Memory

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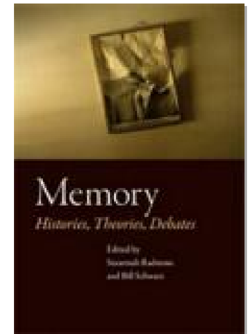

Published by Fordham University Press

Radstone, Susannah and Bill Schwarz.
Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates.
Fordham University Press, 2010.
Project MUSE.muse.jhu.edu/book/66748.

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20. A Long War

Public Memory and the Popular Media

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One of the most difficult theoretical issues confronting the study of memory has been the conceptual problem of group memory and how memories carried by individuals become part of a larger social dynamic. While there has been much debate about descriptive, adjectival terms such as "collective," "cultural," "popular," and "social" memory, terms that are often invoked with noticeable imprecision, less consideration has been given to questions of what social relations make memory public or how we understand the very "publicness" of memory. When we think of *the* public, or *a* public, it is *out there*, encompassing the notion of being on view in front of others, which usually also has a spatial component, a place of meeting others, of memory shared. Public memory is also a phenomenon contrasted, at least implicitly, to our understanding of private memory as *inside, internal*. Yet we also know that ultimately these dichotomies—external and internal, public and private—never quite stay in place, and this is especially so in relation to our conceptualizations of memory. Bradford Vivian properly warns of the dangers of defining memory according to "fixed categories: as categorically public, collective, or private."[1] It is precisely the mutual interconnections between public and private that are both most fascinating and most difficult to uncover.

Kendall Phillips makes a distinction between "public memory" and what he calls "the memory of publics." The first refers to "memories which affect and are effected by various publics": that is, following Hannah Arendt, the public is a realm in which we act together or remember together. It is an arena that people actively constitute through their collective action. The latter speaks to the "public appearance" of memories, a focus on cultural practices such as ritual and repetition that are carried out in public arenas. The two memories are not mutually exclusive, but the second speaks more clearly to the politics of remembering in the public sphere.[2] There is always conflict about how an event is

remembered and what it means. In becoming public, memory is inevitably steeped in controversy. In our contemporary societies in the West, the publicness of memory is constituted most of all in the field of popular or mass culture—mediated through the channels of mass communication—and it is here especially that we can locate a privileged site for the playing out of the ethical issues arising from the historical or the remembered past. These vernacular forms themselves overdetermine the mediations in play, and add to the controversial properties of memory in its public forms.

The most impressive body of interdisciplinary work on the construction of group memory to date has concentrated particularly on moments of profound historical catastrophe or transition: the Holocaust, major wars, the end of Communism in Eastern Europe. Much of this work—following in the slipstream of Durkheim and Halbwachs—moves beyond a highly localized focus, a feature of most oral histories and of autobiographical memory, to the national or transnational arenas, incorporating analysis of a range of competing sites of memory, which necessarily prove more capacious than the memory of any single individual. Such sites accrete memories that are sustained beyond any individual lifespan, most often in physical memorials, monuments, and places and in collective rituals. Studies such as these depend analytically on grasping the processes by which memory is, at any single moment, transmitted and circulated, produced and received.

Memory identified as public or collective in this sense is constituted not only by what people remember of their own experiences but also by a constructed past that's described by Barbara Misztal as "culture's active meaning-making." In her view, in order for personal memories to become part of a wider collective phenomenon, individual experience is necessarily transfigured and is therefore always "more than" individual. Public memory, in this sense, refers to a past that is both commonly shared and collectively commemorated—these should not be understood as the same activities—though, of course, not one necessarily shared by all people, unambiguously, in any particular collectivity.[3]

But for a number of critics, an approach such as this raises more problems than it solves. Wulf Kansteiner, for example, questions the continued usefulness of exploring group memory when, as he sees it, the outcome provides only an abstracted notion of memory, belonging ethereally to some unspecified social "group."[4] Oren Baruch Stier, Jay Winter, and Misztal herself all argue that to avoid such abstractions we need to retain "a sense of both [memory's] individual and collective dimensions."[5] Simply put, it is this problem I address here, seeking to track empirically the movements between the private and individual zones of remembering, on the one hand, and, on the other, their translation into a mediated public reality.

A Long War

One day in the not too distant future, perhaps within twenty or so years, there will be no one alive who participated in the two great world wars of the twentieth century. For those

who were born after these temporal watersheds of our historical landscape yet who still found themselves conscripted to the memory of wars that, in a sense, was not "theirs," this historical, demographic transition could represent a release from an obligation to the memory of others. Alternatively, many could experience a marked sense of loss, a breaking of the link with the past that only the witness provides. There will be no frail, rheumy old men (it is generally men whom we think of here) struggling along the remembered terrains of the front line. But none the less will the rituals of commemoration remain, for such ceremonies are, after all, of the mind: they speak not to the past but to the present.

Only a few men and women who fought in the First World War are still alive and, in anticipation of the generation of participants in the Second World War dying, there has been a significant increase in memorialization of the Second World War by states and by civic organizations. There now exists a vast memorial archive composed of writings by historians and novelists, recordings and images of war-experience, individual testimonies, established sites of memory, movies and TV programs, and so on. Yet in the new millennium, we are in a strange temporal and demographic transition. War memories are becoming a largely intergenerational phenomenon, removed from the direct eyewitnesses, as meanings shift ever more radically in relation to current circumstances, assuming different shapes in our generational imaginations. Yet even so, the war memories of any single population, whether victor or defeated, often still remain unsettled: even now new generations can experience *these pasts* in *this present* as uncanny and unreconciled; memory itself remains unappeased.

In this chapter, I examine the public response to a single television series, *Changi*, screened in Australia in 2001. Changi was a notorious prisoner of war (POW) camp established by the Japanese after the fall of Singapore in 1942. When the Allied forces in Singapore surrendered, the Japanese captured sixty-two thousand men and women, of whom fourteen thousand were Australians. The figures are startling: some three percent of Australians who were POWs in Europe died in captivity; thirty-six percent of those captured by the Japanese perished.[6] The TV program, shown fifty years after the war had passed, sought to represent the memory of these Australian POWs, a matter still alive to all variety of fears, anxieties, and prohibitions in Australian national culture. When the program was aired, a number of those who had been POWs were still alive, and they were able to articulate their own experiences, decisively affecting the public debate that followed.

In larger political terms, aside from the brutalities experienced, the memory of Changi also has prominent historical resonance in Australia, in Singapore, and (to a lesser extent) in Britain, for behind the name lies the historical memory of "betrayal" that many Singaporeans and Australians experienced at the fall of Singapore. The effects of the capitulation of British authority—its entire colonial edifice, incorporating the colonial government, the military and its allies, and the civic life of the settler population, collapsed so spectacularly that it seemed as if not one of the Britons held faith in the system they

were charged to uphold—ran through the region as a whole, with Britain's possessions in the southern Pacific left unprotected against the Japanese advance.[7] In Australia these memories remain vivid, and can still be mobilized politically.[8]

The TV series consisted of six episodes, written and produced by John Doyle, well known (in an unlikely scenario) as part of a satirical comedy duo who represented a particular kind of muted Australian masculinity: laddish, irreverent—larrikin. It was broadcast on public television by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), which doesn't usually attract a mass audience, but the series gained a significant share of the viewing public as the story progressed each Sunday night. *Changi* achieved ABC's highest Sunday night ratings in a decade, gaining, on average, 1.3 million viewers each week. There were, as well, an unknown number who watched the repeats or who saw the series on video or DVD. In addition, each week several hundred people responded on the program's Internet feedback forums.[9]

In the programs, six elderly men were filmed meeting in a club and recalling their experiences as youngsters, connecting present and past in an engaging, inventive manner. With a relatively small budget it proved impossible to recreate visually the historical experience of the camp in full Hollywood mode, so Doyle chose instead a hybrid genre. In eschewing a realist genre he gave to the programs a dreamlike quality that was designed to echo the process of remembering itself, also introducing music as a reality-distancing device in order to encode certain sorts of memories in particular episodes. Within this aesthetic strategy the producers also chose to give prominence to a historical eyewitness who had been imprisoned at Changi, adding, it seemed, a realist component that was, as it turned out, to complicate the public reception of the series. Slim de Gray, the former POW, who acted both as consultant and participant, appeared as himself, that is, as an old man and ex-POW. This mix of history, memory, and fiction, although it may well have driven the popularity of the program as television, served as well to create a degree of dissension about the realities the program was projecting. Where was the truth to lie?

Memories of war are revealing in many ways—not least because notions of public and personal became permeable, forever reconstituted in the emergencies that turn the practices of daily life upside down. Marita Sturken associates the concept of "cultural memory" with traumatic events, where "both the structures and the fractures of a culture are exposed."[10] Indeed through the twentieth century, the commemoration of those who died in war created new collective sensibilities, mentalities that have tied citizen to nation in powerful, novel arrangements. As Jay Winter notes, in the history of war remembrance, the stories told about popular experience have changed over time. "Once they focused on battles and combatants. Now victims, civilians, and women are at the heart of acts of remembrance. . . . War brings family history and world history together in long-lasting and frequently devastating ways. That is why women as well as men now construct the story and disseminate and consume it."[11]

Yet what is also evident in the study of Australian POW memories is the central political dimension at work. As Yael Zeruvabel reminds us, ''collective memory continuously negotiates between available historical records and current social and political agendas.''[12] Even in the heavily mediated domain of popular culture, however, public reconstructions of the past are nonetheless constrained, to a degree at least, by the available historical accounts. Inevitably, questions of politics and questions of historical authenticity become inextricably bound, the one to the other. Thus it is not just by overt political means that some memories are retained and others consigned to oblivion. Susan Suleiman has argued that we need to counteract the ''sacrilization of memory'' and the ''injunction to remember'' through what she identifies as critical memory studies.[13] This conforms to Alison Landsberg's call for a more openly political reading of memory, and with Ashavai Margalit's investigations into the ethics underwriting the study of memory.[14] Similarly, Bradford Vivian insists that ''the ethical and political implications of collective or public memories must be measured by the quality of the social relationships established or sustained through their expression rather than the transcendent truth or undiminished authenticity of memory itself.''[15] Perspectives such as these serve to overcome a given dichotomy between truth and fiction and in so doing allow for more intermediate, more contingent political readings of the meanings that underwrite public-memory texts, particularly those, like *Changi*, that claim some anchorage in historical verisimilitude.

However forceful the verisimilitude, mediations are also present. Public memory in our own times is impossible to disentangle from the workings of the mass media. The dearth of thoughtful empirical studies from within the remit of media studies on the ways in which the producers of media texts create the raw material of public memories remains a problem.[16] But the central insight that, as a result of electronic media, people are able to take on memories of a past to which they have no historical or geographical connection, with strangers whom they do not know, has had a profound impact on expanding our understanding of remembrance as a necessarily public practice, introducing the notion of ''prosthetic memory.''[17] What kind of memories could these be?

Memories of Changi

On April 10, 2007 journalist Tony Stephens, writing an article on the widow of Bill Moxham, a Changi survivor, and her fight for public compensation for her husband's early death, referred to her struggle with the Veterans' Affairs Department as a ''long war.'' Bill Moxham had been one of the six Australians, out of nearly two and a half thousand, who survived the Sandakan death march of some 265 kilometers in 1945. Like others in his predicament, Moxham returned home, quickly married, and did his best to forget his wartime experiences. But his life and that of his new wife on a farm in outback New

South Wales became a nightmare, dominated by Moxham's drinking and violence, threatened and real, toward his wife and children. This was, it seems, a common pattern of events for many of those men who returned from the war. What is of interest, though, is that in 2007—many years after the war itself—Stephens, as a journalist, was able to identify both husband and wife as "victims of the war." Symptomatically, their eldest daughter is quoted as saying: "We were never allowed to talk about what was troubling him." It was many years into her adult life, in the 1980s, when she heard—significantly for our concerns here with public memories—an ABC radio program about prisoners of the Japanese that "everything fell into place": "After years of thinking my father was a wife beater and alcoholic I knew there was much more to it." In 1956, Wilma Moxham fled the family home, taking her children with her; five years later, on his forty-eighth birthday, her husband committed suicide, unable to deal with the nightmares, the flashbacks, and the rage. I look at a photo of him in 1947, framing the article in the middle pages of the newspaper. He is smiling, with no hint of the turmoil underneath.[18]

This story, spanning sixty-seven years, speaks powerfully about the continuing effects of war on men and the consequences for their families that resonate across generations. But it also tells us about the gap between the experience of these men and the wider articulation of their memories. For as with other traumatic experiences of war, many who suffered remained silent, such that there occurred a rupture in the customary processes by which memory is transmitted within families across time. In this case, it wasn't until a public radio program many years later that Bill Moxham's daughter began to comprehend the memories that haunted them all. The programs themselves, based on oral histories and fashioned into radio documentaries by ABC journalist Tim Bowden, marked the important historical moment when the Australian POW story shifted from being a subordinate one to one that dominates the nation's public memory of the Second World War.

Personally, I first became interested in the memory of the Australian prisoners of war through my experience as a teacher of history. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the occasional student would want to research the subject. The older ones would want to know why their POW father refused to speak about the war, lamenting the prolonged impact of the war on their family. In the 1990s, a teenager asked me: "Why does my grandfather cross the road when a Japanese person walks by?" Several questioned why their family refused to buy a Japanese car. In a 2001 interview for a national survey on Australians and the past, a woman from Queensland offered this vignette:

> My father-in-law was in World War Two. New Guinea and Borneo and another place. . . . But he doesn't talk about the killing, only about mateship with the other soldiers. He doesn't like Japanese. I'll tell you a story. Their daughter took them back out west a few years ago and for a surprise she took them to a resort to spend the weekend. Well, it was owned by Japanese, and my father-in-law would not get out of the car! They had to leave. It was too much for him, I guess.[19]

Tales of this kind persist in anecdote and asides, in "the little stories" told between family members and friends. They speak of the significant underground tensions in the latter part of the twentieth century, between the process of dealing with war experiences and the emergence of Japan as a major trading partner since the 1960s, which explains the repeated focus in these stories on consumer goods as anxiogenic objects. Gradually, what could not be spoken in private came to be articulated in the public media.

There are various ways one can track the way this silence began to buckle, in part because of the shifting public discourse. Ivy Luscombe, for example, married an ex-POW who had been forced to work on building the Burma–Thailand railway. She lived for over fifty years with his waking up screaming with nightmares, his long-term illnesses, and his serious food obsessions. Yet he was a quiet man and never spoke about his experiences to Ivy, to his daughters, or to his grandchildren. He refused to watch or to allow Ivy to watch the film *Bridge On the River Kwai* in the 1960s nor forty years after that would he turn on the television to watch *Changi*. Throughout these years Ivy never felt able to discuss her husband's behavior with anyone else, not even the other wives at battalion reunions. It was only after her husband's death that she talked by chance to a neighbor whose husband had also been a POW and discovered that they had shared similar experiences of living with men who had undergone this deep, unspeakable trauma.[20]

Indeed, these memories had had a curious trajectory in the public sphere. Starting in the 1940s, the press photos of emaciated, physically damaged, traumatized POWs returning home provided an iconic "flashbulb" memory of the experience for Australians. (These are now reproduced in school textbooks.) For many years after, there were no widespread military commemorations of those who died in captivity, nor—until the 1980s—were there significant state sanctioned memorials and ceremonies.[21] POW memories were not a central feature of war commemoration in the thirty years after the war, even while they were integral to the "war-damaged" family's experience. Yet while there occurred no official recognition, within popular culture—more specifically, within popular literature—from the 1950s there appeared an important subgenre of masculine fiction that dwelt on the stories of Japanese cruelties, and on Australian heroism, comprising books that sold in their millions. Robin Gerster argues that an important feature of these memories at this time was explicitly racist. It "stemmed from the fact that Australians, like other westerners, had been forced into slave labour by orientals."[22] Since Australians were prisoners, they could never claim military or physical superiority, suggesting that so far as their stories were internalized they emphasized personal survival rather than a collective, military ethos. One historian, Stephen Garton, comments on the implications of this gulf: "Many prisoners saw their experience in racial terms—civilization against barbarism, east and west—and any historical account of these events that does justice to the ways in which the prisoners lived and understood them has to take on the burden of these sentiments."[23]

How then can we understand the repeated refrain from family members of returned POWs about the silences of their war experiences? If there were personal accounts of this collective experience circulating in at least the unofficial domain of popular culture, with a huge readership, how could anyone claim not to know? What kind of public was this "reading public"? The gap involved here is about the transmission of personal memory between and across generations. There is an expectation that the memory of an individual's participation in public events will be shared with lovers or spouses, with siblings and parents, and passed on to children as part of a family's oral heritage. The inability to speak signifies to others both the extent of trauma, the unspeakable, unrepresentable experience and, if it is a defining moment in a life, it also acts as a barrier in intimate relations with others in the family. Other factors are also at play here: this story is about men from the 1940s and 1950s who had been emasculated as POWs and who had been shaped by particular historically contingent forms of masculinity, and there is good reason to think that they may have felt it would have "unmanned" them to speak of their experiences in intimate settings.

Yet from the 1990s, the many personal accounts of Australian POWs become increasingly incorporated into a form of national memory such that, as Joan Beaumont has argued, there is—ironically—now a kind of amnesia about *other* experiences of the Second World War in Australia.[24] The POW experience, having remained a subordinate memory for so long, is, in a strange reversal, now everywhere, the touchstone for *all* experiences of the war and a critical component in the remaking of the Anzac legend. In an important intervention, Stephen Garton, critical of the *Changi* program, offers a conjunctural interpretation, stating that he believes the series "enacts and enfeebles a narrative of the POW experience. It is narrow, parochial, inward looking, blind to the complexities, deaf to the multiplicity of former prisoner voices but attuned to John Howard's nostalgic vision of national cohesion cemented through the commemoration of the Anzac ethos."[25] This reminds us that the overcoming of a trauma—the act of speaking—can, politically, take many different forms.

The decisive break in the pattern of remembrance of the POW past occurred in the 1980s, in part a result of demographic changes, in part a function of wider social transformation of Australian society. From that point on, a new nomenclature appeared, in which the "victim" came to be superseded by the figure of the "survivor," a term that offered a greater measure of agency. Survivor stories began to proliferate in the mass media, allowing for the belated heroization of the POW (such as of Weary Dunlop, a doctor in Changi whose memoirs went into many editions). These turned, by way of a generic Australian populism, on irreverence, humor, male mateship, resourcefulness, and camaraderie in the face of overwhelming odds—qualities that were dramatically present in the TV reconstruction of 2001.

Public Responses to *Changi*

The first organized response to the *Changi* series was initiated by the *Sydney Morning Herald*. Six former POWs were brought together to offer their views of the programs, built on their experiences. Journalistic practice requires journalists to interview (''on the spot'') those who have witnessed an event—the figure of the eyewitness—and from these oral reconstructions, at a second level of mediation, to create the ''story.'' For historical events that occurred long ago, journalists use much the same techniques, in this instance though, not so much in order to create the story, but to verify the one supplied by the fictions of television. This was supplemented, in the *Changi* example, by seeking too the opinion of accredited experts, in this case, Peter Stanley from the Australian War Memorial, who was critical, and a range of academics, whose opinions varied.[26] Thus the press attempted to shape the terms of public engagement on the basis of historical authenticity. This was partially successful and generated a measure of public unease, prompting the journalists to ask whether the viewers could trust the version of events presented to them. This, of course, was complicated by the entanglement of memory and the historical record, which the series had deliberately—knowingly—mixed together. Doyle himself appeared reluctant to be drawn into these controversies: aware that he had a moral responsibility to the men he'd portrayed, he resorted to defending the program as ''art'' rather than as verifiable history. He claimed, in other words, the authority only of memory.

The group of former POWs interviewed by the *Sydney Morning Herald* had no qualms about accepting, formally, the mix of fact and fiction the series was based on, nor even Doyle's distinctive brand of black humor. But at the same time they felt compelled to establish their existential status as survivors by criticizing the lack of authenticity of the programs. ''Where's the tenko?'' they asked, referring to the endless head counts and roll calls they had been subjected to. In one episode, a hatless soldier was depicted standing on a box all day in forty-degree-Celsius heat, refusing to salute the Japanese military. ''But everyone knows,'' they said, ''that a bloke without a hat had to bow, not salute.'' A more glaring error, in their terms, was that the series showed the POWs wearing slouch-hats, which carry iconic meaning in Australia, symbolizing the Anzac tradition. ''We didn't wear the slouch-hats, the sun was too hot.'' They concluded of the series: ''It could have been better, but this is not a documentary, it's a drama, a bit of theatre.'' Two of them, however, were more forthright: ''It's a big joke. Half of it is rubbish,'' commented one. ''I read somewhere that John Doyle warned there would be a lot of criticism over what he's done,'' said another. ''And by crikey I will tell you what. He's right.'' The man awarded Doyle ''certainly no more than 3 out of 10 for factual accuracy.''[27]

At one point Doyle found himself on the ABC program *Backchat* countering further criticism. He argued that a truthful representation of POW experiences was impossible,

in part, he explained, because of the financial constraints under which he worked: "Documentary or naturalism," he claimed, "was never an option. . . . In no way is it historically accurate. . . . Historical accuracy was . . . not the ambition at all. If truth is the first casualty of war then fact is the first casualty of drama."[28]

To a degree, discussions such as these served to frame popular responses to the series. Critically, though, a new medium intervened: the Internet, indicating an important convergence between the mass media (television, the press) and new digital forms of communication that allow private voices to assume a heightened public prominence. Here we can see the beginnings of new, still undeveloped structures of television audience participation emerging, creating unprecedented communities of memory.

After each episode of *Changi*, ABC opened a "guest-book" on the Internet, seeking comment from viewers. At first, those who signed in tended to address, rather formally, ABC or John Doyle himself. But as the guest-book evolved, viewers were able to interact with each other, bypassing the mediation of the professionals. In all, some seven hundred people participated. Many took the opportunity to establish their personal authority, speaking on behalf of relations and friends no longer alive. They sought to establish a claim to an inheritance, a publicly remembered personal inheritance. In reading these stories we can witness, through all the mediations, the degree to which *Changi* fostered a particular kind of historical consciousness, a moment when people became aware of their own historicity, of living in historical as well as in personal time. Thus one person commented on the way the series' movement between the old men in the present and their remembered young selves in the POW camps imagined a continuity between different generations: "a real sense of continuity is being fostered on screen. The old guard is handing on to the new in a powerful way. This must have been a real experience for all generations. Interesting that it is a work produced by baby boomers, fronted by the youngsters and the seniors."[29]

Of the many who spoke about their family relationships, a continuing thread across the weeks was the previous "silence" and refusal, or inability, of the men to speak about their experiences and the gap in understanding this had left. Kelly (many people were identified only by first names or by numbers or by code names) declared that "the show has answered questions which I never got to ask my grandfather." Graham, too, who had a father in Changi, said: "he never spoke much about the war and this series helps me to understand why."[30]

Many of the younger participants in the forums contrasted the television series with the institutional histories they had encountered at school. They positioned it against these, even though the politics of the series may not have been dissimilar to their formal history curriculum. For example, Lydia, in her final year of school, commented that she had been "disheartened by the sheer boredom of our history. Although *Changi* was not entirely historically accurate it brought a new interest in our vivid history. I've watched every episode about 20 times." Jenny too spoke of her "boredom" with the Australian history

curriculum in year ten (the middle of high school in New South Wales, where history remains compulsory). "I am enjoying the *Changi* series very much as is my 13 year old brother." Jake also indicated that beyond the screen, the program resonated in school group discussions and had in part become imbricated into everyday life: "I like many other Australians have fallen in love with *Changi*. I am a year 12 male high school student from NSW, and all of my friends and I watch the show." The series clearly had an important role in making a specific set of male experiences available for discussion to a number of other constituencies across generations and genders.

Initial responses were marked by considerable feeling, not only because the programs were designed to be powerfully evocative, but also because the act of remembering itself could be painful. One contributor claimed that "the 'brutality' you portray is a flea bite compared to what really took place. I fear that you open more wounds than you heal . . . about why older Australians do no forgive or forget." Similarly, Eric D., who had been in a concentration camp as a child, wondered "how many survivors were able to watch the series right through and what they thought of it. . . . I could only watch part of the first episode." Another spoke for the previous generation in her family: "My mother could not watch after the first three episodes for it brought back too many painful memories not just of being there but living with the aftermath." Remarks of this kind clearly spoke to the considerable tension in Australia between the competing desires to remember and to forget. As W. G. Sebald said of the Germans, they were always "looking and looking away" at their own past. However, at points, the programs managed to dramatize precisely this dilemma, as Diana observed: "I was staggered to see the ambivalence the older blokes had about going back into it. They were portrayed as totally engulfed by the experience and yet unable to share it even with their mates. This was all incredibly and frighteningly true to life as I have seen it."[31]

The bulk of the Internet debate focused on two related questions: the persuasiveness of the programs in terms of their production—and some referred here again to questions of authenticity—and the portrayal of the national character, particularly the idea of Australian mateship as a means of surviving the camps. So far as the latter was concerned, as we might expect, it was men especially who responded to the ideals of mateship and who did so by reflecting upon their relationships with older men. Gary H., claiming his *bona fides*, remarks that he had spent "hours and hours" with vets from many wars, "and this series presents an accurate depiction of everything that I have heard from an emotional viewpoint." Similarly, "Gazza" valorizes his father's experience:

> As the son of an ex-POW in Changi, and having heard first hand of my father's experiences, congratulations—there are so many truisms in this, the first episode of the series. Specifically the mateship thing. I have never witnessed camaraderie and an impenetrable friendship like Dad had with his mates—it superceded any relationships

> I have witnessed, due to the shared experiences over 3 years. Well done. Dad would be proud.

Shane, who lost his father on the Burma–Thailand railway, takes on the anger felt by the survivors of the previous generation: "I think the larrikinism, and the bond of mateship, shown in the show reinforced what I already knew to be fact by just talking to these gentleman in the association. . . . As for the Japanese, we may forgive, but we will never ever forget."

The unappeased anger of some of the POWs—or anger on their behalf—simmers just below the surface of these responses, encapsulated by the phrase "we do not forgive or forget." In portraying these memories, Doyle adopted much of the anti-Japanese sentiment to shore up empathy for POWs and to portray their "nobility" in the face of their suffering. Others, though, expressed anxieties about the racism expressed. One female respondent comments: "Maybe it doesn't make all Japanese look like part of the War, but it does continue the idea of them being less human that the Western participants in the war."

The responses to the production itself were perhaps more ambivalent. One woman, with an uncle who had survived, spoke of her disappointment, claiming that the series was "superficial, arty." She contrasted the TV representation to the official commemoration: the Changi War Memorial in Singapore, she wrote, "shows what really happened." Others drew on the history of POW representation and found the series wanting. Phil said after the first week: "Without the pervading sense that the lives of these Australian soldiers now hang by a thread in the hands of the Japanese, and this after Nanking, all that follows in this drama is of little consequence: the humour, the need for food, the meeting with 'Arsehole,' etc. This was achieved seemingly effortlessly in *King Rat*, *A Town Like Alice* and *Bridge Over the River Kwai*. I found the programme fails badly on this major dramatic point." John D. found the time shifting between present and past distracting: "But I then came to realize the program is more about the Changi in their hearts than just a fictionalized documentary." Another appreciated the "the musical interludes," which "prevented me from being too horrified as each story unfolded" (though a number were hostile).[32] Some engaged with the metaphorical intent of the series in interesting ways: "Ignore the carping critics (especially the man from the war memorial)," says Viola, "who wouldn't know a good story if they fell over it. The only way we can cope with such horrors is through fiction." Here the formal institutional authority of the historian is pitted against a belief in the virtues of "telling stories" as a means to apprehend the past. Moreover it is evident that even some who were not men, not from the military, could identify with the national myths of mateship the programs presented, such as Trig, a forty-year old woman: "*Changi* evokes all the memories I hold fast in my heart, yet I am a woman and have never been to war." This prosthetic memory reveals how the television series was instrumental in consolidating a public and collective memory of war.

We can see from the range of these responses that there was by no means any consensus, either on the nature of the program or on the memories it evoked. As Jay Winter argues of the cinema, ''film disturbs as many narratives as it confirms.'' The same holds true here. By following a case such as this, where there has been a rupture in the ''private'' means by which memories of past experiences are communicated, we can see that the cultural transmission of memories is increasingly being externalized or made public and taken over by new media. Negotiations over remembrance continue in new digital forms, not fully in the public eye, but in a more fluidly understood ''public'' space that is at once more individually negotiated and yet can encompass much larger collectives than in former times.

As in many countries, in Australia ''the long war'' remains unfinished; the nature of public memory suggests that the meanings of this past in our present can never be fixed. Changi remains evocative of unresolved feelings and emotions for many Australians who lived through the war or were raised in the generation after. It's strange for those of us who travel to Europe, stopping off at the new Changi International Airport in Singapore. A sense of dislocation pervades the vast expanses of the duty-free malls and departure lounges, erasing the past and turning Changi into one of those archetypal non-places of contemporary times. If nothing else, it reminds us of the fragility and shifting valency of public memories.