

Television tension: national versus cosmopolitan memory in a co-produced television documentary

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Recent discussions in collective memory studies contain frequent reference to the media as one of the main mnemonic sites in contemporary society (e.g. Kaes, 1990; Kansteiner, 2002; Reading, 2003; Sturken, 1997). '[O]ur media,' Roger Silverstone (1999: 126) writes, 'both by intention and default are instruments for the articulation of memory.' Media artefacts, so the argument goes, serve to link members of a community to their history, endowing them with a sense of identity whose roots are located in the past. Such products stand at the intersection of (social) time, linking the past with the present, and linking these two with the future. Looking closely at audio-visual artefacts Anton Kaes notes:

Cinematic images have created a technological bank that is shared by many and offers little escape. It increasingly shapes and legitimizes our perception of the past. Memory in the age of electronic reproducibility and dissemination has become public; memory has become socialized by technology. History itself, so it seems, has been democratized by these easily accessible images, but the power over what is shared as popular memory has passed into the hands of those who produce these images. (1990: 112)

Kaes's observation serves as a starting point for considering the crucial role played by film-makers (notably television producers) in the construction of collective (national) memory. Concentrating on the production of television documentaries, I explore how recent technological and economic developments in the television landscape, notably the shift of the industry from being a national sector to being an international and even a global enterprise, impinge on the constructions of shared memory.

I examine this issue by placing television documentaries within a broader theoretical context and briefly consider the line of inquiry embodied in social communication theory that contains assumptions regarding the three-sided interplay between mass media, collective memory and the nation. Next, I examine the role played by television in challenging the nation-memory nexus by concentrating on what has been referred to in the newly coined term 'cosmopolitan memory' (Levy and Sznajder, 2002).

another key concept

Theorizing the three-sided interplay between nation, collective memory and mass media

Along with the general 'cultural turn' in social history, scholars working on issues of ethnicity and nationalism began deconstructing nationalism by studying the shared symbols, values, discourses and memories by which large human populations develop a sense of themselves as a national community (e.g. Anderson, 1991 [1983]; Billig, 1995; Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983). The questions that occupy centre-stage in this discourse are: how do claims of national identity achieve priority among all other claims of social identity and loyalty? And in what way does a national identity maintain temporal continuity (Bell, 2003: 67)?

Whatever differences appear in the various approaches to nationalism, all the different modes of theorizing locate national memory at the heart of national identity. Anthony D. Smith (1986, 1991, 1999), for example, places great weight on the role memory plays in the forging and maintaining of national identity, noting that the vital 'relationship of memories to collective cultural identity and the cultivation of shared memories is essential to the survival and destiny of such collective identities' (1999: 10). '[O]ne might almost say: no memory, no identity; no identity, no nation' (1986: 383).

This conceptualization of the nation as a community of shared remembering and shared forgetting has been taken up in recent years by scholars who pointed out the significant role mass media play in articulating aspects of national memory. Media artefacts, these authors maintain, enable the members of a nation community to orient themselves. They are crucial in the shaping and reflecting of national identity, connecting a national audience to a national experience and to shared memory (e.g. Mosse, 1990; Olick, 1998; Smith, 2000; Sturken, 1997).

Recently, however, this observation regarding the strong bond between mass media, collective memory and the nation has been challenged. In a pioneering study, *Memory Unbound: The Holocaust and the Formation of Cosmopolitan Memory* (2002), the critics Daniel Levy and Nathan Sznajder have argued that alongside nationally bounded memories, a 'cosmopolitan memory' emerges. In conceptualizing the term 'cosmopolitan memory', Levy and Sznajder are building on Ulrich Beck's definition of 'cosmopolitization':

'[a] globalization *from within* the national societies ... [in which] issues of global concern are becoming part of the everyday local experiences and the "moral life-worlds" of the people' (Beck, 2002: 17). Applying Beck's conception of 'cosmopolitanism' to the study of collective memory, Levy and Sznajder claim that the 'national container' in which collective memory is embedded is being slowly cracked by processes of 'internal globalization' (Beck, 2002: 17). National memories, they argue, are transformed in the age of globalization (Levy and Sznajder, 2002).

For Levy and Sznajder, it is precisely an era of globalization, with its electronic (global) media, that will facilitate a shared consciousness and cosmopolitan memories that span national borders: 'In global times, the media becomes ... a mediator of moral affairs' (2002: 91). In pointing to electronic media as one of the main constituents reflecting and creating cosmopolitan memory, Levy and Sznajder highlight the role *television* plays in this context. It is through televised events (Dayan and Katz, 1992) that a live and concentrated local action can be globally shared.

[And] this is how the world is transported into the local. Distant others can be part of the strong feeling of everyday life ... (Levy and Sznajder, 2002: 91)

Levy and Sznajder's arguments regarding the role played by television in the creation and reflection of universal (moral) values and cosmopolitan memories is crucial. Examining their claims in the context of co-produced television documentaries, I can return to my central question regarding the critical connection between the globalization of the television industry and the shaping of memory: do economic interactions among television producers of different countries give rise to new constructions of shared memory?

Before addressing this question, I would like to offer some critical observations regarding Levy and Sznajder's (2002) conceptual framework. The two critics, dealing as they do with the emergence of cosmopolitan memory, have neglected to raise – much less to resolve – the issue of a *tension* permeating the television landscape. In their joining of what have been the polar points of the national and the global, they experience no strain. In my own observation of the production practices of *television documentaries*, and of the *processes* involved in the making of such programmes, the tension between the national and the global, and between collective (national) and cosmopolitan memory has been impossible to discount, and has come to the fore exactly in that place where the national proves itself *resistant* to the global.

I shall develop this claim within a specific television context, namely the mode of production known as international co-production. I would argue that international co-productions constitute a principal site within television where the inherent tension between the global and the national, and between collective (national) memory and 'cosmopolitan memory' (Levy and Sznajder, 2002), becomes particularly pronounced.

Defining international co-production

The term 'international co-production' is used to characterize a situation where broadcasters in more than one country are involved, *creatively* and *financially*, in the production of a particular programme. This form permits partners to pool resources, in order to raise the substantial budgets required to produce the 'master copies', which can be produced and then made, at minimal cost, to accommodate additional markets (Hoskins et al., 1997). This mode of production gathered momentum through recent technological advances combined with processes of deregulation and privatization, which gave rise to a multitude of channels available to the viewing public. Simultaneously, intensifying competition among television networks has led to smaller television audiences and higher standards pushing up the costs of programming. This development has forced television producers to re-examine the funding of television programmes. In order to reduce the cost of production, the creators of programmes find themselves increasingly driven to consider international collaborations with other, mostly 'foreign', television networks (see Doyle, 2002; Hoskins et al., 1997).

Alongside this definition, international co-productions can be used as a valuable illustration of Levy and Sznajder's (2002) argument regarding the emergence of cosmopolitan memory, which calls for transnational partnerships and which typically results in a product that is 'neither spatially nor temporally bound' (Baltruschat, 2003: 151), and hence 'create[s] new cosmopolitan sensibilities and moral-political obligations' (Levy and Sznajder, 2002: 103).

The picture, however, is not all that simple. The foregoing definition does not take proper account of certain significant characteristics of this mode of production pointed out by producers and mostly ignored by media theorists. Leo Eaton, a leading independent producer writes in a paper delivered at a co-production seminar in Japan:¹

The idea of co-production is very good, very necessary. It is the sort of thing that senior executives and broadcasters around the world say, 'Ah, yes, we must do it,' and assume that just by saying it, they can make it happen. But if we are going to be honest, no producer really likes doing co-productions. They're difficult. They're complicated. They cause a lot more work. I think we all wish we had sufficient money, sufficient resources and sufficient international awareness to just go off and make the sort of films that we want to make. But that's not the world we're living in. We can't afford to fund the programs we want to make so we have to co-produce, and we have to learn how to make it work. And not only may we actually enjoy the process, but we may also widen our own perspective and make a more interesting and less insular program. That means knowing very clearly both how similar we are to our partners, and how very different we are.

Thus, the significance of international co-production for the study of the *tensions* between the global and the national and between cultural constraints

and economic pressures seems to emerge quite clearly. We must begin, however, by looking at studies that consider the nature of this specific mode of production.

Interplay of incentives: going global vs going national

The current scholarly discourse on international co-productions is dominated by two opposing camps. Critics on the one side (e.g. Baltruschat, 2003; Strover, 1995) suggest that co-productions have led to global modes of knowledge-production and knowledge-representation, resulting in a global product in which national characteristics will have withered away or been filtered out. These critics emphasize the pull towards the global through the pressure to reduce the costs of production by sharing them with 'partners' of different markets (e.g. Hoskins et al., 1995, 1998; Strover, 1995), and highlight the nature and characteristics of the *end-product* of this mode of production, its content, as apart and at a distance from the national. The construction of the television co-production scene, they maintain, has led to products in which national attributes are increasingly being neglected or suppressed (e.g. Baltruschat, 2003; Murdock, 1996). Sharon Strover for example claims that:

[T]he coproduction ... makes economic sense but chips away at the notion of media that can build national collectivities or represent single countries. In the face of calls for revitalised 'national media,' impulses toward transnational products and media content that easily cross borders may portend a demise of the national. (1995: 98)

Looking specifically at international co-production in the making of documentaries, Doris Baltruschat notes:

Co-produced documentaries ... focus less on stories relevant for local communities which remain the domain of locally and independently produced programmes. (Baltruschat, 2002: 4)

The opposing camp sees co-production as a tool for resisting globalization and pays special attention to the manner in which this strategy may actually contribute to the upholding of national identity by preserving and protecting national industries (e.g. Bergfelder, 2000; Taylor, 1995). Anne Jäckel's *The Search for the National in Canadian Multilateral Cinematographic Co-productions* (2001) looks at several films made in the last decade through co-production agreements between broadcasters from Canada, France and the UK:

Co-productions not only helped the emergence and guarantees the very existence of national film industries, but in some countries, they have also been seen as 'a mechanism for nation building'. (2001: 155)

This observation is in agreement with other studies, which see international co-production as a mode of production helping to preserve the national (e.g. Bergfelder, 2000; Taylor, 1995). For instance, Paul W. Taylor (1995), who explored the usage of international co-productions in Canada, showed how this strategy was used by Canada to help find its own identity in the midst of a popular culture dominated by its neighbour, the USA.

Neither group, though, has noticed that a necessary tension exists between the global and the national. I would suggest that, because neither the 'globalization school' nor the 'nation-upfront school' has committed itself to tracing the *co-production process*, neither has been compelled to confront the tension I have described above, to shift from a politics of dichotomy (either this or that) to one of integration.

The 'globalization' approach does not account for the rationale of producers who choose international co-production over other, cheaper, modes of transnational collaboration, such as acquisitions. It fails, in other words, to acknowledge a distinctive feature of international co-production, namely that, alongside the need to economize on programming costs, producers are in fact willing to incur *additional* costs in order to have a say in the production process and to make the final product suitable for their national audiences. The globalization approach theorists fail to recognize the fact that the existence of distinct national versions of a given co-produced documentary (each version enjoys an absolute exclusivity in its own national domain) is evidence of the role played by the television industry in actually *resisting* globalization.

Theorists of the 'national approach' are, of course, quick to observe that co-produced films that come in several national versions, as this provides evidence that reinforces their basic claim. However, the scholars who subscribe to this line of inquiry tend to overlook the fact that, when different broadcasters, representing different nationalities, engage in a particular co-production, they still remain *jointly responsible* for the contents and characteristics of the film as initially produced. In other words, the individuals who finance these films (usually the commissioning editors) contribute to the script, to the choice of interviewees, to the selection of archive footage, etc., thus agreeing to endow the film with a 'global' flavour. The very interaction among the different partners involved in the making of a particular co-production is a move in the direction of the global.

Given their theoretical perspectives, the existing studies of international co-production limit themselves to one of the two ends of the production process. Media economists, given their emphasis on cost incentives, tend naturally to focus their attention on the first stage, i.e. on the decision to commission a programme through co-production. The other strand (mostly culture theorists), placing the emphasis on contents, tends to examine the final stage of a co-production, i.e. the filmed text as it finally emerges. I would argue that it is essential to examine the intervening *dynamic* process that leads, over time, from the pre-production commissioning decisions to the production

process itself and finally to post-production decisions and adjustments. In this way, the proposed bridging between the two existing approaches can hopefully be accomplished. Indeed, I would maintain that the tracing of the steps involved in the production *process* will reveal the tension between the conflicting elements that are at work: between economic interests and cultural constraints, between the global and the national, and between collective (national) and cosmopolitan memory.

I observe the production process of a specific television documentary, titled *The Fifty Year War: Israel and the Arabs* co-produced by three television networks BBC2, WGBH Boston and MBC.² In order to make this documentary programme possible, three funding sources had to be secured, with each funding source given the right to use the produced footage to construct its own version of the final product. Each funding source took full advantage of this purchased privilege, and the completed series thus exists in three distinct versions, British (BBC2), American (WGBH Boston) and Middle Eastern (MBC). Given the splitting of the final product into several 'national/cultural' versions, the Arab-Israeli conflict becomes translated into 'reality' being presented differently in the three versions of the nation/culture broadcast programmes.

In the remainder of this article, I examine the processes that have led to the production of these three television documentaries, focusing on the manner in which the three producers viewed and assembled the historical events depicted. Starting from the pre-production phase, I note the reasons for electing to construct a co-production structure. I then consider the economic interactions between the partners, examining in particular the nature of the financial arrangements. I proceed to the editing, paying special attention to content-related decisions, so as to identify the manner in which the different funding networks established editorial control over the end-product.

It is within this coexistence of elected joint responsibility and creative partnering, alongside a topic that has a transnational impact and a whole set of concerns regarding the representation of the 'nation' within this partnering, that I wish to identify the crucial tension, which, I claim, remains to be addressed in the theoretical work on television co-productions – a body of work that has continually moved to present a politics of dichotomy: either this or that, either the global or the national.

***The Fifty Year War: Israel and the Arabs* (1998): the production process**

Commissioning

The series *The Fifty Year War: Israel and the Arabs* was initiated by Michel Jackson the former controller of BBC2. Jackson picked Brian Lapping Associates, a London-based independent production company, to produce it

(Lapping in Bregman and El-Tahri, 1998). In an interview, Eddie Mirzoeff, the BBC executive producer of the programme, said that a series about the Arab-Israeli conflict seemed to be a suitable topic for a co-production because of its relevancy to world-wide viewers:

[The Arab-Israeli conflict] has an effect on the region and therefore on the whole world, it triggered so many things ... (interview, February 2003)

And immediately makes clear reference to his potential viewers' shared memory:

People [viewers] got involve there [in Israel] from childhood, the name resonates. (interview, February 2003)

The budget for *The Fifty Year War* runs to approximately US \$400,000–\$500,000 per episode. The BBC, however, was reluctant to commission such an expensive project by itself and forced the independent production company to get on board foreign broadcasters, who would join the production and share its costs. Zvi Dor-Ner, in the role of executive producer at WGBH Boston, accepted Lapping's proposal, and proceeded to sign a co-production agreement. In an interview, Dor-Ner discusses the reasons that led to his decision to commission this project, together with the BBC as co-player:

We thought it's the right time to do a comprehensive story about the Arab-Israeli conflict. We were delighted that the BBC initiated it because it meant that we don't have to. It means that the budget will be substantial.

Like Mirzoeff, he too saw the Arab-Israeli conflict as a promising topic for a documentary film because:

Conflict is a material of drama [and], the Arab-Israeli conflict is especially so because it's in the centre of the history and the experience of Western civilization. (interview, August, 2002)

For Dor-Ner, as for Mirzoeff, the target audience's historical experience and collective memory regarding this conflict is an essential 'hook'. However, in contrast to Mirzoeff, who referred to a world-wide audience, Dor-Ner zooms in to describe the relevance of the Arab-Israeli conflict to a more *specific* group, namely to 'Western civilization'.

The statements provided by the two co-production agents correspond to Levy and Sznajder's arguments regarding the emergence of cosmopolitan memory:

Cosmopolitan memory implies some reorganization of the history (and the memories) of the 'Other'. (2002: 103)

Indeed, both Mirzoeff and Dor-Ner committed their television networks (BBC and WGBH Boston) to a television history which features 'a history' of two

clear 'Others' (Arabs and Israelis), which takes place in a 'far-away place' (the Middle East). This decision could be seen as a distinct manifestation of what Ulrich Beck called: 'globalization *from within* the national societies ... [in which] issues of global concern are becoming part of the everyday local experiences and the "moral life-worlds" of the people' (2002: 17). This is precisely what Levy and Sznajder meant when they suggested that, through television programmes, 'the world is transported into the local. Distant others can be part of the strong feeling of everyday life ...' (2002: 91). A close reading of the producers' testimonies, however, reveals the existing tension between the global and the national and between cosmopolitan memory (Levy and Sznajder, 2002) and collective (national) memory (Smith, 1999). The producers, while highlighting 'non-national' (Sassen, 2000) memories regarding the events depicted (religious sentiments, childhood memories of the Holy Land), are in fact continually referencing the history of their own nation/culture. As producer Eddie Mirzoeff of the BBC puts it:

We were very active during the Mandate and in Suez ... [and] there has been always a feeling that we have a relationship with the Middle East- Lawrence of Arabia, all that sort of stuff (interview, February, 2003)

What clearly emerges in this statement is the fact that the decision to produce a film about the Arab-Israeli conflict rested in no small measure on what were seen as existing British sensibilities (and shared memories) regarding the conflict depicted. Mirzoeff highlighted the relevance of this topic to the shared past of those he perceived to be his network's target audience, broadly speaking, British citizenry. He points to three elements: (1) the British Mandate, (2) Britain's involvement in the Suez War while (3) Lawrence of Arabia, a cultural and historical figure, is presented as an icon for a British colonialist experience of the Middle East. It is clear from the above that Mirzoeff is insisting on framing the 'global' television programme he had commissioned within the existing national narrative and historical experience of his target (national) audience – the British. Zvi Dor-Ner at WGBH provides us with a similar statement, highlighting the historic and present involvement of America in the Arab-Israeli conflict:

America has been profoundly involved in the conflict in various ways. ... It deals with it on a daily basis.

For Dor-Ner, as for Mirzoeff, emphasizing the national (historical) experience and reproducing national memories, becomes a key concern in his decision to commission *The Fifty Year War: Israel and the Arabs* documentary project.

In contrast to Dor-Ner and Mirzoeff, who committed themselves to a film about two 'others' (Arabs and Israelis) in a 'far-away place' (Palestine), a history in which they play a peripheral role, the third partner³ in this co-production, Christine Garabedian of MBC got herself involved in a

project about a history in which her target (national) audience (the Arabs), played/plays a central role. The global aspect of the project, an opportunity to challenge existing Arab narratives about the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict, became an important factor in her network's decision to become involved: } *MBC*

[MBC] got a documentary series which they know they would have never been able to make anywhere in the Arab world. ... The fact that they were hearing for the first time an Israeli voice. ... Because so much of Arab culture is simply about propaganda there is no such thing as democratic journalistic culture in the Arab world. Many things are suppressed, many things aren't talked about, so what justified this kind of project is precisely the dialectic between an Arab voice and an Israeli voice which are not shouting at each other ... (Christine Garabedian, interview, July 2002)

Garabedian's statement could easily serve as testimony to Levy and Sznajder's (2002) conceptualization of the emergence of cosmopolitan memory and the role television plays in this process. Garabedian's goal is to challenge the traditional Arab narrative, which 'deploys historical events to promote foundational myth' (Levy and Sznajder, 2002: 103), and to confront it with a critical narrative that recognizes the history (and the memories) of the 'Other' (2002: 103):

Because so much of Arab culture is simply about propaganda. ... Many things are suppressed, many things aren't talked about.

It is precisely a transnational collaboration that enabled her to attempt this objective. Garabedian sees the British-American co-production as a site through which her (national) audiences' perceptions and 'memories' can be challenged:

... what justified this kind of project is precisely the dialectic between an Arab voice and an Israeli voice ...

What follows in Garabedian's statement however, reveals a somewhat different position:

It's [the programme is] very British. ... There were various things in the script which we [MBC production team] felt needed changing. ... We ... worked on the assumption that some of those things would be either obscure to an Arab audience or be offensive to an Arab audience. ... What we tried to do is to make it in some way more neutral, more historical ... (interview, July 2002)

Here, the *tension* inherent in the process of creating the international co-produced film text sounds loud and clear: the contradictions, the moral puzzle and the conflicting demands. The reasons for joining the co-production team are clear and compelling:

The fact that [we] were hearing for the first time an Israeli voice. ... Because so much of Arab culture is simply about propaganda there is no such thing as democratic journalistic culture in the Arab world.

It is exactly these aspects of the BBC broadcast film, however, that become what Garabedian then describes as: 'obscure to an Arab audience or offensive to an Arab audience'. Here is the quandary; here is the tension. Garabedian must now enter a zone of creative cultural interaction that will allow her to 'modify' one historical narrative in order to, in her terms, become 'more neutral, more historical'.

The decision to opt for a co-production

This tension between the national and the non-national, so clearly inherent in the commissioning stage of the production process, manifests itself in the following phase, i.e. in the producers' decision to produce this film through an international co-production.

It will be helpful here to return to the working definition of international co-production, in order to elucidate the tensions inherent in the decision to co-produce. International co-production is a situation in which two or more broadcasters agree jointly to produce a programme and to share in its prospective proceeds. Each partner has the right to screen the co-production in its own geographic market. Each partner provides support, whether monetary or in kind, and has a say in production decisions (Hoskins et al., 1997).

This definition can be used as a valuable illustration of Levy and Sznajder's (2002) argument regarding the emergence of cosmopolitan memory. This strategy calls (by definition) for transnational collaborations that 'aim a form of universalism that homogenizes television content so that stories take place in a "no-where land"' (Tinic, 2003: 174), and hence 'create new cosmopolitan sensibilities and moral-political obligations' (Levy and Sznajder, 2002: 103).

In *The Fifty Year War* project, the two contracting parties committed themselves to the concept of a single product (to be produced by an independent production company) and to a joint responsibility for this product's content. By agreeing to incorporate each other's 'memories, habits and values' (Deutsch, 1966: 75) in their co-produced product, they were in fact agreeing to, in some way, transcend psycho-national, historico-national boundaries, contributing to the emergence of cosmopolitan memory – a memory which, according to Levy and Sznajder 'implies some reorganization of the history (and the memories) of the "Other"' (2002: 103). Still, the picture is not so simple. As argued earlier, for any channel operator the co-production strategy is more expensive than buying a ready-made programme, i.e. relying on acquisition. The reason for the extra costs normally has to do with the financing sources (usually channel operators) wanting to have a say in the production process and to retain editorial control over the final product. It is in this willingness to incur additional costs (by opting for the international co-production strategy) that the tension between the global and the national, ignored by both Beck (2002) and Levy and Sznajder (2002) comes into clear relief. We thus see the two broadcasters protecting themselves against the uniformity that would result from allowing unrestricted

'cosmopolitanism' to prevail, by insisting on acquiring content-control over the product they have commissioned. Eddie Mirzoeff of the BBC explains his rationale for this insistence:

This series ... is financed by other members as well as the BBC. They [Brian Lapping Associates] are trying to keep everybody happy. They are juggling a lot of balls in the air. As far as the BBC is concerned ... we are not interested in that. We care about the programme that we are broadcasting ... (interview, February 2003)

Mirzoeff's articulation for his network's need for content-control finds expression as well in the financial agreement signed between WGBH Boston and Brian Lapping Associates on 14 February 1996:

WGBH will pay Brian Lapping Associates \$50,000 to support preproduction research and development of the series, and will pay at least \$150,000 per episode for not more than six episodes in exchange for the following rights:

- a. The right to see treatments, rough cuts, and fine cuts and to have our comments and suggestions given appropriate weight in the subsequent work on the films.
- b. The right to one week editing time (including editor and editing equipment) per episode to make such changes as may be required for the American version.

The presumption of the both the legal document and of Mirzoeff's statement is clear: the BBC and WGBH Boston serve two distinct national communities, having unique sensitivities, needs, historical experience and collective memories. By insisting on creating separate *national* versions of the film produced by Lapping, the two producers are, in effect, addressing the inherent tension in negotiating the inclusion of 'the otherness of the other' (Beck, 2002: 18), and the concomitant tension in any attempt to challenge their own existing national narrative (Levy and Sznajder, 2002: 103). This notion manifested itself in the editing phase.

Editing

In this stage a 'rough assembly' was constructed by the production team, followed by the creation of a script produced by the series producer Norma Percy. After the 'rough assembly' and the script had been prepared, the executive producers of the two television networks (BBC and WGBH Boston) were invited to attend viewing sessions in Lapping's London office. Dor-Ner of WGBH would not think of being absent:

I will not release [relinquish] my responsibility as a broadcaster to my partners. They have their responsibilities, I have mine. My audience is different from theirs. I don't plan to deliver or to suspend my responsibility in a co-production. So this issue of editorial control of the final product, the final product to my audience, I want to have the control, I want to be able to affect it ... (interview, August 2001)

Eddie Mirzoeff of the BBC is likewise committed:

The BBC is happy to have a substantial share ... but they demand complete editorial control. (interview, February, 2003)

Examining these statements, it becomes clear that the reason for both executives insisting on active participation in the actual editing was to ensure that specific national versions, suitable for their respective viewerships (national audience), would be forthcoming.

The viewing sessions

Four (documented) viewing sessions are held and comments are recorded as the representatives of the channel operators – Mirzoeff (BBC) and Dor-Ner (WGBH) sit with Norma Percy and Brian Lapping in their office watching the ‘rough assembly’ and reading script.

Sitting in the viewing sessions, series producer, Norma Percy wrote the producers’ comments on the script itself. Percy’s notes are an invaluable primary document in tracing the development from the ‘rough assembly’ to the master film. Writing on the script she had in front of her as the viewing sessions proceeded, her comments are first of all to herself as creator/producer and are therefore emotional, pithy and central, seeking at each critical moment to set down some clues, some key words that will, in the re-editing, allow her to recall what she had thought and felt at any particular moment (Norma Percy, interview, May 2003).

I feel at this point in my own analysis that to proceed sequentially from comment to comment of the Percy’s notes would only burden the reader and not clarify. I have decided therefore to proceed by grouping Percy’s comments under three main analytical categories:

1. The actors: who are they and what is their relevance to the national (British or American) experience (Smith, 2000)?
2. The roles (Propp, 1968): who are each nation’s friends and enemies, who are the heroes, who are the villains?
3. The events that the nation must remember and those that it must forget (Renan, 1996): how will national specificity demand which historical events will be admitted, and which will be consigned to oblivion?

Viewing session with the BBC

In the first viewing session, dated 2 June 1997, Eddie Mirzoeff of the BBC (the chief financier of the series) was the first to respond, confronting the opening segment of the film. He asked Norma Percy to add two minutes about

the Balfour Declaration and to consider the political arena in the 1930s, notably the British Mandate for Palestine. In making these demands of the film's opening, the BBC executive is clearly not only highlighting the role of Britain as a significant actor in the narrative, but is staking out the strongest possible claim for his 'we' in the film's first frames. Mirzoeff's Britain plays a significant role in the 'plot', and this must be manifested at the beginning of the film text. For Mirzoeff, the historical 'hook' will be the British Mandate and the Balfour Declaration.

Mirzoeff's insistence on highlighting the role played by Britain in the conflict was ongoing and unrelenting. In the third sequence (titled 'Dir Yassin'), he asked the production team to mention the fact that the Jewish force, which attacked the Arab village of Dir Yassin, was responsible for blowing up the British headquarters at the King David Hotel in Jerusalem (22 July 1946). The same request was made regarding the sequence that follows (titled 'The War of 1948'). The script reads: 'The Arab armies invaded on 15 May, the day after Israel was born.' Mirzoeff asked the production team to place this commentary in the historical context of Britain's departure from Palestine. Mirzoeff as producer, again, is putting great store in accommodating Britain in the televisual space of the series.

Mirzoeff's insistence on playing up Britain's role in the conflict became especially conspicuous in the second viewing session. In a (documented) session held on 20 June 1997, the BBC executive said to Norma Percy that she must provide an explanation as to 'why the Brit[s] left [Palestine]?'

In the sequence that follows (Dir Yassin), the production team did make the changes demanded by Mirzoeff in the first session, so that it was now stated explicitly in the commentary that the two Jewish forces that had attacked the Arab village (the Irgun and the Stern Gang) 'had waged a campaign of terror against the British'. Here, again, Mirzoeff asks the production team to provide specific information regarding the nature of the 'terror against the British'. Mirzoeff sets out from an ideological site in which the nation he identifies with, the dominant player, must be situated upfront (Billig, 1995; Smith, 2000). Interestingly, here 'upfront' does not mean as hero but as victim. As victims, the British are much less in the position of responsibility for either the onset or the escalation of the conflict. This is the part of 'forgetting' (Renan, 1996): Britain's colonial past is given a wash of grey so that it may be perceived in a preferred victim status. It is this that Mirzoeff called the 'even-handed programme' (interview, February 2003).

Having established the Jews as aggressors ('campaign of terror against the British'), it is then but a simple step to Mirzoeff's demand to highlight the second-level victimhood of the Palestinians, asking the production company to add archival footage of Palestinians in refugee camps. Here Mirzoeff refers to the current British discourse regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict: 'There has been a degree of passionate support [in Britain] at one time strongly for Israel at another time more recently for the Palestinians' (interview, February 2003).

Viewing sessions with PBS (WGBH Boston)

In the first (documented) viewing session, dated 2 June 1997, the producers of WGBH,⁴ like their British colleague, commented on the opening segment, asking Percy to highlight the role the United States played in the 50-year conflict. On the script Peter McGhee, the chief producer of WGBH wrote: 'Don't you think that the role the US played in 50 years is imp[ortant]?' This almost rhetorical question resonates very well with my argument regarding the interplay between national perception and televised representation. For the American producer it is clear that the US (his nation) is a significant player in the Arab-Israeli conflict (Billig, 1995). In his comment he urges the production company to 'flag' this role in the opening sequence.

From the notes of the viewing session, with only this one comment ascribed to the Americans, it would seem that the Americans had gotten what they needed, period. However, in a conversation with Brian Lapping, the producer revealed that the anger of the Americans was only made clear after the sessions. 'Zvi [Dor-Ner] watched the film. ... He was so mad ... I was afraid he'd hit someone' (Brian Lapping, interview, May 2003). Where the Americans did elect to express themselves was in an exchange of letters to Brian Lapping. In a letter dated 4 October 1997, Peter McGhee writes:

For all kinds of reasons, cost among them, I have wanted us to narrow our differences, if any must exist, to minor adjustments in narration. It doesn't appear that this can be the case ...

It may be tempting to see our difference as making a political purpose, on your side or on ours. I reject the temptation and urge you to. What I see and believe is that the things that *aren't said* in that program give what *is* said a skew and a naiveté that impeach the program and the program makers to knowledgeable audience.

Now, we have not persuaded you to our view, and yet we cannot broadcast or put our name on the program you plan without it being made quite different.

So one thing to put on the agenda when we meet is how we can do the work which we feel is necessary with least disruption and cost, hoping, as I do, that when we have made manifest what we think is needed by doing it, you will understand and agree that it has not put your reputation at risk.

I could not hope for a more insightful analysis of the tensions and pitfalls involved in an international co-production than what Peter McGhee described in his letter. What is clear for McGhee is very clear indeed: money is significant (the rationale for engaging in a co-production is to limit the cost); a strongly defined political narrative that is accessible and acceptable to the target (national) audience must be set in place; and the element of forgetting is as essential as that of remembering (Renan, 1996): 'the things that *aren't said* in that program give what *is* said a skew and a naiveté that impeach the program and the program makers to knowledgeable audience'.

A few days later McGhee and Dor-Ner sent a fax to Brian Lapping (dated 23 October 1997), in which they offer 'a schematic of the material/information' which they believed Programme One is lacking. The producer's first request was to begin the programme with the UN's partition plan (1947) and add the following information.

UN general assembly votes to partition Palestine. Palestine is to be divided into two states – one Arab and one Jewish, with Jerusalem designated as an international city. The Jews accept the plan and the Arabs reject it.

The British government votes against the partition. It decided to evacuate Palestine instead of implementing the plan. The British retain a lot of power until their departure

In adding this information, the producers of WGBH are, in effect, calibrating the role of four players: the US, the British, the Arabs and the Jews. The US is implicitly identified as the helper and a 'peacemaker' (hosting the assembly). Britain, in contrast is clearly presented as the villain ('The British government voted against the partition. It decided to evacuate Palestine instead of implementing the plan'). As an active player it is also identified as a significant contender for agency and responsibility for the conflict's irresolvability: ('The British retain a lot of power until their departure'). The Jews are presented as the heroes (the peacemakers), while the Arabs are identified as the villains who hold responsibility for the escalation of the violent conflict: 'The Jews accept the plan and the Arabs reject it.' In the comments that follow, McGhee and Dor-Ner were still insisting on playing up these roles of the two parties to the conflict. A good example is their comment on the sequence of 'The War of Independence':

In the initial stages, the Arabs were able to block Jewish transportation all over Palestine, and the skirmishes are over the ability to use roads.

The Jewish forces go on the offensive to gain control over the road to Jerusalem. It is a protracted and bloody battle. First Arab villages are conquered and the population is removed. The massacre in Dir Yassin occurs within this context, and the beginning of the refugees' story.

In a letter attached to these editorial comments (dated 23 October 1997), Peter McGhee writes to Brian Lapping:

I hope as you do that we have all had all the passionate speeches we need to have. I welcome your assurance that you would like to be able to have us broadcast the same program and will try to make it so, but if we can't come to agreement on that, I'll put it down to one of the various ways in which the US and British information needs simply are different.

This strong statement reflects just where one sits when one is constructing a 'television history' through an international co-production. The collaborating

producers, while maintaining their commitment to a single master product, were pushing for the national (and the particular) through their demand that the sensitivities of their specific audience (the American citizenry) be addressed in the produced footage.

With these cultural (national) discrepancies in mind, the producers at WGBH decided to come to London to watch over the revised programme in person, in an attempt to make it suitable for their target audience – the American viewers. In a viewing session held in Lapping's office on 29 October 1997, the producers of WGBH described their main demands: a focus on the UN Partition Plan (1947), a discussion on the British hostility towards the Jews, an emphasis on the Arab aggression against the Jewish population in Palestine and in the Arab countries, and on Jewish victimhood. These demands were rejected by Brian Lapping, claiming that 'putting all the blame on the Arabs is a distortion of history' (Brian Lapping, interview, May 2003). Again the parties agreed not to agree. Lapping's version of the film (approved by Eddie Mirzoeff) was transmitted on BBC2, and the WGBH version was taken by Zvi Dor-Ner back to the cutting room. Brian Lapping summarized this final stage of the production process:

I gave up on the American version. We had an agreement that they can make editorial changes. They had a right to make changes to suit their need. That was the term on which we got the money so we had no choice. (interview May 2003)

Lapping's statement glaringly states the 'core elements' regarding the co-production process: he who holds the purse holds the power to 'make up the story', i.e. to construct a history.

Transmitting the three film-texts

After the series had been aired, the two executive producers were asked whether effective editorial control had indeed been achieved. Eddie Mirzoeff of the BBC said:

I knew that they [Brian Lapping] had to do these versions but it did not reflect in what we got. ... So we get effectively the complete control. (interview, February 2003)

And Zvi Dor-Ner of WGBH said:

I'm happy with the American version. It's not that I was forced to broadcast the BBC's version. I've done what I thought was necessary to do and I did not compromise in that. (Dor-Ner, interview, August 2001)

Clearly, both executives were satisfied that an effective national narrative had indeed emerged from the material collected for both of them by the independent production company. It seems, therefore, that from the commissioners'

point of view, the fact that the film had been produced by a single independent production company, as a co-production, did not detract from the possibility of endowing the final product with a specific national character.

Once the British and American versions were finalized, the secondary player, MBC, was allowed to come in and design its own version of the film, the one that would be transmitted by cable systems in the Arab world. As already mentioned, MBC's financial commitment was set at 12 percent of the overall budget. In return for this limited share, the network acquired the right to re-edit the BBC's version to suit its needs. This stands in contrast to the status of the main players, who had participated actively in the production process. When asked about the rationale underlying this re-editing of the BBC's version to produce an Arab version of the film, the producer of MBC's programme explains:

We ... worked on the assumption that some of those things would be either obscure to an Arab audience or be offensive to an Arab audience. They were various things in the script which we felt needed changing. (Christine Garabedian, interview, July 2002)

Like the British and American producers, the creators of the MBC version began the re-editing process by making changes in the script. The Arab partner, in contrast to the British and the American co-producers, did not obtain the right to participate in the actual production process. Still, this apparently did not affect MBC's ability to create its own national version, incorporating their viewership's specific narrative.

[We had to change] the structure and the interpretation of what actually happened. It's interesting because you realize how subtle the changes are. If you put in one sentence you can change the whole meaning of the piece regardless of what the interviewees are saying, regardless of the content of the archive. ... You can foreground something simply by adding a word.

Garabedian now joins Dor-Ner and Mirzoeff with responses that rise to a sharp level of consciousness. Both experience and judgement tell them that *time* (fast or slow, full or empty, exciting or dull) and *place* (near or far, 'home' or 'away'), in order to be meaningful to their partisan audience, may not be global. The heightened sense of belonging is essential to their produced film, and must frame the *nation*.

Conclusions

I have attempted in this article to explore the role of television producers as mnemonic agents. In so doing my aim has been to underline the inherent tension permeating the television landscape -- a tension between economic interests and cultural constraints, between the global and the national, and between collective (national) and cosmopolitan memory. What becomes quite clear

from the analysis of the actual production *process* is that none of the producers even entertained the notion that its target audience might be willing or able to accept a cultural product that, while affirming a singular national self-identity, might at the same time allude to a more broad and diverse system of international differences. The concept of 'difference' within one's own target audience, of diverse national memories and viewpoints, is wholly ignored in favour of a clearly constructed selective appropriation of unique nation/culture historical knowledge and existing collective (national) memories.

In conclusion, there are a number of challenging issues which are beyond the scope of this article. While I have emphasized the fact that all three producers, while engaging in the construction of a novel televised narrative, were, in effect, constantly insisting on reproducing those memories that their specific nation/culture communities already remember, I have refrained from asking: to what extent has each of these producers, in his/her broadcast cultural product, actually assumed the major required task of any society today: to take responsibility for its past. Rather than challenging existing collective memories regarding the events depicted, the three co-players in this film project were 'flagging' those memories that their perceived audiences had already agreed to remember. While every act of memory carries with it a dimension of betrayal and amnesia, which the theorist Kwame Anthony Appiah acknowledges when he wrote in his essay 'You Must Remember This': 'to change those memories is to change the community'; he also throws down a challenge when he adds 'to expand its compass, perhaps' (2003: 37).

Notes

1. The paper was delivered in 1992. A copy of the lecture was distributed by email to television producers in 2002.

2. MBC (Middle East Broadcasting Corporation) is a commercial channel available via starlight and cable, producing programmes for an Arabic-speaking audience. In 2002, it relocated from London to Dubai.

3. Unlike the BBC and WGBH Boston who, in return for contributing a significant percentage of the budget, were allowed to retain full editorial control at all stages of the production, MBC's rights, under its contract, were limited to adapting the BBC's film to create a version in Arabic for its audience.

4. Zvi Dor-Ner, the executive of WGBH Boston, was accompanied by Peter S. McGhee, Vice-President of National Programming.

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