearing our best clothes in a sense, our traditional clothing, and we're all traditional people, so we're not playing" (*Colonial House*, Episode 7). Their visit puts the four month struggle of the colonists into a broader context, and puts into question the wisdom of buying into a 17th century mindset. After the Wampanoag's visit, California college professor (of anthropology, no less) and self-described liberal Carolyn Heinz explains:

It suddenly sunk in, in a way that it hadn't until then, that I'm going along with being an imperialist. I think I'm going to go away, and people are going to say Carolyn, what did you think you were doing? But it didn't really sink in. That I'm re-enacting a whole system that I don't believe in and disapprove of, and yet, it's the roots of our own nation and of who we are! (*Colonial House*, Episode 7)

Heinz's response is similar to Tisdale's observations about how the roots of America are not just about courage, vision, and hard work, as has been emphasized throughout the series, but also about greed and exploitation. This observation is not unique to this series. The romance of going back into history, particularly in those series where participants must "live off the land," is often punctured by the realities of early capitalism. The lands they are living off were acquired through violence, and the profits they produce are often not for themselves, but for a larger corporate interest that exploits their labor – the fisheries in *Quest for the Sea*, the Hudson Bay Company in *Quest for the Bay*, the English investors in *Colonial House*, and the banks in *Outback House*.

Colonialism and capitalist imperialism are central to several of these historical reality series, something that would seem to undermine the nationalist spirit that arguably motivates them in the first place. However, for the most part acknowledgement of colonialism does limited damage to the overall narrative arcs of these programs. Sometimes discussion of colonialism is bounded in particular episodes or parts of the programs. For example, despite the intervention of the Wampanoag, the Plymouth Colony's assessment is carried out by white historical experts, using criteria that represent the interests of Britain. Or, when the relationships between colonists and colonized are depicted, they are, by necessity, such a pale imitation of the historical realities that they fail to make a substantial impact.

RITUAL REPAIR – RITES OF FERTILITY AND SACRIFICE

Within the historical reality genre, then, seemingly devoted to strengthening national identity through re-enactment, the fissures and myths of national belongingness are revealed. However, the series contain responses to this threat. They do this in part by emphasizing physical and genealogical connections between past and present, bringing attention to the

contagious magic at work in these re-enactments. The ties of places, things, and even blood are used to anchor what otherwise might seem like tenuous connections between historical and contemporary national subjects. Danielle, the aboriginal maid servant in *Outback House*, remarks about the valley where the sheep station is located, “I’ve had so much déjà vu it’s not funny, and I swear it’s because I know people who are related to me have been here already” (*Outback House*, Episode 3). Like Danielle’s experience, a number of the series include participants who can trace their families back to the actual people whose lives are being re-enacted. For example, in *Quest for the Bay*, one of the eight participants is Geoff Cowie, whose great-grandfather Isaac Cowie worked as a Yorkman in Manitoba in 1867, just as the crew is re-enacting. Geoff reads from his great-grandfather’s diary along the way, and early in the journey they visit his grave, located on their route. Even though not all eight crew members can trace their families back to the actual people who made these treacherous journeys, Cowie’s familial connection verifies the reality of the legacy they are honoring. In *Quest for the Sea*, all three men in the program are Newfoundlanders who can trace their families back to fishing villages similar to the one they are re-creating. Similarly, Mr. Edgar, who serves as Butler in the *Edwardian Country House* series, seeks to honor his own grandfather, who was in service early in the 20th century, as does housemaid Rebecca, who is following in her grandmother’s footsteps. These more concrete connections between the present and the people of the past they seek to understand respond to the otherwise abstract connection of national identity over time. When this is not feasible, participants are invited to “touch” the past in other ways – by using objects or tools from the era, or in some of the series, meeting older people who lived lives similar to the ones they are re-enacting.

In addition to the contagious magic of physical or genealogical connections to the past, the series reinforce the pull of national identity on participants, and by extension on viewers, through rites of fertility and sacrifice. By fertility, I mean the *communitas* arising from group experiences, such as the high they get from feasts or parties, a regular feature of the series. Some series include actual fertility rituals in the form of weddings, which take place in both *Frontier House* and *Outback House*. The muster party in *The Colony* would have been an actual fertility ritual in the 19th century, as some people who attended were looking for potential husbands and wives.

Beyond that, the series encourage and celebrate familism, or the idea that the participants, initially strangers or separate family units, come together to forge a new quasi-family unit. This has varying success from series to series. In *Frontier House*, for example, by virtue of a structure where each incoming family works separately to prepare for winter, almost in competition with each other, the community never really gels as a larger family unit. In contrast, in series like *Edwardian Country House*, *Quest for the Bay*, *Outback House* and *Colonial House*, groups of people who start the projects as strangers report coming together “as a family” in response to their experiences, and in order to survive. On a small-scale, then, the series dramatize interdependence, the management of group conflict, and structured inequality, all characteristics of the past and present nation state. These families and “found families” are metonyms for the nation-as-family.

By and large the participants decide to take part in the programs in order to test themselves, but also, they report, to pay homage and do justice to the sacrifices of previous generations. Viewing the historical reality genre as a corpus, it becomes clear that the national self is a sacrificing, even sacrificial self. In an era where sacrifice may not have felt particularly immediate, the late 1990s and first half of the 2000s, modern reality TV

volunteers got a taste of the sacrifices that are fetishized as giving birth to modern nations. Even as they complained and railed against the harshness and discomforts of their colonial, outport, frontier, outback, homefront, Victorian, or Edwardian lifestyles, the participants, and the programs, recognized these hardships as representing merely the tip of the iceberg of the actual human suffering that would have occurred in these various historical scenarios. Some of the sacrifices could be fully re-enacted, such as rationing in *1940s House*, where the whole family starts to go hungry, especially the women. In *Quest for the Bay*, the Yorkboat volunteers defy all odds by completing the infamous Robertson Portage, a challenge that is known to be back-breaking and dangerous. The program's narrator interprets this feat for us, saying:

Two hundred years from their place in time, the 21st century crew can now stand beside their 19th century counterparts as equals. They have earned the right to call themselves Yorkmen, and have learned a basic truth of a Yorkman's life: the pain will pass, and the beauty remain. (*Quest for the Bay*, Episode 3).

For the most part though, the non-sacrificing modern self tries to inhabit the sacrificial historical self, and the embodiment is incomplete. Throughout all the programs, both participants and producers contemplate the gap between re-enactment and embodiment in actual historical circumstances. These gaps are particularly apparent when actual danger is near. The rules of the game, where participants are living in a period appropriate way, are broken or bent when people actually get sick, or are injured, or need to do things that violate contemporary perceptions of risk. Doctors and paramedics appear in present day clothes with 21st century technologies when people get sick or injured, as they do on both *Outback House* and *Quest for the Bay*. In *Quest for the Sea* and *Quest for the Bay* anachronistic safety gear is worn in dangerous waters. Ethics, good taste, and liability preclude re-enacting life as it would have actually been in most of these historical contexts, with its diseases, deaths resulting from the smallest accidents, such as an infected sliver, and armed conflicts between white settlers and indigenous peoples. The gap between past sacrifice and the program's re-enactment is also particularly apparent when historical dangers are simulated, such as the bombings during the blitz, in the *1940s House*. The family lives "as if" there are air raids, listening to recordings of bombs falling as they sit in their Anderson shelter.

Whereas the realism of reality television is normally a taboo topic to be raised within reality shows, in these series it becomes a central topic of conversation and worry. Producers challenge participants, and participants challenge themselves, to truly embody the experiences of their national forebears. However, the ways in which these historical experiments can never fully capture the subjectivities and experiences of the past is a constant source of reflection and anxiety. Examples of this range from the ridiculous to the sublime – from the *1900 House* family buckling and buying shampoo at the local store for their dried out, dirty hair, and then pouring it down the drain out of guilt for not living the full 1900 lifestyle, to the residents of the *1940s House* contemplating how the sacrifices they have endured over three months pale in comparison to the massive loss of life in WWII, on both the warfront and the homefront. This dynamic points to how these series function as a commemorative ritual of nation-creating bodily sacrifice. Here I use Carolyn Marvin's theoretical framework for understanding how nationalism and patriotism work.

According to Marvin and Ingle (1999), the nation is “the shared memory of blood sacrifice, periodically renewed,” and further, the nation’s power derives from the power to kill and sacrifice its own, which they label the “totem secret” (p.4). While Marvin and Ingle are concerned with creation-sacrifices of the highest order – soldiers sent to battle to die, and in so doing, renewing the nation with their blood – the sacrifices dealt with in historical reality television focus more on the everyday. They depict the physical sacrifices and hardships of pioneers, settlers, and the lower classes on whose backs nations were built. Marvin and Ingle (1999) insist that the “totem secret,” the way that nations sacrifice their own citizens, is widely misrecognized, “concealed by the conviction that individualism is the defining myth of America, a way of thinking that seems far removed from any group idea” (p.2). While confronting the limits on individualism and the centrality of sacrifice might seem to puncture the strength of nationalism, Marvin and Ingle argue that it is central to its emotional power. They write, “Sacrifice disciplines groups....despite our conviction that violence is morally repugnant and should be eliminated, it creates the groups to which we feel the strongest attachments” (ibid., p.313). The historical reality genre’s emotional power comes from its flirtation with the totem secret – that the nation is constructed out of violence and sacrifice. Danny Tisdale’s reaction to the exploitation and violence at the roots of America, discussed earlier, is an example of this recognition. Participants in historical reality shows are often shocked by the hardships and sacrifices of historical subjects, but they are also in awe of them. For the most part, they leave with a sense of privilege and obligation to those who preceded them. The felt obligation to commemorate comes through in comments like this one, concluding *Quest for the Bay*: “The Yorkmen are gone, but their stories remain. They must. They are our legends” (Episode 5).

In Marvin and Ingle’s framework, although the nation is periodically renewed through *actual* bodily sacrifice, in between past sacrifices must be recalled, even re-presented through ritual means, in order to extend their group-creating magic. Commemorative rituals “re-energize and re-dedicate sacred time and space created by acts of heroic predecessors” (Marvin and Ingle, 1999, p.134), and these increasingly occur through the mass media. They write:

Media witness sacrifice and model it. Though they cannot perform real sacrifice, they scratch the itch in small ways and at regular intervals. They provide maintenance and memory until a big sacrifice comes again. Then they become the channel through which knowledge of sacrifice moves the nation. (ibid., p.141)

Although not on the scale of a media event such as a state funeral or Veteran’s Day ceremony, historical reality series bear the logic of national connection that Marvin and Ingle explain, “scratching the itch” of national sentiment in a “small way.”

HISTORICAL REALITY TV AS COMMEMORATIVE MEDIA RITUAL

The spectre of past sacrifices motivates historical reality television in the first place, providing the testing ground that participants crave. The programs expose the fissures and abstractions of national identity through the specificities of their re-enactments. Although the disconnect between the specificity of personal identity and experience threatens to expose the

myth of national identity, the concreteness of past bodily sacrifices, whether actual deaths or the suffering resulting from hardships, re-asserts itself. The gap between the “reality” that can be shown in a contemporary television series covered by insurance policies and limited by good taste, and the historical realities they propose to re-enact, create anxiety, just as all commemorative rituals create anxiety about their inability to re-create the ritual magic of actual creation-sacrifices. Marvin and Ingle (1999) contemplate this gap, inherent to all commemorative ritual:

A defining feature of perfect creation-sacrifice, the utterly real, is that it has departed from the here and now. Existing only in memory, it is fragile. As a hedge against chaos, or forgetting, we can only imitate it. This anxious distance between model and reality provides the engine that sets the ritual cycle in motion. (p.135).

Like all reality television, the gap between the life-world reality and the mediascape reality is a central tension for producers, participants, and audiences (Lewis, 2004). However, this gap doesn’t threaten the authenticity of the historical reality endeavor; rather, it verifies the solemnity of the series’ undertaking. The participants bear witness by partially embodying and re-enacting the sacrifices of national forebears, and as viewers we bear witness to their witnessing. In this way, the series hail viewers as national subjects. In Mabel Berezin’s (2001) terms, historical reality television series function as public political rituals that “dramatize political identity or felt membership” in the nation (p.84). The irony may be that, although they ostensibly set out to de-mystify the past by having modern people live like historical subjects, the programs of the historical reality genre largely end up re-mystifying the past, by drawing our attention and reverence to past sacrifices that are ritually experienced as birthing or renewing the modern nation.

REFERENCES

- Alexander, J. C. (2004). Cultural pragmatics: Social performance between ritual and strategy. *Sociological Theory*, 22(4), 527-573.
- Anderson, B. (1983). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origins and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Andrejevic, M. (2004). *Reality TV: The work of being watched*. New York: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Arrow, M. (2007). “That history should not have ever been how it was”: *The Colony*, *Outback House*, and Australian history. *Film and History*, 37(1), 54-66.
- Baker, C. (2002, June 4). Public broadcasting increasingly businesslike; Competition forcing stricter attitude. *The Washington Times*, p.C08.
- Berezin, M. (2001). Emotions and political identity: Mobilizing affection for the polity. In J. Goodwin, J.M. Jasper and F. Polletta (Eds.), *Passionate politics: Emotions and social movements* (pp.83-98). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bignell, J. (2005). *Big brother: Reality TV in the 21st century*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Born, G. (2003). Strategy, positioning, and projection in digital television: Channel Four and the commercialization of public service broadcasting at the UK. *Media, Culture and Society*, 25(6), 774-779.
- Broadcast now*. (2001, February 2). Older viewers lured into peaktime by *1940s House*. Retrieved from <http://www.broadcastnow.co.uk/news/multi-platform/news/older-viewers-lured-into-peaktime-by-1940s-house/1169203.article>
- Broadcast now*. (2002, May 20). Reviving Pet proves to be canny move for BBC1. Retrieved from <http://www.broadcastnow.co.uk/news/multi-platform/news/reviving-pet-proves-to-be-a-canny-move-for-bbc-1/1143225.article>
- Brown, J. (2001). *Quest for the bay*. Frantic Films.
- Brown, J. (2004). *Quest for the sea*. Frantic Films.
- Burum, I. (2005). *Outback house*. Australian Broadcasting Corporation.
- Daily News*. (2000, December 4). Old-fashioned 'house' takes a trip west for PBS. p.92.
- Edmonds, M., Dennehy, L., and Adams, C. (2005, June 16). Vets are on standby. *Herald Sun*, p.21.
- Edwards, L. H. (2007). The endless end of frontier mythology: PBS's *Frontier House* 2002. *Film and History*, 37(1), 29-34.
- Foucault, M. (1995/1975). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. (A. Sheridan Trans.). New York: Random House.
- Fry, A. (2000, January 24). Showoff. *Variety*, p.47.
- Gapps, S.(2007). Adventures in *The Colony: Big Brother* meets *Survivor* in period costume. *Film and History*, 37(1), 67-72.
- Gardam, T. (2003, December 15). End of risk TV? *The Guardian*, p.8.
- Graham, A. (2000). *1940s house*. Channel Four Television Corporation and Wall to Wall Television.
- Graham, A., and Willis, E. (2002). *Edwardian country house*. Channel Four Television Corporation and Wall to Wall Television.
- Hilton, C. (2005). *The colony*. Film Finance Corporation Australia Limited, New South Wales Film and Television Office and Hilton Cordell Productions.
- Hoppe, B. (2000). *The 1900 house*. London: Channel Four Television Corporation and Wall to Wall Television.
- Hoppe, B. (2002). *Frontier house*. Educational Broadcasting Corporation and Wall to Wall Television.
- Hoppe, B. (2004). *Colonial house*. Educational Broadcasting Corporation and Wall to Wall Television.
- Jones, J. (2004). PBS evolves, keeps its traditions intact. *Television Week*, 23(21), 20-23.
- Lewis, J. (2004). The meaning of real life. In S. Murray and L. Ouellette (Eds.), *Reality TV: Remaking television culture* (pp.288-302). New York: New York University Press.
- Lowenthal, D. (1999). *The past is a foreign country*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Marvin, C., and Ingle, D. W. (1999). *Blood sacrifice and the nation: Totem rituals and the American flag*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Neill, R. (2005, July 9). Broadcast blues – troubles with our AUNT. *Weekend Australian*, p.R01.
- Outright Distribution. N.D. *The History House*. Retrieved from <http://www.outrightdistribution.com/programme.aspx?program=709>

-
- Pereira, J. (2001, January 26). Rating reality. *Report on Business Magazine*, p.23.
- Posner, M. (2002, January 11). Reality bites back. *The Globe and Mail*, p.R12.
- Rymsza-Pawlowska, M. (2007). *Frontier House: Reality television and the historical experience. Film and History*, 37(1), 35-42.
- SBS Corporation. (2005). *SBS Annual Report 2004-2005*. Retrieved from http://media.sbs.com.au/sbscorporate/documents/777101_front_section.pdf
- Schlesinger, P. (2008). Cosmopolitan temptations, communicative spaces, and the European Union. In D. Hesmondhalgh and J. Toynbee (Eds.), *The media and social theory* (pp. 75-92). New York: Routledge.
- Stanistreet, M. (1999, October 17). Big Brother is watching, and now you can too. *Sunday Express*. Retrieved from LexisNexis database.
- Taddeo, J. A., and Dvorak, K. (2007). The PBS historical house series: Where historical reality succumbs to reel reality. *Film and History*, 37(1), 18-28.
- Volcic, Z. (2008, December). *That's Me: Nationalism, power, and identity on Balkan reality TV*. Presentation at *Real worlds: Global perspectives on the politics of reality television*. Annenberg School for Communication, Philadelphia, PA.